

LOXAHATCHEE RIVER PRESERVATION INITIATIVE



Preserving Florida's first federally-designated Wild and Scenic River for future generations

Working For Our River

Since its inception in 2000, the Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative (LRPI) has guided \$45.7 million in regional watershed restoration projects within northeastern Palm Beach County and southern Martin County. LRPI, a multiagency partnership, has effectively leveraged state funds with local funds in a cost-share program which has a proven track record of delivering tangible environmental benefits aimed at preserving and protecting the resource for future generations to enjoy.

While the river, wildlife and our community benefit from the LRPI's work already completed, there is more work to be done as the Loxahatchee River remains an impaired water body. The focus of the LRPI centers on the development of pathways to restore impaired waters in conjunction with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) through the formulation of a Reasonable Assurance Plan (RAP). The LRPI places heightened emphasis on delivering projects included within the RAP. These investments will provide quantifiable pollutant loading reductions that will enable the Loxahatchee River to achieve water quality targets on an expedited timetable.

For the 2020 legislative session, LRPI ranked 5 critical projects for which \$1.89 million in state legislative funding assistance is requested.

Rank Order	Project Name	Funding Request	Local Sponsor	Local Match Funds
1	Pennock Industrial Park Stormwater Improvements	\$231,855	Town of Jupiter	\$324,555
2	Cypress Creek Floodplain Restoration Project Phase I	\$125,000	Martin County Ecosystem Restoration Division	\$125,000
3	Section 7 Drainage Improvement Project	\$321,500	South Indian River Water Control District (SIRWCD)	\$321,500
4	Seminole Avenue Stormwater Basin Improvements	\$870,000	Town of Jupiter	\$2,800,465
5	Sims Creek Preserve Hydrologic Restoration	\$350,000	Town of Jupiter	\$400,000
	Totals	\$1,898,355		\$3,971,520

The total **local match** for all projects represents **68 percent** of the total project costs of \$5,869,875.

The Loxahatchee River and its Watershed



The Loxahatchee River is the southernmost tributary of the Indian River Lagoon and includes the Northwest Fork of the river, the first federally-designated Wild and Scenic River in Florida. The river's current watershed is 260 square miles of northeastern Palm Beach County and southern Martin County.

Past changes associated with agriculture, flood control and other urban land uses have influenced the system. In response to the need for restoration, LRPI, a multiagency partnership, formed and has made great strides in restoring the river and its surrounding watershed.

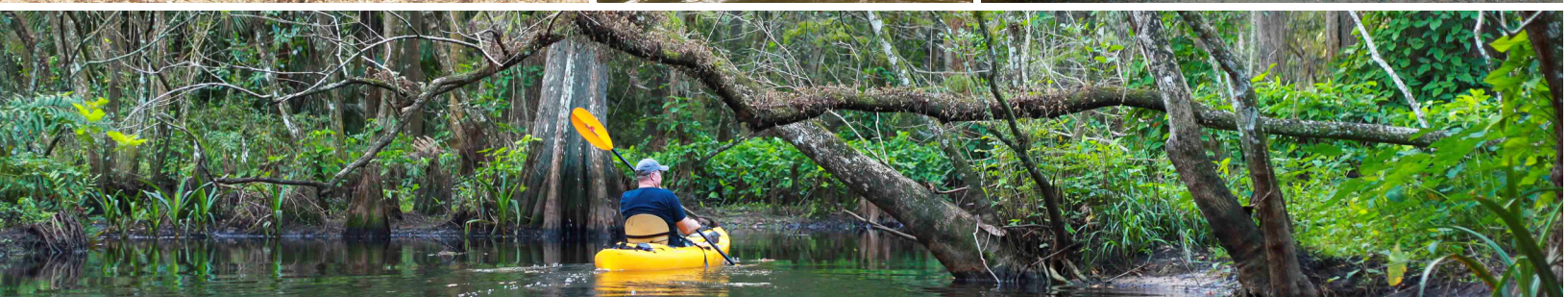
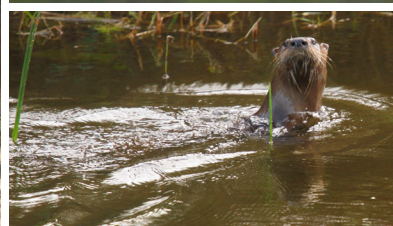
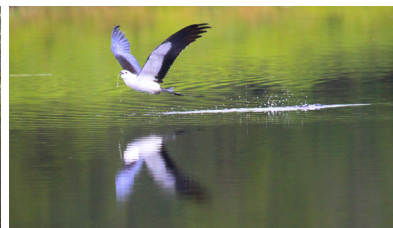
The river is meeting minimum flows and levels on a more consistent basis

Natural Area Restoration

With LRPI funding, 24,000 acres of habitat within the river's watershed have been restored. Funded projects have re-established water levels closer to the conditions that existed prior to when these areas were drained and altered in the past. The resulting enhanced storage capacity for surface water enables the river to receive freshwater during the dry season, helping it meet the state-developed "minimum flows and levels" criteria.

