

SECTION 5. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Mission Statements

ELD Education Services: To empower citizens to make informed decisions about natural and cultural resources throughout west-central Florida through the mission of the Environmental Lands Division.

Brooker Creek Environmental Education Center: To promote an understanding of natural Florida and of the interactions of humans with the environment in order to demonstrate the importance of conserving the natural environment.

Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center

The BCPEEC, located at 3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs, opened in April 2004. Its purpose is to increase the public's appreciation of the value of Pinellas County preserves and management areas, and natural resources in general. Nestled amid a wetland forest alongside Brooker Creek, the Center provides a window into wild Florida and its unique characteristics. Through exhibits, educational programs, and guided hikes, visitors can experience, discover, and better understand the connections between people and the land. Programs offered at the BCPEEC by staff and various partners help visitors make informed decisions about natural resources and identify personal actions they can take to reduce negative impacts on natural resources.

The BCPEEC is a 25,000-square-foot, three-building complex designed in old Florida pioneer-style architecture (Figure 41). It includes a 6,000-square-foot exhibit area with 24 discovery-oriented exhibits, a well-equipped classroom, and an attractive auditorium that seats up to 200 people. The main building includes a nature store and a resource center with a library and searchable database. Picnic facilities are available in a screened dining area, picnic shelter and outdoor pavilions. The classroom, auditorium and other facilities are available for private rentals. Restrooms, water fountains, and trash cans are located at all the buildings. Vending machines (drinks and snacks) are also found in the screened area of the auditorium.

Programming offered at the BCPEEC (as of Fall 2007) includes events for families, guided hikes and canoe trips, book times for preschoolers, summer camps, and general public presentations on topics such as ecology, sustainability, history, art, culture, and Native American culture. Special programs are held for targeted audiences such as teachers, home school educators, scouts, government decision-makers, business professionals, area neighborhood residents, and faith-based organizations. Teachers who have attended a BCPEEC-offered training workshop can bring students to use the classroom. Private and public pre-school and elementary school groups regularly visit the Exhibit Hall and Preserve trails. (See **SECTION 4. PUBLIC RECREATION, Wildlands Hiking Trails** on page 4-10 for information on hiking trails located near the BCPEEC). Special one-day events such as World Rivers Day FEST bring attention to

important local environmental topics by offering fun activities and exhibits in partnership with environmental agencies and organizations.

The ELD Education Services Program has an Education Program Long-Range Plan that was written in 2003 and revised in 2005 and 2007. This document should be consulted for further details on the program.





Figure 41. Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center

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