

# Restoration Meets Recreation at New Everglades Public Area

## More stormwater treatment land opens to hikers, bikers and more

**West Palm Beach, FL** - A new haven for outdoor enthusiasts opened today amid an expanse of wetlands constructed by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to clean water for the Everglades.

"South Florida residents and visitors alike have yet another public oasis to escape the everyday hustle," said SFWMD Governing Board Vice Chair Shannon Estenoz. "Opening this land for recreation enables the people of Florida and beyond to further enjoy the national treasure we are working so hard to rehabilitate."

Located in central Palm Beach County, Stormwater Treatment Area (STA) 1 West features a new parking area leading to a 200-foot viewing platform and gazebos overlooking the watery expanse. The three-mile trail along a section of the levee surrounding the 6,670-acre STA offers hikers, bicyclists, photographers and bird watchers vast views of nature and wildlife such as great blue herons and mottled ducks. Fishing is allowed in the outer canal but not within the treatment area.

In keeping with an environmentally friendly mission, the land also boasts a restroom with a composting toilet.

The expanse is the third stormwater treatment area managed by the District to open for recreation. The 6,562-acre Stormwater Treatment Area 1 East, just across the massive Water Conservation Area 1, opened in May for similar outdoor activities. Future plans call for a 10-mile levee walking trail connecting STA 1 East and STA 1 West.

While recreation has become a staple on these public lands, the key purpose of stormwater treatment areas is to improve the quality of water runoff before it flows to the Everglades. The STAs are immense constructed wetlands full of aquatic plants. Those plants soak up phosphorus, a nutrient that helps vegetation grow but one that can harm the Everglades ecosystem.

Along with better farming practices, South Florida's 52,000 acres of STAs have prevented more than 2,600 metric tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades, reducing phosphorus loads by 70 percent since 1994. The STAs have also attracted many native animal and bird species.

The new STA 1 West recreation area is open from dawn until dusk, Friday through Monday. For detailed information about recreational opportunities on District properties, including the STAs, visit [www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov) and follow the recreation link.

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