



splash!

quick facts on...

Recreational Use of Public Lands

Partnerships benefit all

AUGUST 2007

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.

Land and water - the link is undeniable. Acquiring sensitive land around water resources is a vital component in ecosystem restoration. To maintain healthy ecosystems, the South Florida Water Management District and other governmental agencies carry out programs to purchase land, manage it, and provide for public use opportunities, while protecting the natural and cultural features of the land.

Acquiring Land

Over the course of history, the South Florida Water Management District has acquired over 530,000 acres for conservation or the development of water resource improvement projects, not including the 800,000 acres in three water conservation areas. The benefits are far-reaching for the public and the environment. However, meeting the ever expanding demands of land stewardship presents a myriad of challenges for District staff. And doing it all on our own is not an option.

That's why the District's Land Management and Operations Department has partners, and plenty of them. Numerous agencies and organizations are currently cooperating with the SFWMD to implement public use programs. These include local government, state and federal agencies, public universities, and not-for-profit organizations, such as:

- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Florida Division of Forestry
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection



Bicycling is a great way to get in touch with nature.

- Orange, Osceola, Polk, Okeechobee, St. Lucie, Martin, Lee, Palm Beach, and Miami-Dade counties
- Florida Atlantic University's Center for Environmental Studies and Pine Jog Environmental Education Center
- The Florida Trail Association, CREW Trust, Audubon Society, and the Nature Conservancy

A Unified Goal

The goal of partnering entities is unified - that of preserving precious natural resources, while offering the public recreational use of acquired lands compatible with the purpose for which the land was purchased. Partners are sharing in the future destiny of their community or organization by helping to develop and maintain outdoor amenities, such as hiking, equestrian, and bicycling paths; forming greenway corridors that connect with larger land tracts; and meeting the needs of local comprehensive plan requirements for parks and open space.

Partnerships Around

Examples of successful partnering efforts on District lands include:

- **Tibet Butler Preserve** (Orange County) - an environmental education facility is managed by the county, as well as exotic vegetation treatment and maintenance of hiking trails and boardwalks.
- **Six Mile Cypress Slough** (Lee County) - the county controls exotic plants, offers environmental education, and coordinates a volunteer program.
- **DuPuis Management Area** (Center for Environmental Studies) - environmental education, a nature lecture series, special events, and coordination of a volunteer program are provided.
- **Stormwater Treatment Areas 5 and 1E** (Audubon Society and Pine Jog Environmental Education Center) - conduct birdwatching events for the public.
- **Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed** (CREW Trust) - environmental education, volunteer coordination and public use opportunities are offered.
- **Loxahatchee River** (Department of Environmental Protection and Palm Beach County) - SFWMD lands are managed along the river, including exotic plant control and hydrologic restoration.
- **Arthur R. Marshall National Wildlife Refuge** (US Fish and Wildlife Service) - Land management and recreational use opportunities are provided.
- **Water Conservation Areas 2 and 3, and Stormwater Treatment Areas 1W, 2, 3/4, and 5** (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) - provides recreational hunting opportunities.
- **Allapattah** (Martin County) - partnering for the development of public use access facilities.



Horseback riding in DuPuis



A view from the boardwalk at Corkscrew



Canoeing on the Loxahatchee River

Commitment to Public Use Access

In most cases, the District provides land and limited public access facilities. In some cases, the District has assisted with capital funding for additional improvements when partnering agencies have brought financial support to the table. Whatever the case might be, the SFWMD has a strong commitment to work together with other agencies and organizations so we can make things happen.

The District Governing Board approved a proactive policy in 2004 designed to ensure access to District lands. Everglades restoration projects will not only provide environmental benefits to South Florida but will also increase opportunities for nature-based recreational use by outdoor enthusiasts.

We thank our current partners for helping us maintain accessibility on SFWMD owned properties, adding public facilities, managing day-to-day activities, and offering expanded environmental education and outreach programs. And we also actively pursue additional partners to jump on the bandwagon. Finally, we encourage residents in our 16-county region from central Florida to the Florida Keys to come out and play on District lands.

To inquire about partnering with the SFWMD's Land Stewardship Division, contact Dan Cotter at 561-682-2301.



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SERVICE CENTERS

Big Cypress Basin/Naples
 239-263-7615
 Broward
 954-713-3200
 Florida Keys (Key Largo)
 305-853-3219
 Lower West Coast
 239-338-2929 or 800-248-1201

Martin/St. Lucie
 772-223-2600 or 800-250-4100
 Miami-Dade
 305-377-7274 or 800-250-4300
 Okeechobee
 863-462-5260 or 800-250-4200
 Orlando
 407-858-6100 or 800-250-4250
 Palm Beach County
 561-682-6000 or 800-432-2045