

## Directions

Take I-95 to Forest Hill Boulevard and head west. The park entrance is between Jog Road and the Turnpike overpass (although the TP does not exit here). Turn north into

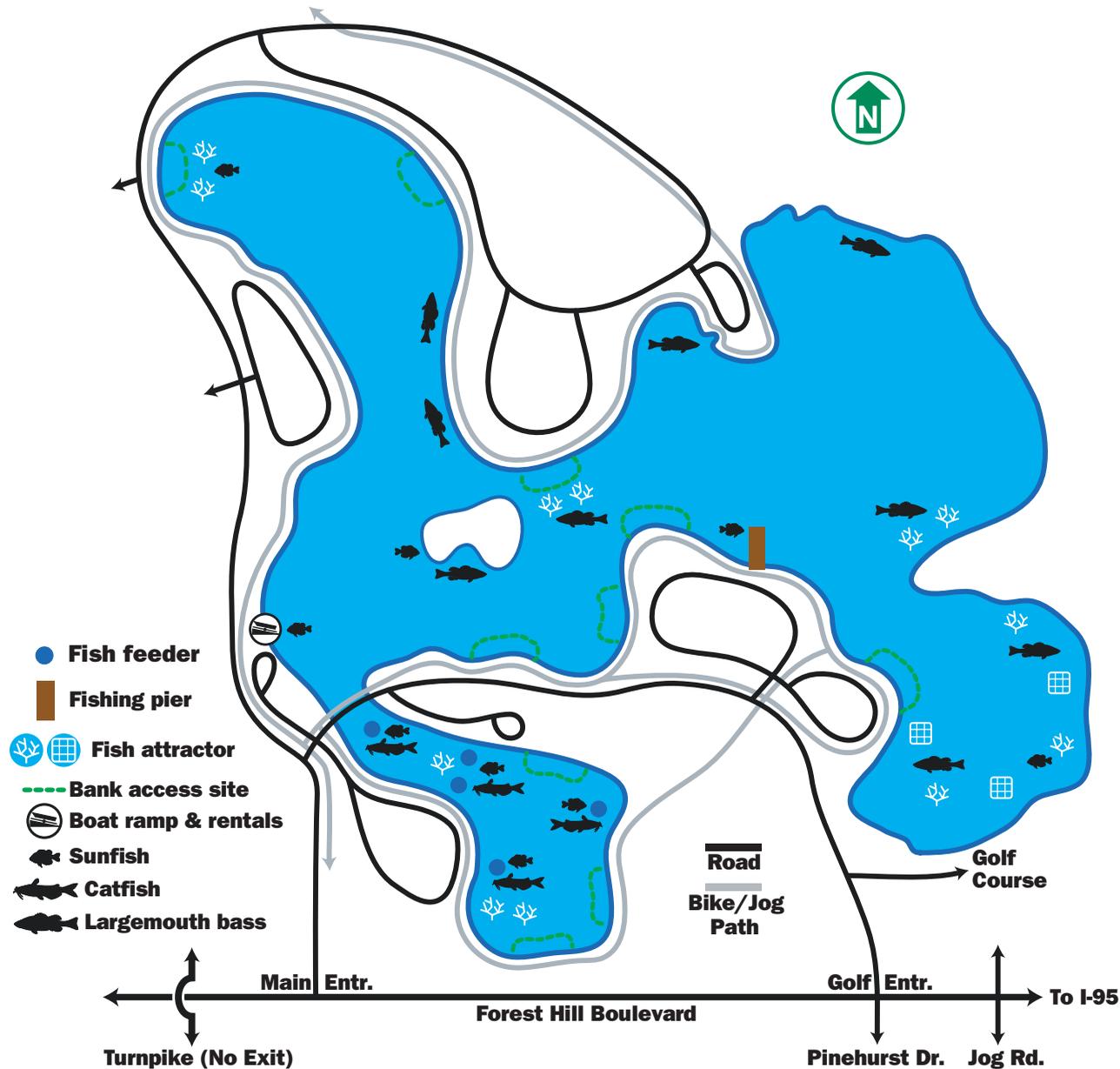
the second (Main) entrance (not the Okeehellee Golf Course entrance) and stay right to reach the section of the lake that has fish feeders. Staying on the main road will take you to the non-feeder portion of the lake. Parking, restrooms, and picnic

shelters are available. For information about boat rentals, call 561-304-1344. For park information, call 561-966-6600. To contact FWC, call the South Region Office at 561-625-5122.

