INDUSTRY & NATURE

Protecting the balance of industry and nature is necessary today and for future generations. The SWA strives to be a good neighbor to people and wildlife. Natural areas give people irreplaceable services. Water filters through the wetlands here before moving south to the Florida Everglades. Millions of people rely on this natural water supply. Greenways offer refuge for wildlife and peace for people, too.
Welcome to the SWA Butterfly Loop Trail!
The Butterfly Loop Trail shows how the SWA balances industry and nature. The trail begins behind the SWA Administration Building and extends west to the Owahee Trail that borders Grassy Waters Preserve. As you return, you will pass Lake Altman and glimpse the Renewable Energy Facility 2. This conservation area acts as a natural buffer bordering the SWA facilities.

History & Habitats
The Butterfly Loop is one of four trails that meander through the SWA Greenway Trail System. This more than 300-acre conservation area was set aside during the development of the Palm Beach Renewable Energy Park. This conservation area, together with the adjacent Grassy Waters Preserve hosts one of Florida’s largest roosting areas for the federally-endangered snail kite.

Neighboring Connections
The SWA Greenway Trail System is part of the Northeast Everglades Natural Area (NENA) in Palm Beach and Martin counties. Connected conservation lands and nature centers provide trails and recreational opportunities from the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Okeechobee. Discover more at PBCgov.com/ERM/NENA

Did you know?
Passion vines are food plants for Florida’s state butterfly, the zebra longwing butterfly. It is pictured here as the mascot of the Butterfly Loop trail. The water hyssop is a caterpillar food plant for the white peacock butterfly.

Fabulous Forests
Look up to find the common canopy trees for clues to the plant community you are in. As you observe your overhead surroundings, you will see several plant communities along the trail and subtle transitions called ecotones.

- Mesic (Moist) Pine Flatwoods – Dominated by slash pines with a saw palmetto understory. These upland areas are dry most of the year.
- Wet Flatwoods – Dominated by slash pines, but are wetlands. Soils are sandy and hold water part of the year. Few, if any, saw palmettos are here.
- Cabbage Palm Hammocks or Low Hammocks – Dominant trees are palms, oaks and red maples with ferns and wild coffee in the understory. The soils are moist, sometimes lying over a shallow limestone base.
- Cypress Swamps – Forested wetlands where cypress trees may form a dome or mix with pines in wet transition areas.
- Wet Prairies – Wetlands with low shrubs, usually on the edges of marshes or swamps.
- Marshes – Grasses and sedges are most common here. Holds water most of the year.

Wildlife Alive
Look high and low! Wading birds often fly overhead on their way to the rookery to the south or when browsing for prey. Animals leave behind evidence of their lives. A keen glance at the ground will reveal scat and tracks of deer, otters, alligators and bobcats. Observe the colors of different dragonflies and butterflies, too. Listen for bird calls, frogs and crickets.

As you experience the transition from industry to nature, let your senses change your perspective as you reflect upon what you see, hear and smell.
Pond Apple (C, S, W)
Annona glabra
Historically, an extensive pond apple swamp fringed the southern end of Lake Okeechobee. The rich soils were desirable for agriculture, so the swamp was converted to cropland in the early 1900s.

The boardwalks and benches are made from recycled plastic lumber and the trail paths are made from recycled crushed concrete. Chickee huts are made with the methods of historic Seminole traditions.

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Caution!
Some plants are poisonous or cause skin irritation. (Be cautious and leave them for the wildlife.)

www.SWA.org/Trails

The SWA conservation area is adjacent to the east side of the Grassy Waters Preserve and can be accessed from their berm.
Top 15 Trail Plants
Numbered markers on the trail correspond to the plant descriptions below.

- **C** - cultural
- **M** - medicinal
- **S** - use of the senses
- **W** - wildlife essentials

**Slash Pine**
*Pinus elliottii*
Grows in uplands or wetlands. Areas dominated by slash pine are called flatwoods. Pine cone seeds are an important food for squirrels. Many insects hide in the ridged bark, which in turn attracts birds and reptiles. Pine resin was once collected for turpentine.

**Cocoplum**
*Chrysobalanus icaco*
A generalist shrub found in many habitats. In the absence of fire, it may grow tall. This shrub is often planted as a landscape hedge.

**Leafy Bladderwort**
*Utricularia foliosa*
This carnivorous aquatic plant traps invertebrates for food nutrition. They are indicators of good water quality. In the summer the yellow or purple flowers peek up above the water.

**Pink Sundew**
*Drosera capillaries*
A carnivorous plant that grows in nitrogen poor soils in the spring time. Native Americans, including the Miccosukee, used the plants to treat ringworm. Chemicals in sundews have been used to treat gram negative bacteria, warts, corns and bunions.
Various species have been used medicinally for centuries in many ways, including as a diuretic, for constipation, difficult urination and depression, but with caution. These wetland shrubs are easy to identify by their five petalled yellow flowers, many stamens and clusters of short, needle like leaves.

Pollinators like bees and butterflies dine on the nectar from pickerelweed flowers. Dragonflies and damselflies rest and lay eggs on the leaves. Submerged portions provide habitat for invertebrates. Ducks eat the seeds, and deer eat the leaves.

Some tree trunks have “boots,” which can hold moisture, provide habitat for small animals and air plants, and are often used for crafts. Tall cabbage palms may be hundreds of years old. Eating palm hearts kills the tree.

An epiphytic fern, provides cover for small animals. In Cuba and Latin America, the rhizome (root) is used to treat wounds and external sores. Also used in medicinal baths for chronic illnesses.

Seminole Indians used leaves for tea, for medicinal purposes, and during ceremonies. The leaves can be used to flavor soups, like the commercial bay leaf, a different species.

* Trail hours are from dawn to dusk, seven days a week.