

**Report on the South Florida Water Management District's
May 26, 2005 Public Workshop on Rule Development for Public Recreation Access**

I attended the public workshop held at the Lower West Coast Service Center from 6:30 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. along with approximately 50 other members of the public.

Fred Davis, Director of the District's Land Stewardship Division, explained that the District is embarking on a program to establish a rule-based program for access and use of all lands owned and managed by the District. Several well known areas are owned, but not managed by, the District – Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve and the Okaloacoochee Slough, for example. These areas will not be affected by this program. The workshop was one of five taking place across the District in May and June to explain what the District is planning to do and to gather input from interested members of the public before the formal rule making process begins (in September). Between now and August, District personnel will develop a draft rule which will be presented to the Water Resources Advisory Commission in August and to the Governing Board in September. The District hopes the rule making process will proceed smoothly so that the Governing Board can adopt a rule in January of 2006.

The District believes that enactment of a rule will provide the following benefits:

- ◆ Provide certainty regarding approved recreational uses
- ◆ Reduce user conflicts through balanced recreation
- ◆ Protect natural resources
- ◆ Protect the District's mission

The District categorizes the public lands as follows: Vacant/Undesignated, Rights of Way (canals and levees), Constructed Wetlands (stormwater treatment areas and impoundments) and Conservation Lands. The chart below summarizes what the District is currently proposing with regard to permitted and prohibited activities on each type of land.

	Vacant/Undesignated*		Rights of Way		Constructed Wetlands		Conservation Lands	
	Permitted	Prohibited	Permitted	Prohibited	Permitted	Prohibited	Permitted	Prohibited
Hiking	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Camping		✓		✓		✓	✓*****	
Fishing	✓		✓		✓**		✓	
Bicycling	✓		✓		✓***		✓***	
Horseback Riding	✓		✓		✓***		✓***	
Canoeing	✓		✓			✓	✓	
Kayaking	✓		✓			✓	✓	
Motorboating		✓	✓			✓	✓	
Airboating		✓	✓			✓	✓	
Hunting		✓		✓	✓*****		✓*****	
Motorized Street Vehicle		✓		✓		✓	✓*****	
OHV		✓		✓		✓		✓

* Daylight Hours Only

** Catch and Release (due to DEP and EPA permit criteria)

*** Designated Trails Only

**** As Authorized by the FFCC

***** Only at Designated Campsites

***** Limited to Designated Roads

It is important to note that exceptions can be granted on a case by case basis, depending on how a particular activity is deemed to be consistent (or inconsistent) with the management plan for each District property. District personnel expressed a strong desire to work with members of the public to increase use of District lands. Many people present indicated a great desire to have OHV use permitted in the District's Conservation Lands.

The District would like to receive comments on the proposed uses by July 1st. Comments should be addressed to BJ Kattel at bjkattel@sfwmd.gov (800) 432-2045, ext. 6640.