

*W*INTER HAVEN

The Chain of Lakes City

Media Release

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City Receives Outstanding Achievement Award

Winter Haven –The City of Winter received the 2014 Outstanding Achievement Award from the Florida Stormwater Association recognizing the City’s Sustainable Water Resource Program. The award acknowledges innovative accomplishments and outstanding commitment to stormwater management practices benefiting the environment and local citizens. “This is a very special honor for the City of Winter Haven,” said Mike Britt, Natural Resources Division Director. “Without the leadership of the City Commission and administration, special efforts like this are not possible.”

The centerpiece of the City’s program is the Sustainable Water Resource Management Plan. Winter Haven has one of few local government sustainable water resource management plans adopted in the state. The intent of the plan is to meet long-term needs for water supply, lake levels, water quality, flood protection, and natural systems. The Plan and other information about the program is available at www.sustainablewinterhaven.net.

More visible elements of the Plan are rain gardens and nature parks the City has created. To date, the City has constructed 68 rain gardens in public rights-of-way and park areas around downtown Winter Haven, and has plans to construct another 30 over the next few years. The projects are proving to be cost-effective by removing pollutants before they get to the lakes and also improving the appearance of neighborhoods by adding landscaping. They also recharge water to the underground aquifer to help lake levels and water supplies. Completed projects include rain gardens near City Hall, the City Utility Complex, Sixth Street SE and Second Street NW.

The City has also constructed three nature parks that store and treat stormwater prior to entering the lakes. The 12-acre South Lake Howard Nature Park treats stormwater

runoff while providing a one-mile walking trail, fishing piers and boardwalks. The six-acre Lake Hartridge Nature Park is also designed for pollutant removal and habitat improvement and includes almost a one-half mile trail, playgrounds and a fishing pier. The Lake Maude Nature Park treats runoff from a seven-acre residential watershed and restores about 1,000 feet of lake shore. A fourth park, still in the planning stages, will cover 34 acres and treat stormwater from a 328-acre watershed at Lake Conine. All these projects are intended to meet goals for water, recreation and community.

One of the more long-term components of the plan includes restoration of about 7,000 acres of historical wetlands within the Peace Creek Watershed. Dubbed the 'Sapphire Necklace Plan,' these restored areas would store a volume of water equal to 7 years of water supply and create up to 20 new nature parks with miles of trails as well as recreation elements. The plan also proposes the areas be used to attract future growth, increase property values, reduce permitting requirements and improve quality of life. Balancing the economic, recreation and environmental aspects of life in Winter Haven is a primary goal of the sustainability program.

When asked about the progress of the plan, Britt indicated, "Many of the plan's local elements are being implemented, but the larger, more complicated elements need coordination with other governmental and private sector organizations." For more information, please contact City of Winter Haven, Natural Resources Division at 863-291-5881.