

# 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 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 50/50 cost-share program.

While the river, wildlife and our community benefit from the water quality and habitat-related projects already completed, there is more work to be done. Projects critical to the long-term preservation of the watershed remain to be implemented.

For the 2019 legislative session, LRPI ranked 9 projects for which \$3.36 million in state legislative funding was requested.

Rank Order	Project Name	Funding Request	Local Sponsor	Local Match Funds
1	Culpepper Ranch Phase II Berm Project	\$270,000	Martin County Ecosystem Restoration Division	\$270,000
2	Loxahatchee River Watershed Hydrological Refinements Phase I	\$160,000	Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management	\$160,000
3	Septic System Abandonment 2019-2020	\$693,000	Loxahatchee River District	\$693,000
4	Pine Gardens North Infrastructure Improvements	\$356,044	Town of Jupiter	\$1,685,155
5	Seminole Avenue Stormwater Basin Improvements	\$870,000	Town of Jupiter	\$2,800,465
6	Section 7 Drainage Improvement Project	\$290,000	South Indian River Water Control District (SIRWCD)	\$290,000
7	Hydrological Restoration Phase II FY2019-2020	\$500,000	Jonathan Dickinson State Park	\$500,000
8	Hydrological Restoration Phase III FY2019-2020	\$25,000	Jonathan Dickinson State Park	\$25,000
9	Loxahatchee River Battlefield Park - Sewer Line Extension	\$200,000	Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation Department	\$258,000
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$3,364,044</b>		<b>\$6,681,620</b>

The total **local match** for all projects represents **67 percent** of the total project costs of \$10,045,664.

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



*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 of the Loxahatchee River estuary.





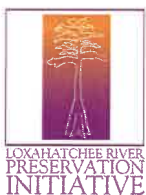
*Though significant progress has been made, impairments in the watershed require attention*

## Present and Future

Over the past 17 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 (October 2018). 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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