Ancient Marine Reptiles Hit The Beaches
Palm Beach County Sea Turtle Nesting Season Update

We are halfway through the 2017 sea turtle nesting season. The biggest story so far is the record-breaking number of green sea turtles nesting throughout Florida. Palm Beach County could be on track to break the previous record of 9,554 green sea turtle nests set in 2015. The evidence of their nightly visits to our shoreline can be observed each morning as beaches throughout the county are covered in sea turtle tracks.

All of Palm Beach County’s nesting sea turtles are protected. Here are a few things you can do to help keep these awesome reptiles safe:

SEa Turtles Need Dark Skies
Reduce sea turtle disorientation by turning off unnecessary lights during nesting season (March 1 through October 31). Use energy efficient amber LED bulbs for outdoor lighting to save money and sea turtles.

Be Careful When Digging on the Beach
Most sea turtle nests are dug in areas above the high tide line. The eggs are deposited 18 inches below the sand surface. To avoid disturbing the nests, please dig holes and build sandcastles below the high tide line. Don’t forget to fill the holes in before you leave the beach so they don’t trap nesting females or hatchlings.

Keep the Beach Clean
Beach furniture can be a hazard for nesting sea turtles. Please remove these items at night or store at the toe of the dune. Dispose of trash in appropriate containers and recycle all plastics and fishing line.

By Ann Mathews

Visit discover.pbcgov.org/erm/pages/Sea-Turtle.aspx for more information about Palm Beach County’s sea turtles.
The Grass Is Always Greener ...
West Palm Beach Living Shoreline Program Update

By Eric Anderson

It has been four months since volunteers planted thousands of mangrove seedlings and Spartina grass plugs in planters off of Currie and Osprey Parks in Lake Worth Lagoon. Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management staff inspected the planters in July and found the grasses and mangroves thriving. Unlike seawalls, which offer little in the way of food or shelter for wildlife, living shorelines merge erosion control with habitat creation. They have an attractive natural appearance, provide essential habitat for fish, and create feeding areas for wading birds. Another living shoreline project is under construction at Bryant Park. For information about the Currie and Osprey Parks living shoreline projects, visit http://discover.pbcgov.org/erm/Publications/CurrieParkRestoration.pdf.

Artificial Reef Program Update

In 2016 the Andrew Red Harris Foundation donated 100 artificial reef modules to the Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management for deployment offshore of Jupiter.

American Oystercatchers in Lake Worth Lagoon

Department of Environmental Resources Management (ERM) staff were excited to see three American oystercatcher chicks walking the shoreline of one of ERM’s created islands in central Lake Worth Lagoon. American oystercatchers feed on mollusks, worms, and insects. Their bright reddish-orange bills are used like shucking tools to open oyster shells. They nest in shallow scrapes in the sand. American oystercatchers are listed as Threatened by the state of Florida. Coastal development has resulted in widespread habitat loss, leaving few suitable breeding sites for these birds. ERM’s restoration work within Lake Worth Lagoon greatly benefits these beautiful shorebirds. Learn more about American oystercatchers at www.myfwc.com.
The Department of Environmental Resources Management (ERM), along with Palm Beach County’s Youth Services, began a summer internship program for students ages 17 to 22. The goal is to inspire and mentor young adults by giving them first-hand experience doing “green” jobs that preserve, protect, and enhance Palm Beach County’s land and water resources. Over the course of four weeks, interns worked alongside ERM staff doing a little bit of everything: learning about South Florida ecosystems, identifying plants and animals in natural areas and Lake Worth Lagoon, conducting environmental surveys, working with laboratory equipment, assisting with education and outreach, trying out graphic design programs, and general office work such as scanning, filing, and organizing. Eight interns participated in this first year of the Green Futures program and from all accounts enjoyed the opportunity. Each intern was required to keep a field journal outlining their observations and recording their comments about each day’s events. This successful program will continue in 2018.

"I had many opportunities to learn more about my environment and was exposed to some really cool experiences. It was a nice way to spend my Summer!"

Daniela
The 2017 Lake Worth Lagoon Fishing Challenge is officially in the books! Between May 26 and July 9, over 80 youth and adult anglers registered to participate in the 2nd annual fishing tournament. The challenge, presented by the Lake Worth Lagoon Initiative and sponsored by Snook and Gamefish Foundation, West Palm Beach Fishing Club and Coastal Angler Magazine, was a huge success. Eighty anglers logged 1,528 catches representing 58 fish species.

Sportfish and interesting species caught by participants included common snook, redfish, bluefish, black sea bass and tripletail. Data collected during the challenge, including fish species, size and location, will be utilized by Department of Environmental Resources Management (ERM) staff to help evaluate the health of Lake Worth Lagoon fisheries. The data will also be used to plan and manage existing and future restoration projects.

