



splash!

quick facts on...

The Legacy Program

Nature's Classroom: Learning on Public Lands

OCTOBER 2010

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.

Our Mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems, and water supply.

The South Florida Water Management District has developed a hands-on environmental education program, called Legacy. Legacy connects water resource and environmental education with land management activities. The program partners local high schools with public lands the District manages to provide outdoor learning activities for students.

The District's expertise in land management, water resource and environmental science is a perfect opportunity to bring outdoor learning experiences to teachers and students. Classroom-specific curriculum activities may include bird patrol field studies, data and photo monitoring of flora and fauna and aquatic invertebrate studies. Teachers, land managers and program coordinators work together to identify Legacy activities on specific lands.

Originally developed by the St. Johns River Water Management District, this program is similar to other programs at sister agencies, including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's LIFE (Learning in



High school students perform water quality testing.

Florida's Environment) program and the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Splash Grant Program.

Legacy Program goals focus on:

- Strengthening the connection of District lands with water resource and environmental education
- Providing communities with new opportunities to benefit from public lands
- Enhancing environmental stewardship in youth
 - Encouraging recreational use of public lands
 - Building awareness and support for District properties



An educational kiosk at a Legacy site.

Legacy sites for 2010-2011 include:

- **Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW), Lee and Collier Counties**

The 7,000-acre Corkscrew Marsh is the headwaters for the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW). The entire watershed, more than 60,000 acres in all, spans both Lee and Collier counties and provides natural flood protection, water purification and critical aquifer recharge. Wildlife sightings are frequent as the watershed also serves as important habitat for animal species such as the endangered Florida panther, snail kite and wood stork. Other birds, particularly woodpeckers, red-shouldered hawks and a variety of warblers, are always plentiful. The District partners with the CREW Land and Water Trust to offer educational programs and recreational opportunities.

- **DuPuis Management Area, Martin County**

The DuPuis Management Area is a 21,875-acre multi-use natural area. The property is interspersed with numerous ponds, wet prairies, cypress domes, pine flatwoods and remnant Everglades marsh. A 400-foot boardwalk trail provides a meandering path through a cypress swamp. The area provides 22 miles of hiking trails and 40 miles of horseback trails. Recreational opportunities abound with an equestrian center, graded vehicle roads, backpack and group campsites and seasonal hunting. DuPuis is far from urban areas, and its dark night sky lends itself to excellent star gazing. The District partners with the Center for Environmental Studies at Florida Atlantic University to conduct events, lecture series and other educational opportunities at the onsite environmental education facility.

- **LILA (Loxahatchee Impoundment Landscape Assessment), Palm Beach County**

LILA is a working 80-acre model of the Everglades ecosystem on the grounds of the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. This "living laboratory" gives experts an opportunity to research and apply restoration techniques on a small, controlled scale before taking them into the 1.7 million-acre Everglades ecosystem. The unique facility was built in 2003 as a partnership between the South Florida Water Management District, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The District partners with the Center for



★ = Legacy Site Locations

Environmental Studies at Florida Atlantic University to offer educational opportunities for students and teachers.

- **Reedy Creek, Osceola Environmental Studies Center, Osceola County**

Reedy Creek connects Lake Russell to Cypress Lake and Lake Hatchineha. A riverine cypress swamp is located in the Reedy Creek watershed. While floodplain swamp dominates, 13 additional communities, including rare dry prairie, mesic flatwoods and scrub are also found. In 1995, the Save Our Rivers Program acquired thousands of acres in the Reedy Creek-Lake Marion Creek system. In Osceola County, 850 of these acres are assigned for Environmental Center use through a partnership program with the Osceola School Board and Osceola County. Here in the wilds of central Florida, visitors experience Florida's unique scrub habitat. Portable classrooms are used for hands-on environmental education and an interpretive center.

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