# Okeehellee

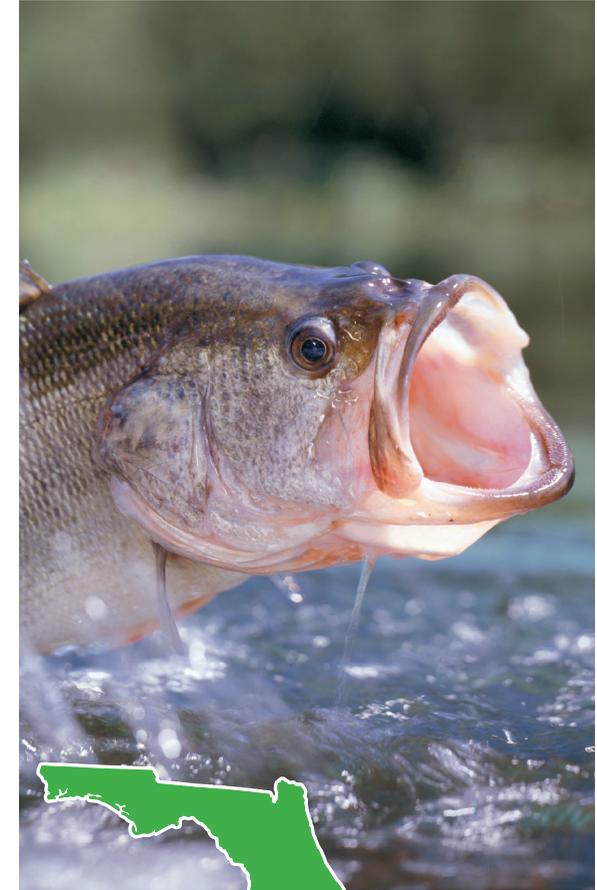
## Fish Management Area

Palm Beach County



## Helpful Information

- **Fish Management Areas around Florida:** [myfwc.com/fishing/freshwater/sites-forecast/fish-management/](http://myfwc.com/fishing/freshwater/sites-forecast/fish-management/)
- **Wildlife Alert:** If you suspect a fish, wildlife, boating, or environmental law violation, report it to the FWC's Wildlife Alert Reward Program: 888-404-FWCC (3922). Cell phone users can reach us at \*FWC or #FWC, depending on your service provider. [myfwc.com/contact/wildlife-alert/](http://myfwc.com/contact/wildlife-alert/)
- **Big Catch Angler Recognition Program:** [BigCatchFlorida.com](http://BigCatchFlorida.com)
- **TrophyCatch Angler Recognition Program:** [TrophyCatch.com](http://TrophyCatch.com)
- **GovDelivery:** Stay in the loop on issues related to Florida's fish and wildlife resources. [myfwc.com/contact/auto-alerts/](http://myfwc.com/contact/auto-alerts/)
- **Fish Consumption Advisories:** [myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/health-disease/other-wildlife/fish-consumption/](http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/health-disease/other-wildlife/fish-consumption/)
- **Getting Licenses and Permits:** [myfwc.com/license/](http://myfwc.com/license/)
- **Latest FMA Regulations:** [myfwc.com/fishing/freshwater/regulations/fma/](http://myfwc.com/fishing/freshwater/regulations/fma/)



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Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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## Site Description

Okeehetee Fish Management Area (FMA) is managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) South Region Fisheries Management Section. This FMA was created in 1985 and benefits from a number of enhancements designed to improve fishing and angler access at this site.

