

## **Recreation Management and Partnership Plan**

### **Overview**

The South Florida Water Management District (District) is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources for over 5 million residents in central and southern Florida. It is the oldest and largest of the State's five water management districts serving a 16-county region that extends from Orlando in central Florida, south to Key West. The District's 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 District accomplishes its mission through an array of programs and projects.

An ancillary aspect to the mission is to provide and encourage public recreational activities on District lands as long as they are compatible and consistent with the primary purposes of the lands. Over the years the District has taken great strides to expand public recreational use opportunities on land purchased with public dollars. Additionally, as the agency continues its aggressive pace to acquire land for Everglades restoration and other ecosystem restoration and water resource projects, the District has taken a proactive approach to enhance the recreational use program throughout the 16-county jurisdiction.

State statutes mandate the District provide compatible public access and use of District lands. The District's Public Recreational Access and Use Policy adopted by the Governing Board in March of 2004 is a commitment to plan, manage, and promote public use of District lands according to that mandate. A primary goal of this Recreation Management and Partnership Plan is to provide objectives and strategies to further the directives set forth in the Policy and meet the growing recreational opportunities on District lands as a result of the District's restoration initiatives. This plan provides the District with a comprehensive planning tool to address existing and future recreation opportunities on District lands over the next five years (revised every five years).

Land resources available for public use which are managed by the District are generally divided into four category types; Rights-of-Way, Water Resource Management Project Lands (Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan , Acceler8, Northern Everglades, Everglades Program, and others), Conservation Lands (Save Our Rivers), and Interim Lands (future project lands). These land types can be quite unique in project purposes, environmental character, and managed under different District programs and processes. Public use and the allowable recreational opportunities can vary from land type to land type.

The compatible nature-based activities associated with recreation on District lands include, but are not limited to, hiking, biking, boating, canoeing, hunting, fishing, equestrian use, and camping. Management of these uses requires a strong commitment to a law enforcement program which enforces public use rules and regulations and protects natural resources. The rules and regulations for public access and use of District lands are primarily found in Chapter 40E-7, Part V, Florida Administrative Code and the State Hunting Regulations. District rules are established for the series of permitted and prohibited activities but also have the flexibility to allow for special uses to be permitted under controlled conditions. The District must rely on other state and local government agencies to enforce District regulations.

The District has a two-step strategy for accomplishing recreation objectives. The first step is to develop limited access and support facilities for nature-based recreation using dedicated Water Management Lands Trust Funds. For specialized uses such as hunting the District relies upon the assistance of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Compatible capital improvement projects provide only the essential infrastructure to meet the public's ability to access the site. Public use facilities will increase on District lands as more restoration projects are developed. On Federal sponsored projects cost-sharing opportunities exist for the development of recreation amenities. Acceler8 projects forecast and implement public use projects expecting to qualify for future cost-sharing.

The second component to the success of public recreation on District lands is the development of strong partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies and non-governmental or private organizations. Partnerships are critical for sustaining the site management, maintenance, and operation of facilities and programs associated with public use. The dedication of District funds and resources for the on-going operations and maintenance of recreation facilities may become a limiting factor without partnerships. An integration of state and local government recreation master plans and the establishment of local partnerships early in the planning process of project implementation can be beneficial and cost effective to planning and constructing public use facilities. Furthermore, partnerships, including volunteers, may provide additional recreational service benefits to the public including educational and outreach opportunities.

A summary of the key objectives of the Recreation Management and Partnership Plan are listed on page 53.

The Draft Recreation Management and Partnership Plan tentative review schedule is as follows:

- Public and Agency Review and Input- April-July, 2007
- Presented at the Water Resources Advisory Commission Recreational Issues Workshop- April 16, 2007 and June 28, 2007
- Review at the Water Resources Advisory Commission Recreational Issues Workshop- August 13, 2007
- Present at the Water Resources Advisory Commission after input and revisions- September, 2007
- Request South Florida Water Management District Governing Board adoption- October, 2007

To make comments to the Draft Plan or for any additional information please e-mail [dcotter@sfwmd.gov](mailto:dcotter@sfwmd.gov) or mail comments to:  
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Comments to the Draft Plan are due on or before July 31, 2007.

*[To review the District's Draft Recreation Management and Partnership Plan Click Here](#)*