Enhanced habitat and public-use infrastructure supported by LRPI funds also improve opportunities for recreational activities such as paddling, hiking, cycling and fishing.

Below left: Restoration of the Loxahatchee Slough Natural Area included the removal of nonnative melaleuca trees. **Below center top:** A swallow-tailed kite takes a drink of water. **Below center bottom:** An otter glides through the water at a natural area. **Below right:** A cyclist



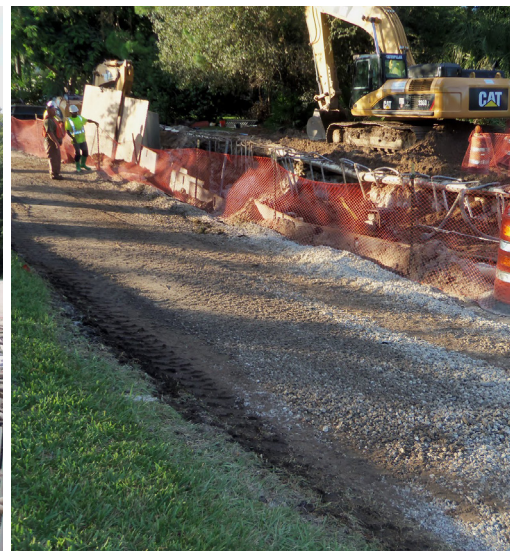
Tens of millions of gallons of wastewater are now being treated and reused through irrigation

Septic-to-Sewer Conversions

Six LRPI-funded projects have converted septic systems to municipal wastewater systems and educated the public on proper septic tank maintenance. These projects have directly improved the river's water quality and have increased water supply by recycling wastewater. As a result of neighborhood septic-to-sewer conversions from 2012 through this year, about 48 million gallons of septic effluent is no longer entering the watershed.

Left: Construction of septic-to-sewer conversion project. **Center:** Fill is added around newly-installed sewer service infrastructure.

Right: A new neighborhood sewer service system is installed along a right-of-way. (Photos courtesy of the Loxahatchee River District)

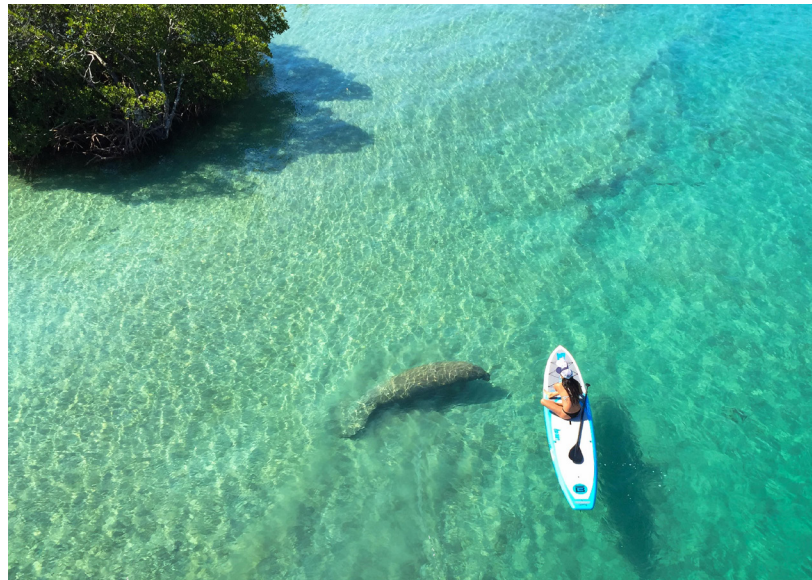


Monitoring shows water quality improvements in portions of the river and its watershed

Stormwater Outfall Retrofits

LRPI has funded 13 projects that have improved stormwater management infrastructure. These improvements took place in the urban environment and have resulted in greater treatment of stormwater prior to discharge into the river's sensitive estuary.

Left: A retrofitted stormwater outfall. (Photo courtesy of the town of Jupiter) **Right:** A paddler watches a manatee visible in the clear waters





Though significant progress has been made, impairments in the watershed require attention

Present and Future

Over the past 18 years, significant progress has been made to improve conditions in the Loxahatchee River and its watershed. Restored natural areas allow nature to yield higher quality water down river year round. Septic-to-sewer efforts have produced substantial decreases in the amount of septic effluent that reaches the watershed, while stormwater retrofit projects in the urban estuary capture and treat run-off providing meaningful benefits.

While there are many signs of success, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's most recent assessment of the Loxahatchee River Watershed identified areas that are impaired. More work remains to be done. LRPI's opportunity is to address these impairments through our future work.

This publication was prepared by the Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management (September 2019). For questions, please contact: Department Director Deborah Drum, Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners, Department of Environmental Resources Management, 2300 North Jog Road, West Palm Beach, FL 33411-2743 | 561-233-2400.



South Florida Water Management District | Florida Department of Environmental Protection (Florida Park Service) | Friends of the Loxahatchee River | Jupiter Inlet District Loxahatchee River Environmental Control District | Martin County | Palm Beach County South Indian River Water Control District | Town of Jupiter | Village of Tequesta | Public at Large

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