

Washburn Cove Sanctuary Public Access Plan

Site Summary

The Washburn Cove Sanctuary is a 39-acre site consisting of parcels located west of State Highway A1A in unincorporated Melbourne Beach, Brevard County, Florida. Although the Washburn Cove Sanctuary is not directly adjacent to other conservation lands, a number of conservation and recreation properties, that offer access to similar habitats, are located in the vicinity of the Sanctuary. The Washburn Cove Sanctuary is a Category 3 or Primary Research and Conservation Site as defined in EEL Program's Sanctuary Management Manual and thus is not expected to undergo significant development other than boundary posting. The sanctuary is bordered on all sides by private homes/properties. The Sanctuary consists of maritime hammock, hydric hammock and tidal swamp habitats.

Passive Recreation Definition

To the extent they do not interfere with biological management goals, EEL sanctuaries provide a range of passive recreation opportunities for the public. As a general guideline for EEL Program management decisions, passive recreation is defined as, "a recreational type of use, level and combination of uses that do not individually, or collectively, degrade the resource values, biological diversity, and aesthetic or environmental qualities of a site."

Before developing a site public access plan, staff conducts a Public Access Site Assessment. From this assessment, the types and extent of activities can be determined with the goal to balance human use with the protection of natural resources. Items considered during the assessment include, environmental, cultural, recreational and educational resources, stakeholder interests, potential conflicts, universal access, connections to other recreational resources, and potential management and/or maintenance conflicts and constraints.

Activities that allow for the quiet enjoyment of nature are conducive to EEL Program goals. Common activities on EEL sanctuaries are hiking, biking, kayaking, (catch and release?) fishing, and equestrian use. Activities and uses that are generally not allowed on EEL sanctuaries without permit include, but are not limited to: motorized vehicles, smoking, overnight use, commercial use, hunting / shooting sports, removal of plants or animals, relocating plants or animals, remote control and unmanned aerial vehicles, and pets.

Public Access Site Assessment

During the Public Access Site Assessment, it was noted that there is an historic Ais Indian Mound located on the sanctuary on the western parcel along the southern flank. The high point of the mound was located on an adjacent private parcel that was developed within the past 10 years.

Recreational Uses and Amenities

The Washburn Cove Sanctuary is a Category 3 or Primary Research and Conservation Site as defined in EEL Program's Sanctuary Management Manual and thus is not expected to undergo significant development other than boundary posting. The small size, configuration and proximity to homes make it unsuitable for public access that would not negatively affect adjacent property owner's privacy. Due to the proximity of other recreational opportunities within a 5-mile radius of the Sanctuary, a trail is not planned. Similar habitats are available for the public to visit at the Coconut Point Sanctuary 2.5 miles north and the Maritime Hammock Sanctuary 1.5 miles south. Connections to all publicly accessible sanctuary trails and beach access points are facilitated through a paved bike path on the west side of SR A1A stretching from the Town of Melbourne Beach to Sebastian Inlet State Park. No ADA access is planned at this time though ADA access is provided at the Barrier Island Center which is located approximately 5.6 miles south of the Washburn Cove Sanctuary.

Environmental Education Opportunities

Given that the site will not be opened for public access Environmental Education Opportunities are limited to research and monitoring by staff and visiting scientists.