



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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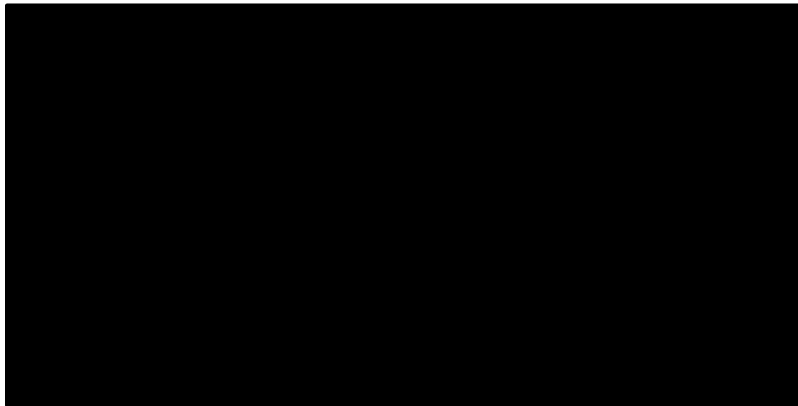
South Florida Water Management District

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SFWMD Expands Recreation at Everglades Water-Cleaning Wetland
Hiking, biking and wildlife viewing are popular attractions at Hendry County site



(Click on the picture for a larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL — In a continuing effort to increase access to public lands, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has opened Stormwater Treatment Area 5/6 (STA-5/6) in Hendry County to the public for expanded recreation. Visitors to the wetland will arrive to a new parking area and trailhead with restrooms and an educational kiosk and a picnic shelter farther into the site.

The vast wetland that cleans Everglades-bound water is already popular with bird watchers and hunters during organized activities with District partners such as the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society. Now, large portions of the approximately 16,000-acre area will be open to the general public for activities such as hiking, biking and wildlife viewing.

“A remarkable diversity of birds has already made this water quality facility a renowned recreational area,” said SFWMD Executive Director Blake Guillory. “Increasing access provides new opportunities for the public to enjoy South Florida’s unique slice of nature.”

Outdoor enthusiasts can walk or ride bicycles along levees in the STA, framed by an array of wading birds, alligators and aquatic life. Existing features at the site include a boardwalk built for disabled veterans and residents.

“This is something that has been needed for years, and to see it come together is wonderful,” said Hendry County Commission Chairman Karson Turner, who also serves on the SFWMD Water Resources Advisory Commission (WRAC). “Now, not only will the thousands of visitors we have come to this area be able to experience STA-5/6 in a more comfortable manner, but it will allow our local population to become more acquainted with this area and experience this facility in a more tangible way.”

The District has steadily increased access to the site south of Clewiston, with the first organized bird-watching program beginning in 2005 with a partnership with the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society. To date, Audubon volunteers, in coordination with the District, have hosted more than 6,700 bird watchers and photographers from across the globe on 183 individual tours at the site.

Since 2002, the District’s partners at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission have led a series of organized waterfowl and alligator hunts at this wetland.

New Hours of Operation

- Sunrise to sunset on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday.
- The area will be closed to the general public on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday for wetland management purposes.
- The area will be closed on Sundays starting the Sunday before Thanksgiving until the first Sunday in February to allow for hunting activities.

Throughout South Florida, the District provides recreational access to its public lands while continuing to manage them to support environmental restoration, water supply, water quality and flood control missions.

At present, the District owns approximately 621,000 acres of land that are open to the public. Many of these properties are in their natural state or have enhancements such as picnic tables, informational kiosks, primitive campsites and hiking trails.

For more information on recreational opportunities throughout the District’s 16-county region, visit www.sfwmd.gov/recreation.

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About the South Florida Water Management District

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage

and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.