



## Brooker Creek Preserve

### General Description

Size: 8,500 acres. This is by far the largest preserve in Pinellas County, and one of the largest in the Tampa Bay Region. The site was acquired as a partnership effort between Pinellas County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District. Pinellas County manages the preserve, and is developing the site into a major center for environmental education and scientific research, as well as managing the site for preservation, habitat restoration and outdoor recreation.

### Location and Access

The main access point is the new environmental education center, scheduled to open in 2004. The entrance is on the south side of Keystone Road, about 1 mile west of the county line. Additional access points for hiking and equestrian trails are located nearby on Old Keystone Road and at the end of Lora Lane.

### Environmental Significance

The majority of the preserve contains a mixture of cypress swamp and bottomland hardwood forest, other habitats include freshwater marsh, sandhill, pine flatwoods, oak hammock and mixed upland forest. Brooker Creek flows diagonally across the preserve from east to west on its way to Lake Tarpon. Although much of the preserve and the creek show signs of past human disturbances, large areas of intact natural habitat still exist. Depending on the season, visitors may observe a rare Bachman's sparrow, or discover a blooming Catesby lily or grasspink orchid. Restoration of the creek channel and disturbed uplands is a management priority. Another initiative is the establishment of major greenway corridor connections, including the Brooker-Anclote River Corridor Project and the Brooker Starkey Corridor Project. The presence of such a large expanse of habitat in the most densely populated county in the State is quite remarkable. Pinellas County has demonstrated both the resources and the commitment to protect and manage this natural resource as a public treasure that will enhance the quality of life for area residents for generations to come.

### Recreational Opportunities

The preserve offers 13 miles of equestrian trails and a 1.75 mile nature trail with interpretive markers and an educational brochure. An additional 8.5 mile "wilderness trail" will be accessible from the environmental educational center. The primary emphasis of the preserve is not recreation but education. The new center consists of a three building complex of classrooms, laboratories, an auditorium and over 6,000 square feet of educational exhibits. Cutting edge technology will be used to provide visitors with a unique learning experience in conjunction with the surrounding natural setting.

### Volunteer Opportunities

The different opportunities available for volunteers involve virtually every aspect of the preserve's operations, and are too numerous to list here. Examples include field research projects, leading guided walks, monitoring boundary fences, controlling non-native invasive plants, cleanups, clerical work and much more. With the opening of the environmental education center, the possibilities are almost limitless.

### Contact Information

Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management, Environmental Lands Division, Field Research Assistants: (727) 453-6930.  
 Land Management Assistants: (727) 453-6924.  
 Trail Blazers: (727) 453-6922.  
 Environmental Education Center: (727) 453-6906.  
 General Volunteer Information: (727) 453-6900.