Okeehetee FMA is a cooperative project between the FWC and Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation Department. Sport Fish Restoration funds pay for 75% of this project. These monies are federal tax dollars collected from the sale of fishing equipment and accessories to support access improvements, educational programs, aquatic habitat improvement, and fisheries research.

The lake itself is 157 acres in size. It is characterized by clear water, a sand bottom, and plenty of native vegetation. A smaller 11-acre section, separated from the remainder of the lake by a bridge, is the focus of fish stockings and most other intensive

management activities. However, fishing is available throughout the entire lake. A concrete boat ramp in excellent condition allows launching of non-gas powered boats. Boat rentals and a fishing pier are also available.

## Amenities

**Stocking** — This lake was originally stocked with bluegill and redear sunfish prior to being opened as a FMA. These fish, along

with largemouth bass which were already present, reproduce well on their own in order to sustain their populations. Since 1990, nearly 75,000 channel catfish have been stocked in Okeehetee FMA. These fish do not reproduce well in south Florida lakes, so 6,000 catfish are stocked annually in order to maintain high numbers for anglers.

**Fish feeders** — Fish feeders have been placed in Okeehetee FMA in order to provide food and increase the growth rates of fish that are already present as well as those that are stocked. The feeders dispense fish food automatically several times per day. They provide the best locations to catch catfish and sunfish within the FMA. Although they do not eat the fish food directly, largemouth bass are also attracted to the feeders by the bait fish and smaller sportfish that congregate around them.

**Fish attractors** — Natural and artificial fish attractors present within Okeehetee FMA are marked by buoys. They provide

underwater structure which attracts fish, especially largemouth bass and sunfish.

**Vegetation management** — Control of undesirable plant species and introduction of beneficial plant species is practiced to enhance habitat for fish as well as to improve angler access within Okeehetee FMA. Designated bank access sites provide good opportunities for anglers on foot. Bulrush and spikerush stands throughout the lake are excellent places to fish for largemouth bass and sunfish.

## Fish Species Present (and how to catch them)

**Bluegill and redear sunfish** — These popular and cooperative pan fish are found around the fish feeders and near vegetation or structure. Live worms or crickets fished a few feet under a small bobber are a sure bet. Doughballs and small pieces of cut hot dog also work well. Good lures include small jigs, beetle spins, and tiny spinners. Flyrod anglers can score with small popping bugs, wet flies, and nymphs.

**Channel catfish** — This species has been documented up to 5 pounds in the lake, although much larger specimens have been reported by anglers. They are readily found at the fish feeders and in deeper "holes" in the lake. Chicken and beef livers work well as baits, as well as commercial "stink baits" sold in bait and tackle shops. Fish directly on the bottom, or deep under a small bobber. Catfish are rarely taken on lures.

**Largemouth bass** — Although they are plentiful, these fish tend to be small within Okeehetee FMA (about 8-10" on average). Anglers should use light tackle and smaller lures, including plastic worms and minnow imitations. Medium-sized popping bugs and

streamers will produce fish for flyrodders. Small shiners and live worms are the best baits. Anglers using bait should set the hook quickly to prevent deep-hooked fish.

**Mayan cichlid** — This exotic species from Central America has recently become established in Okeehetee and appears to be increasing in numbers. It can be identified by the reddish coloration of the body, the vertical bars, and black spot with turquoise ring on the tail. This colorful fish will take the same baits and lures as sun fish, although not as readily. It is a hard and colorful fighter, and excellent table fare. It is illegal to transport any exotic fish alive or to release it into another water body.

## FMA Special Regulations

In order to provide better angling, special regulations are in place to protect fish populations within Okeehetee FMA:

- Channel catfish daily bag limit: 6.
- Panfish daily bag limit: 20.
- Bluegill and redear sunfish less than 8 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.

A fishing license is required for residents from 16 to 64 years of age, and for nonresidents 16 or more years of age, to fish by any method, including cane poles, on a Fish Management Area.