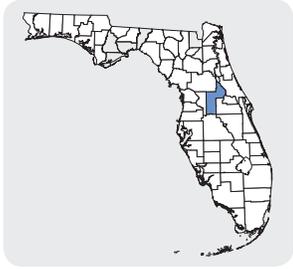


Pine Meadows Conservation Area Habitat Restoration

Lake County, FL



Introduction

Historically, Pine Meadows consisted of sawgrass marsh with wet prairie and intermittent pond and bay habitats. Like other marshes within Lake County, Pine Meadows was diked, ditched and drained during the early 1970s for farming. Since cessation of farming the wetland

species re-colonizing the marsh included large areas of both exotic and native shrubs, and some areas of emergent and floating vegetation. In 2014, SJRWMD transferred ownership of the property to the Lake County Division of Parks and Trails, which currently is working with the FWC's Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Restoration Section to restore the property. This area is now referred to as Pine Meadows Conservation Area and was opened to the public in May 2018.



Objectives

- Replace failing water control structures
- Reduce the number and volume of tussocks
- Control exotic plant species, allowing native plants to colonize and expand

Approach

Restoration of Pine Meadows began in 2016. Multiple projects over several years were implemented to restore fish and wildlife habitats. A limestone road was constructed to provide access. Excavators were used to remove and replace failing water control structures. Aerial herbicide treatments were conducted to control exotic plants. Aquatic plant harvesters and shredders were used to remove floating vegetation and improve boating access and navigation.



Benefits

The once limited access to the Pine Meadows Conservation Area is significantly improved. The limestone road built to provide access for contractors conducting restoration work is now the primary access road for recreational users of this area. Replacing old water control structures restored Pine Meadows' water flow and retention to pre-farming conditions. The aerial herbicide treatment helped control exotic vegetation, allowing native beneficial plant species to expand. Harvesting and shredding of floating vegetation improved access and navigation for recreational boaters, anglers, wildlife viewers and hunters, and allowed native plants to colonize these areas.



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