



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD Recognized for Support of Youth Recreation on Public Lands *Outdoor programs foster appreciation for Florida's natural areas*



(Click on the images to view the Recreation Guide to SFWMD public land or a recreation activity search.)

West Palm Beach, FL — In a first for a government agency, the Florida Sportsmen's Conservation Association recently recognized the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) with its yearly youth award for the agency's continued support of recreational activities on public conservation land.

"Fostering an appreciation for the outdoors, especially for young people, is a valuable component of our conservation efforts," said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Joe Collins. "By providing access to public lands managed for restoration, we are creating a variety of educational and unique South Florida outdoor experiences."

With its Jack Bylsma III Youth Award, the sportsmen's association recognized the District's partnership in several outings under the Youth Hunting Program of Florida. The award is given either to a youth under the age of 21 or an organization that has made a contribution toward improving sportsmanship or the cause of conservation.

“The District has been a valued partner in the growth of the Youth Hunting Program of Florida,” said Bishop Wright Jr., an honorary lifetime board member and past president of the Florida Sportsmen’s Conservation Association. “We’re excited for what the future holds for these young folks.”

Administered by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the Youth Hunting Program of Florida teaches young Florida residents between 12 and 17 years old how to hunt safely, legally and ethically. Among its many goals, the program seeks to foster an appreciation for Florida’s natural areas while emphasizing the need for conservation. Participants learn these values through camping, outdoor and environmental education and other related activities, in addition to hunting.

Earlier this year, the FWC also recognized the District with an award for its continued partnership in the program.

“This is another great example of our valuable partnership with the South Florida Water Management District,” said FWC Vice-Chairwoman Kathy Barco. “We greatly appreciate efforts by the District to provide access to these public lands in a way that supports connecting youth and families to conservation.”

Since 2011, the District has supported seven youth outings as part of the FWC program on public land the agency manages in areas such as the Everglades Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs). The program has included turkey, deer and hog hunts on Grassy Island in Okeechobee County, near the Taylor Creek STA, and alligator hunts in STA-2 in southern Palm Beach County. Several future outings are planned under the program.

The District provides recreational access to 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.