



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD, Martin County Expand Recreation Access at Pal-Mar East
Horseback riding and hiking are popular at the expanse near the Martin/Palm Beach county line



*Original parking area (left); expanded parking area (right).
(Click on the pictures for larger versions.)*

West Palm Beach, FL — The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and its partners in Martin County are enhancing public access to a unique recreation area known as Pal-Mar East. The main feature of the expansion is more public parking access for activities such as horseback riding and hiking.

“This is a beautiful slice of Florida preserved for the environment and the public,” said SFWMD Governing Board Vice Chairman Kevin Powers. “Expanding access to the site is a prime example of how this agency works with partners such as Martin County to enhance recreational access to conservation land so the public can enjoy the outdoors.”

Located near the Martin/Palm Beach county line, Pal-Mar East was acquired jointly by the District, Martin County and the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Wetlands Reserve Program in 2006. Developing recreational access has been an important component of the overall management of the 2,800-acre property.

“Martin County is committed to restoring sensitive environmental lands like Pal-Mar East,” said Martin County Commissioner Patrick Hayes, whose district includes Pal-Mar East. “Significant progress has been made in restoring adjacent properties, such as the area formerly known as Nine Gems and Cypress Creek. In cooperation with SFWMD, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Palm Beach County, we are giving the public access to a wide variety of recreational activities.”

At Pal-Mar East, a trailhead was originally developed with a small parking lot for six vehicles. As the management area gained popularity, especially with equestrians, the District and Martin County identified the need to expand the parking area to increase access for horse trailers. The parking extension is part of site improvements that include marking of an approximately 7-mile hiking trail, which is under way.

This work is the result of a cooperative agreement between the District and Martin County to develop and maintain recreational amenities on public lands, including Pal-Mar East, Allapattah Flats and Cypress Creek.

“Pal-Mar East offers visitors a wonderful glimpse into undeveloped Floridian pine flatwoods and marsh habitats and the abundant wildlife they sustain. It is always rewarding to expand the public's access to the conservation lands they own,” said Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard, who also serves on the Pal-Mar Water Control District Board of Supervisors.

Throughout South Florida, the District provides recreational access to its public lands while continuing to manage them to support environmental restoration, water supply, water quality and flood control missions. At present, the District owns 621,000 acres of land that are open to the public. Many of these properties are in their natural state or have enhancements such as picnic tables, informational kiosks, primitive campsites and hiking trails.

For more information on recreational opportunities throughout the District’s 16-county region, visit www.sfwmd.gov/recreation.

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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.