

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 over \$45 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. Continued investments in LRPI-supported projects will provide a measurable increase in water storage capacity as well as reductions in nutrient loading that will enable the Loxahatchee River to achieve water quality and quantity targets on an expedited timetable.

For the 2023 legislative session, LRPI ranked 8 critical projects for which \$2.49 million in state legislative funding assistance is requested. The total local match for all projects represents 58% of the total projects cost of \$5,976,940.

Rank Order	Project Name	Funding Request	Local Sponsor	Local Match Funds
1	Dover Ditch Living Shoreline	\$157,500	Village of Tequesta	\$157,000
2	Bush Road Stormwater Improvements	\$100,255	Town of Jupiter	\$185,127
3	Environmental Education and Passive Outdoor Recreation Facilities on the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River	\$100,000	Loxahatchee River Environmental Control District	\$125,000
4	Cypress Creek Hydrologic Restoration Project	\$750,000	South Florida Water Management District	\$1,450,000
5	Sims Creek Preserve Hydrologic and Environmental Restoration	\$100,000	Town of Jupiter	\$296,558
6	Cypress Creek Floodplain Restoration Project	\$ 750,000	Martin County	\$750,000
7	Loxahatchee Slough Habitat Restoration Project	\$150,000	Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management	\$150,000
8	Loxahatchee River Mile 6 Gap Closure and Oxbow Restoration and Maintenance	\$377,500	Jupiter Inlet District	\$377,500
	Totals	\$2,485,255		\$3,491,685

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 impacted this river 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.

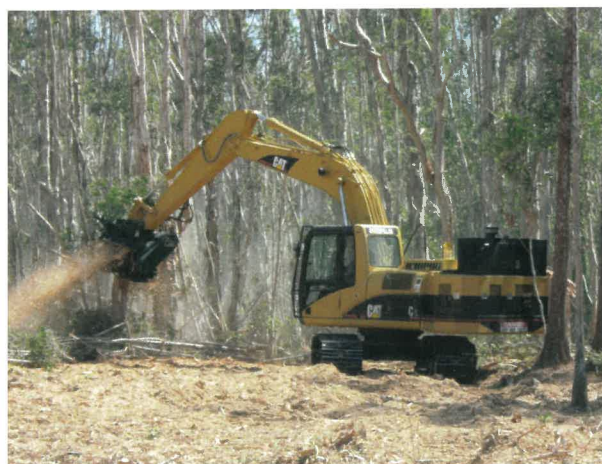
The river is meeting minimum flow levels on a more consistent basis

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 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 stops to take in the sunset at the Loxahatchee Slough Natural Area. **Below bottom:** Paddling the Wild & Scenic Loxahatchee River



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)



Stormwater Outfall Retrofits

LRPI has funded 16 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 habitats.

Left: A retrofitted stormwater outfall. (Photo courtesy of the town of Jupiter)

Right: A sandhill crane incubates her eggs.





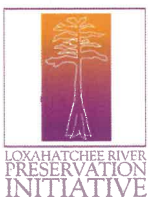
Though significant progress has been made, impairments in the watershed require attention

Present and Future

Over the past 20 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 areas of success, more work needs to be done. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's most recent assessment of the Loxahatchee River Watershed identified areas that are impaired. 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 (November 2022). 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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