



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

July 15, 2011

CONTACT:

Gabe Margasak

South Florida Water Management District

Office: (561) 682-2800 or Cellular: (561) 670-1245

www.sfwmd.gov/news

follow us on 

SFWMD Adds Access to CREW with Bird Rookery Swamp Trailhead *Rookery, Corkscrew ecosystem are popular public recreational spots*



(Click on the picture for a larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL — Bird watchers and outdoor enthusiasts alike have a new gateway into the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) management area in Southwest Florida.

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has completed an access enhancement to the popular Bird Rookery Swamp, opening a southern entrance point for the public to CREW. The work is part of the District's overall effort to facilitate recreational use of public land.

"Restoration often leads to new recreational opportunities, and the Bird Rookery Swamp trailhead and access to CREW is an example of this synergy," said Tommy Strowd, SFWMD Director of the Operations, Maintenance and Construction Division. "We will continue to take advantage of opportunities to increase access to public land so long as it is compatible with restoration and management objectives."

The rookery's new features include:

- Ample parking
- Informational kiosks
- Upgraded access to the existing boardwalk
- Americans with Disabilities Act compliant facilities, including a wheelchair access trail

Encompassing 7,017 acres, the Bird Rookery Swamp Management Unit is managed by the District in cooperation with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The site is a key component in maintaining the hydrological balance of the greater Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed.

The District and its partners – representing businesses, environmental groups, landowners and governmental agencies – manage CREW for its numerous benefits to water storage, wildlife preservation and public recreation opportunities. The 60,000-acre watershed spanning Lee and Collier counties includes a majestic 5,000-acre marsh at its headwaters and the famous Audubon Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.

The vast majority of Bird Rookery Swamp features forested wetland dominated by bald cypress and red maple trees. There is also a mix of wet flatwoods and dome swamps bordering the western edge and an area of open marsh, dominated by sawgrass and Carolina willow in the center tract.

Many threatened and endangered plants and animals call Bird Rookery Swamp home. Florida panthers, black bears, white-tail deer, alligators and a menagerie of birds are just a sampling of Florida's native species utilizing the area.

Bird Rookery Swamp is also a great place for visitors to experience a glimpse of "Old Florida." Recreational opportunities such as biking, hiking and nature appreciation are allowed throughout the property. There is a 1,400-foot boardwalk near the public parking area that connects to a 12-mile loop of tram roads through some of the most beautiful natural habitats found in Southwest Florida.

To date, the District has opened 621,000 acres of land to the public. Many of these properties are in their natural state or have basic enhancements such as informational kiosks and hiking trails. For more information on recreational opportunities throughout the District's 16-county region, visit www.sfwmd.gov/recreation.

#

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.