



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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Legacy Program Transforms DuPuis into a Classroom

SFWMD's hands-on education program introduces high school students to public lands



(Left) SFWMD Governing Board member Kevin Powers speaks with Clark Advanced Learning Center students participating in the Legacy program at DuPuis Management Area. (Right) Students prepare to identify and count plants growing within a one-square-meter sampling area at DuPuis.

Canal Point, FL – High school students from Clark Advanced Learning Center recently spent a day identifying grasses, shrubs and vines at the DuPuis Management Area to experience science in action through Legacy, a new South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) environmental education program.

The hands-on program connects water resource and environmental education with land management activities. Legacy partners local high schools with District-managed public lands, where teachers and students learn by collecting information that will add to the knowledge and experience relied on by District land managers to make real-world decisions.

“Legacy is giving students in Martin and St. Lucie counties the opportunity to experience the same lands that I enjoyed while growing up in this area,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Kevin Powers. “We hope this educational program creates a bond between students and these natural areas – and maybe even inspires some of them to become land managers.”

Originally developed by the St. Johns River Water Management District, the Legacy program utilizes the SFWMD's expertise in land management, water resource and environmental science to create classroom-specific activities tailored to certain sites. The goals of the program include:

- Strengthening the connection of District lands with water resource and environmental education
- Providing communities with new opportunities to benefit from public lands
- Enhancing environmental stewardship in youth
- Encouraging recreational use of public lands

The 12 Clark Advanced Learning Center students participating in Legacy at DuPuis are taking an environmental science class through a dual-enrollment program offered by their school and Indian River State College. On their recent visit, the students were trying to determine what types of plants were growing within a one-square-meter sampling area thick with saw palmetto.

Junior Brayton Bass said he first joined Legacy because it will help him earn community service credits, but his motivation quickly changed.

"Once I got out here, I realized it was a pretty unique experience," Bass said. "You don't get a lot of nature up around Hobe Sound and Jupiter."

Information collected by students about the "whats and wheres" of plant communities at DuPuis will help land managers build a picture of how habitats respond to management efforts, including prescribed burning, hydrologic restoration and exotic plant control. The students will visit DuPuis a few times a year to gather data and then share their results with the District.

Through Legacy, students can interact with the environment in a way that inspires them to value South Florida's conservation lands and encourage others to do the same, said Dan Thayer, SFWMD Director of the Vegetation and Land Management Department.

The 22,000-acre DuPuis Management Area in western Martin County is one of four sites around the 16-county District that will be part of the Legacy program in 2010-2011. The multi-use natural area is interspersed with numerous ponds, wet prairies, cypress domes, pine flatwoods and remnant Everglades marsh. The other three Legacy sites for 2010-2011 are:

- **Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) Marsh** – Lee and Collier counties
- **Loxahatchee Impoundment Landscape Assessment (LILA)** – Palm Beach County

- **Reedy Creek, Osceola Environmental Studies Center – Osceola County**

For more information on the Legacy program, please visit the District's Educational Programs [website](#) or read this [fact sheet](#).

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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.