



Legacy Environmental Education Program
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What is Legacy?



- Hands-on program connecting water resource & environmental education with land management activities
 - Partners schools with nearby public lands
 - Provides outdoor learning experiences for students
 - Utilizes agency expertise in land management, water resource and environmental science

Legacy Program Background

- Developed in 1993 at St. Johns Water Management District

- Similar programs:
 - Department of Environmental Protection “LIFE” program (*Learning in Florida’s Environment*)
 - Southwest Florida Water Management District grant program



Legacy Key Features



- **Multiple visits by the same group of students**
- **Involvement of technical specialists (land managers, scientists, engineers)**
- **Activities leave a “legacy” on the property**
 - **Bird counts, wildlife surveys, water & soil monitoring, kiosks, nature trails, plant guidebooks**
 - **Cascade teaching to younger students**

Keys to Success

- **Proximity of school to District property**
- **Appropriate on-site facilities (shelters, restrooms)**
- **Assistance with logistical support (transportation, substitute teachers)**
- **Flexibility to accommodate teacher interests/ classroom needs**
- **Supportive school administration**



District-Managed Lands & Public Access



- Across the District's 16 counties, SFWMD has land management responsibilities on approximately 1.6 million acres.
- Public access has expanded significantly over the past decade.
 - Parking areas, signage
73 trailheads, 3,912 signs
 - Boat ramps, pavilions
19 boat ramps, 14 picnic shelters
 - Hunting opportunities
19 hunting areas open
 - Recreation Guide publication,
new website features

Water Resource & Environmental Education on District Lands



- Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem (CREW)
- DuPuis Management Area
- Loxahatchee Impoundment Landscape Assessment (LILA)
- Osceola Environmental Study Center
- Riverwoods – Kissimmee River Valley
- Six-Mile Cypress Slough Interpretive Center
- Oxbow Eco Center
- Labelle Nature Park
- Tibet Butler Preserve (Vera Carter Environmental Center)
- Reedy Creek Center with Osceola School Board
- Okeechobee High School Ag. Farm
- Hunters Creek Middle School partnership at Shingle Creek
- Riverbend Park

Additional Water Resource & Environmental Education

- **Teacher training workshops (Great Water Odyssey; Everglades: An American Treasure)**
- **Delivering presentations to school children throughout the year (100+)**
- **Participating in science fairs and envirothons (31)**
- **Providing small grants to schools for water conservation demonstration projects/field experiences**



Legacy Goals

- **Strengthen connection of District lands with water resource and environmental education**
- **Provide communities with new opportunities on public lands**
- **Enhance environmental stewardship in youth**
- **Encourage recreational use of public lands**
- **Build awareness and support for the purpose of District properties**



Pilot Legacy Sites (Phase 1)



- **CREW (Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Wetlands)**
- **DuPuis Management Area**
- **LILA (Loxahatchee Impoundment Landscape Assessment)**
- **Osceola Environmental Study Center**



Pilot Legacy Sites



- **Educating students for more than a decade**
 - Reaching 9 counties
 - 30 high schools
 - 10,000+ students annually (K-12)
- **Potential activities include:**
 - Bird patrol field study
 - Data & photo documentation of palmetto regrowth
 - Surveys of aquatic invertebrates

Next Steps

- ✓ **Project charter**
- ✓ **Implementation team**
 - **Outreach to expand relationships with school boards, teachers, potential local partners**
 - **Develop & finalize site-specific activities in collaboration with local high schools**
 - **Tap staff expertise for activity support**
 - **Host kick-off events**



Future Opportunities

- **Phase 2: Add three sites**
 - **Riverwoods—Okeechobee County along the Kissimmee River**
 - **Oxbow Eco-Center—St. Lucie County**
 - **STA-5—Hendry County**
- **Phase 3: Grant program**
 - **Promotes teacher-initiated activities**
 - **Expands geographic reach of Legacy**





Questions?

And thank you.