



Lithia Springs Park & Preserve

General Description

Size: 200 acres. Lithia Springs Park is a County park that has been developed on land leased from the Cargill Company. It was originally purchased by Cargill's predecessor, Gardinier, Inc., in 1937 to provide a source of freshwater for the phosphate processing plant located at the mouth of the Alafia River. The main spring has an average water flow of approximately 24 million gallons a day, and has been a popular local swimming hole for generations. Originally only 160 acres in size, the County acquired another 40 acres through the ELAP Program in 1991. The new section is at the west end of the park, across the river from the main section. In addition to the springs, the site includes high quality hardwood swamp forest bordering over a mile of river shoreline, as well as a remnant of rare sandhill uplands, now dominated by mature turkey oaks and other hardwood trees.

Location and Access

To reach the park, take Lithia-Pinecrest Road to Lithia Springs Road, just south of the Alafia River bridge. The road dead-ends into the park. There is an entrance fee of \$1.00/person. To reach the 40 acre preserve section, turn west from Lithia-Pinecrest Road onto Adelaide Avenue (north of the bridge) and turn south on Hill Drive. Look for a metal gate in a hog wire fence on the left after the pavement ends.

Environmental Significance

The natural springs are the site's most unusual feature. The larger spring has been converted into a public swimming area, with a sandy shoreline surrounded by a concrete wall with stairways to prevent erosion from foot traffic. The spring boil itself is off limits to swimmers for safety reasons. A second, much smaller spring is restricted to preserve its natural beauty. Visitors can look down from a guardrail into the spring and observe fish and plant life in the crystal clear water. The springs are an important source of clean water for the Alafia River, however, nutrient levels, especially nitrates, have been steadily increasing over time, a consequence of land use changes within the watershed. The majority of the river corridor upstream of the park has been permanently protected from development. As a result, the habitat within the park is part of an interconnected system of over 10,000 acres of preserve lands. Within the park itself, the rare upland sandhill habitat has been impacted to a degree by development of picnic and camping areas, and fire suppression. Even so, this park has been known to support a few rare species, including Sherman's fox squirrel, eastern indigo snake, and the seldom seen short-tailed snake.

Recreational Opportunities

This is a fully developed and staffed county park that offers swimming, picnicking, camping and canoeing. Guided walks and interpretive programs are available on request. Entrance and camping fees apply.

Volunteer Opportunities

All Hillsborough County parks offer volunteer opportunities through the County's VIPs Program. Typical park activities consist of assisting park staff with routine management tasks. Special projects may be available for community service groups.

Contact Information

Lithia Springs Park, 3932 Lithia Springs Road, Lithia, FL 33547. (813) 744-5572.
Hillsborough County Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department, 1101 E. Rivercove Drive, Tampa, FL 33604. (813) 975-2160.