splash!

quick facts on...

# Recreation Opportunities in Stormwater Treatment Areas

OCTOBER 2008

***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.*

With their vivid red and pink feathers, adult roseate spoonbills are easy visual targets for even novice bird-watchers making their first foray into a constructed wetland.

But more recreational experiences including walking, sightseeing, and hunting, are waiting for day trippers to several of these unique wetlands designed by the South Florida Water Management District to aid in Everglades restoration.

## How a Stormwater Treatment Area Works

The key purpose of stormwater treatment areas is to remove phosphorus from urban and agricultural runoff flowing into the Everglades. Too much of the nutrient phosphorus promotes an overgrowth of plant life and alters the habitat that Florida's native plants and animals need to thrive.

Stormwater treatment areas remove phosphorus from runoff water by channeling it through shallow marshes filled with aquatic plants like cattail, southern naiad and algae. These plants take up or absorb phosphorus from water traveling through, reducing to very low levels the amount of the nutrients reaching the Everglades.

Plants in the stormwater treatment area keep working even after they die. Cattail plants remove phosphorus from decomposing leaves that become wetland sediments. Finally, the limestone layer beneath the sediment absorbs and holds phosphorus, providing decades of phosphorus storage.

## Recreation at Stormwater Treatment Areas

Stormwater treatment areas provide another bonus – prime home and visiting territory to wildlife including wading birds, ducks and American alligators.

The South Florida Water Management District welcomes guided visitors to Stormwater Treatment Area 5 for seasonal bird-watching tours guided by local Audubon members. It isn't unusual to spot roseate spoonbills, fulvuous and black bellied whistling ducks, wood storks, white pelicans and other birds.

Passive use including bicycling, hiking, nature photography and bird-watching is allowed at several stormwater treatment areas. Waterfowl and alligator hunting also are permitted in some stormwater treatment areas during weekends designated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

## Where to Go and What to Do

**Stormwater Treatment Area 1 East (STA 1E)** in Palm Beach County features a public access point for hiking, bicycling and bird-watching, plus paved parking, an information kiosk and a composting toilet. Catch and release fishing is allowed from the banks inside the levees. The recreation area is open from sunrise to sunset on weekends (Fridays through Mondays). Boating is not permitted.

**Stormwater Treatment Area 1 West (STA 1W)** in Palm Beach County features a public access point with a 200-foot bird-watching platform and gazebos overlooking the wetland. Hikers, bicyclers and bird-watchers can use the three-mile levee trail. The recreation area is open from sunrise to sunset on weekends (Fridays through Mondays). On designated weekends the area is open for waterfowl and alligator hunts managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, **http://myfwc.com/hunting/** or call **(561) 625-5122**.

**Harold A. Campbell Public Use Facility at Stormwater Treatment Area 3/4 (STA 3/4)** in Palm Beach County features information kiosks, paved parking, concrete sidewalks and restrooms for hikers, bicyclers and bird-watchers. A public dual-lane boat ramp offers access to 27 miles of perimeter canals. The recreation area is open from sunrise to sunset on weekends (Fridays through Mondays). The boat ramp is open seven days a week. On designated weekends in areas separate from public use areas, waterfowl hunts are managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, **http://myfwc.com/hunting/** or call **(561) 625-5122**.

**Taylor Creek Stormwater Treatment Area** in Okeechobee County features thatched-roof chickee huts and a three-mile levee trail open for hiking, bicycling and bird-watching. This recreational area includes a gravel parking lot and composting toilet, and is open from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week. It is maintained by Okeechobee County, **(863) 763-6950**.

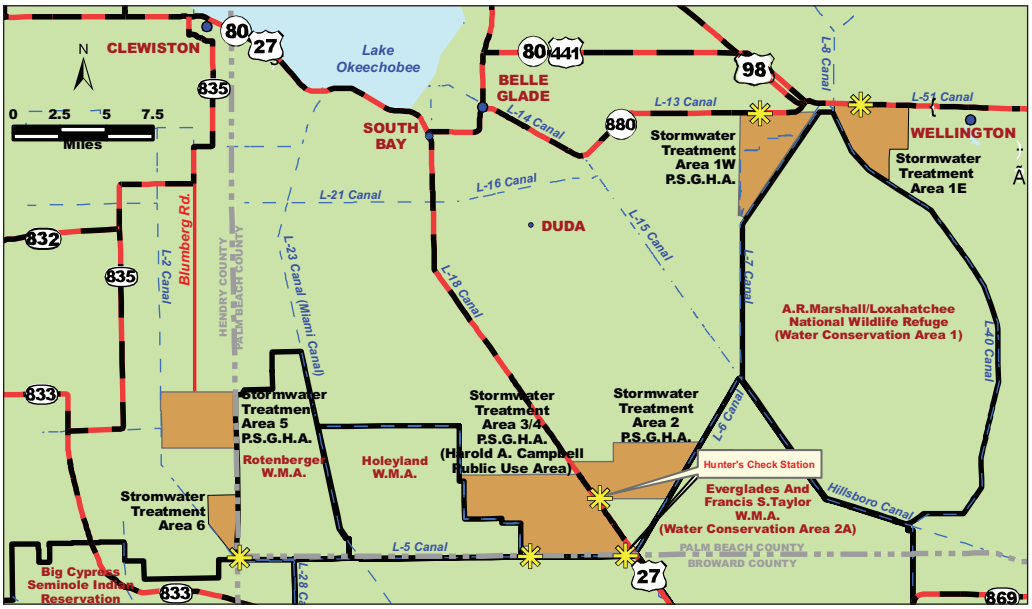
**Stormwater Treatment Area 5 (STA 5)** in Hendry County is not open for daily passive use. Seasonal bird-watching tours are offered by the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society, **http://www.orgsites.com/fl/hgaudubon/**. On designated weekends, the area is open for waterfowl and alligator hunts managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, **http://myfwc.com/hunting/** or call **(561) 625-5122**.

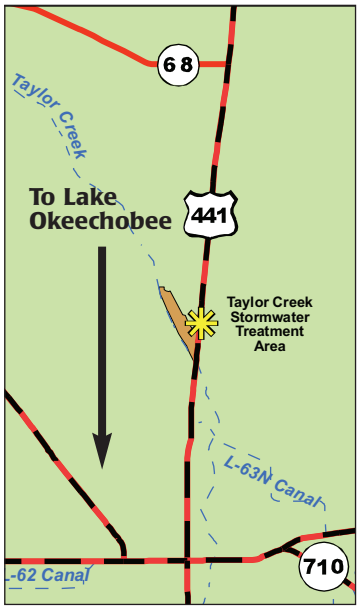
***Stormwater Treatment Area 6 (STA 6)** in Hendry County is open for passive activities including hiking, bicycling and bird-watching from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week.

***Stormwater Treatment Area 2 (STA 2)** in Palm Beach County is open only for seasonal waterfowl hunts managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, **http://myfwc.com/hunting/** or call **(954) 746-1789**.

For additional information about these and other recreational opportunities, see the South Florida Water Management District Recreation Guide, online at: **www.sfwmd.gov/recreation**, or call the recreation line, **(866)433-6312**.

**closed for construction.*

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**SERVICE CENTERS**

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*Florida Keys (Key Largo)*
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*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
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407-858-6100 or 800-250-4250
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