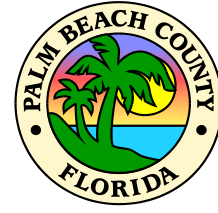




Lake Worth Lagoon E-News



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WHAT WE'RE DOING

- **Environmental Enhancement Status Reports** Find the latest information on recent restoration efforts.
- **Environmental Times** Read the latest issue of PBC ERM's Newsletter.

LEARN ABOUT THE LAGOON

- Lovin' the Lake Worth Lagoon Presentation, October 8 at 3:00 pm at FAU's **Pine Jog Environmental Center**. For more information contact Tracey Ritchie, at 686-6600 ext. 419 or tritchi1@fau.edu
- Visit the **Lake Worth Lagoon** web page.

VOLUNTEER

- **International Coastal Cleanup** Volunteer on September 20th.
- **Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program** Contact Christy Hudak at 561-575-5407 ext. 12 or Christy.Hudak@myfwc.com

Flowering Underwater Plants in the Lagoon: Seagrass

Just below the water's surface you'll find underwater flowering plants growing in the Lake Worth Lagoon. These highly productive and ecologically important plants, seagrass, create habitats that provide a nursery area for juvenile fish and shellfish with commercial and recreational fishing value. Their roots capture sediments which help increase water clarity and their blades provide a great spot for tiny plant and animal organisms to attach. Endangered manatees and green sea turtles feed directly on seagrass and birds use the seagrass beds as regular feeding grounds. While seagrass does provide a valuable food source in the lagoon, it may be more important to the food web when it decomposes. Dead, decaying plant matter forms the base of the food chain and is an important food source for crustaceans, worms, mollusks, and mullet.

The Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management has conducted seagrass monitoring since the year 2000. Nine imaginary lines drawn through the lagoon called transects help biologists monitor seagrass beds along the lines over time. Seven years of surveys have shown fluctuations in seagrass cover with no obvious pattern of increase or decrease – until the hurricanes of 2004 (Charley, Frances, and Jeanne). In June 2005, monitoring results revealed a major decrease in seagrass cover in most areas of the lagoon. The loss was likely caused by an increased amount of sediment in the water, a result of increased stormwater runoff from the hurricanes, increased freshwater discharges from Lake Okeechobee and the West Palm Beach Canal (C-51), and bottom sediment resuspended from wave action. The 2007 and 2008 monitoring efforts suggest that the seagrass beds have returned to conditions previously observed before the storms and seagrasses have increased in both density and coverage. The 2007 aerial mapping estimates that seagrass beds cover at least 1,688 acres or almost 22% of the lagoon.

Learn more about the six seagrass species found in the lagoon, trends over time, and view a map of seagrass bed locations on our website at: <http://www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/erm/lakes/estuarine/lake-worth-lagoon/>

Did You Know? Fascinating Facts About the Lagoon

An American oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*) was observed feeding with his parents along the mudflats at Snook Islands Natural Area in the Lake Worth Lagoon. This is the second year in a row that an oystercatcher has fledged from this location! It's even more exciting when you consider there is no previous record of American oystercatchers nesting in Palm Beach County.

True to its name, this large coastal shorebird uses its striking orange bill to feed on oysters, clams, mussels, crabs, marine worms, and other invertebrates. Oystercatchers nest in Florida between March and July, typically inhabiting isolated beaches, dredged-material islands, and shell bars. A shallow nest is scraped into the substrate above the high-tide line and typically 2 or 3 eggs are laid. Both mom and dad incubate the eggs for 25 to 27 days, and the young take their first flight at about 35 days of age. Oystercatchers are listed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission as a Species of Special Concern in Florida as a result of habitat loss and disturbance due to intensive beach development and concentrated human recreation.



American oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*)

Source: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. 2003, January 6. Florida's breeding bird atlas: A collaborative study of Florida's birdlife. <http://www.myfwc.com/bba/> (Date accessed 8/13/2008).

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