An awards ceremony was held at the West Palm Beach Fishing Club on July 13, 2017. The event included a presentation about the Lake Worth Lagoon and ongoing restoration efforts and an awards ceremony. Individual awards for adult and youth anglers, plus overall and sportfish winners, were presented, along with weekly participation and door prizes. With the total number of fish caught in 2017 more than tripling the final catch log from 2016, we expect the 2018 challenge to be even bigger.

By Matt Mitchell
Learning About Lake Worth Lagoon
Staff Participate in 30th Annual Kids Fishing Days

The 30th Annual Kids Fishing Days, sponsored by the West Palm Beach Fishing Club and Palm Beach County Fishing Foundation, was held at Lake Park Harbor Marina in late July. This meaningful and rewarding three-day event brings kids out to Lake Worth Lagoon to experience the wonder of nature and the joy of fishing. This year approximately 350 kids from ages 8 to 14 took part in the event. For many of the kids and chaperones, it was a memorable first-time experience to learn about Lake Worth Lagoon ecosystems, receive quality fishing instruction, ride on a boat in the ocean, see and touch marine life and “catch and release” their very first fish!

Department of Environmental Resources Management (ERM) staff and interns shared their knowledge of Lake Worth Lagoon plants and animals with the kids. This was a unique opportunity for the enthusiastic Green Futures interns to teach and engage the kids with hands-on displays, pictures and prizes. It was worth suffering through three days of extreme heat to give these children a better understanding of our unique marine environments and why it is important to protect the ocean and Lake Worth Lagoon.

By Alicia Andersen

Visit http://discover.pbcgov.org/erm/Pages/Lake-Worth-Lagoon.aspx for more information about Palm Beach County’s largest estuary.

How big is a manatee? THIS BIG!
Five special visitors arrived at Winding Waters Natural Area in West Palm Beach during the last week in July and the first week in August. They came from all corners of the state: Jacksonville, The Villages in central Florida, and Dade County. Unlike other visitors, they plan to make Winding Waters their new home. These new residents are gopher tortoises from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s (FWC) Waif Gopher Tortoise Program. This program, established in 2012, relocates gopher tortoises removed from the wild by people not associated with FWC’s permitted relocation effort. These tortoises are usually from unknown sites and cannot be returned to their original locations. Winding Waters Natural Area, with its slash pine forests, has the right habitat for gopher tortoises. A section of the natural area was secured with barriers to protect relocated gopher tortoises. To help the gopher tortoises get used to their new surroundings, starter burrows were dug. The natural area is permitted to receive 100 waif gopher tortoises, so these first five tortoises will soon have many more neighbors!

By Ann Mathews
ERM VOLUNTEERS ARE THE BEST!

The numbers have been crunched and the results are outstanding! During April, May and June, Department of Environmental Resources Management volunteers donated 504 labor hours to help preserve Palm Beach County’s precious environment. More than 180 volunteers worked on 19 projects in county-owned natural areas and restoration areas. They removed 6,900 pounds of trash and planted 1,000 red mangroves in Lake Worth Lagoon.

By Ann Mathews

Top: Volunteers removed 880 pounds of trash during the Great American Cleanup event at Jupiter Ridge Natural Area in April.

Middle Left: Members of Cub Scout Pack 274 and their parents removed trash from Hypoluxo Scrub Natural Area in June.

Middle Right: Students from Don Estridge High Tech Middle School planted 1,000 red mangrove seedlings at Ibis Isle in Lake Worth Lagoon.

Bottom Left: A door was found by volunteers during a cleanup at Pine Glades Natural Area in April. More than 1,100 pounds of trash was removed during the event.

Bottom Right: Volunteers show off the trash removed from the Rosemary Scrub Natural Area parking lot during a cleanup event in May.

Online Construction & CCNA Contract Advertising Update

Palm Beach County departments began advertising business opportunities in a centralized on-line Vendor Self Service System (VSS) on July 31. The Department of Environmental Resources Management encourages vendors to register on VSS. You must include an email address and commodity codes of your goods and/or services. Only vendors registered for the solicited commodity codes will receive notification emails of new bids and addenda.

Don’t forget to add our email (pbcvendor@pbcgov.org) to your safe addresses to ensure that your SPAM software does not quarantine county notification emails. Visit https://pbcvssp.co.palm-beach.fl.us/webapp/vssp/AltSelfService to create or update your vendor account. Instructions are on the right side of the VSS page. Email questions about Vendor Registration to pbcvendor@pbcgov.org.

By Julie Aden