

Hardwood Hammock Sanctuary Public Access Plan

Site Summary

The Hardwood Hammock Sanctuary is a 31-acre site comprised of several non-contiguous parcels located west of State Highway A1A in unincorporated Melbourne Beach, Brevard County, Florida. Although the Hardwood Hammock 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 Hardwood Hammock 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 Hardwood Hammock Sanctuary consists of eight parcels that are in 4 non-contiguous clusters comprised of between one and four parcels, each with private homes located to the north and south. The parcels are bordered to the east by State Road A1A and to the west by the Indian River Lagoon. The Sanctuary consists of tropical hardwood hammock, maritime hammock and tidal swamp habitats generally distributed from east to west.

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, 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 had been a linear Ais Indian Mound located on the sanctuary just west of A1A, along the eastern flank of the parcels. Indication from historic aerials are that the mound

was disturbed and the its materials were used for the hardening of State Road A1A during the 1950s.

Recreational Uses and Amenities

The Hardwood Hammock 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 private properties 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 Barrier Island Sanctuary 0.65 miles north and the Sebastian Inlet State Park 1.4 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 0.65 miles north of the Hardwood Hammock 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.