

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SOUTH COVE NATURAL AREA

1) This is an urban environment. Why do we need to add habitat?

The Lake Worth Lagoon has lost over 70% of its natural resources over the past 50 years due to dredge and fill activities, bulkheading, degraded water quality, and increased muck deposits from sewer and stormwater discharges. This project is designed to improve and restore critical shallow water resources by creating 3.5 acres of seagrass habitat, 2 acres of intertidal mangrove/spartina habitat, and 0.9 acres of oyster reef habitat to be utilized by fish, wading birds, manatees and sea turtles. Over 75% of game fish and 90% of commercial fisheries are dependent on the estuarine habitat.

2) Why the boardwalk?

This project will raise public awareness about the natural resources within the Lake Worth Lagoon, by allowing residents and visitors access to the natural area via a boardwalk and observation deck. The boardwalk draws users out into the estuarine habitat to get a closer view of the spartina, mangroves, oyster reefs, seagrasses, fish and wildlife.

3) Why is the educational experience important? Everyone already knows that it's important to protect the environment.

The project has been designed with the intent of restoring a highly urbanized area of the lagoon that receives high visitor traffic due to its proximity to downtown West Palm Beach. The project will act as a "living classroom" that will showcase the various estuarine habitats of the lagoon.

4) If schools take field trips to the South Cove area, where will the buses park?

School buses could drop off the students and then utilize public parking.

5) If a big part of the problem is caused by the dredge hole, why not just fill and cap the hole? Why do we need the islands?

The intertidal mangrove islands along with the seagrass and oyster habitats provide critical estuarine components that increase biodiversity for fisheries and wildlife, at the same time provide a recreational area to bird watch, canoe, kayak, and enjoy the waterfront.

6) What about mosquitoes? Do they lay eggs in the mangroves that will be planted near our seawall and out on the islands?

Mosquitoes require stagnant water to breed. The South Cove intertidal islands will be tidally flushed two times a day, so the islands will not be suitable environments to harbor mosquitoes.

7) Why do some people say that mangroves smell bad?

The odors associated with mangrove swamps are from a build-up of muck sediments and limited tidal flushing. The South Cove islands will be flushed by the tides two times a day which limits the accumulation of muck sediments. The South Cove islands are modeled after other projects completed by Palm Beach County Environmental Resources Management; Snook Islands Natural Area adjacent to the Lake Worth Golf Course and the Town of Palm Beach Par 3 Golf Course Mangrove Planters. Neither project has the problems of foul odors because of daily tidal flushing.

8) What about riparian rights?

The City owns the adjacent uplands known as Flagler Drive and Trinity Park. Traditional uses such as ingress/egress and water views are preserved with the current design.

9) How are you going to prevent the homeless from taking up residence on the islands?

The islands will be intertidal islands, underwater at high tide, therefore would not be a possible location for the homeless to take up residences. The City shall be responsible for public safety and law enforcement within the Natural Area and its public use facilities. The City shall establish operating hours for the public use facilities. The City will secure and maintain the Natural Area boardwalk with gates and signage to prevent unauthorized activities.

10) Will mangroves grow out of control and block our views? Will they be springing up all over the place and grow up to 60 feet tall or more?

Red mangroves are slow growing salt tolerant estuarine trees found along coastal tropical and subtropical waters of the world. The mangrove planting will be limited to the islands and planters. Mature red mangroves typically reach heights of 20-30 feet tall in Florida. However, permit conditions will allow for the City to trim the mangroves located in the mangrove planters to a height of 1 foot above the seawall, to preserve the water views.

11) Won't this create a Coney Island type of attraction?

The South Cove Natural Area will be for passive recreational use only with no commercial operations.

12) Who pays for the design and construction of this?

Palm Beach County will provide funding matched with State grants through Lake Worth Lagoon Partnership Grant Program and other possible grant sources are being investigated.

13) Who pays for the maintenance?

The City shall have naming rights for the individual islands within the South Cove Natural Area. All monies collected shall be put into an interest bearing account for the future maintenance of the Natural Area.

14) Who will maintain the project area?

The County and City will share responsibility in the maintenance of the Natural Area.

15) Why create an attraction that will add to an already bad parking situation in the downtown?

Contrary to perception, there is plenty of parking in the downtown; more than 13,000 spaces including public and private garages, and metered parking. Recent studies indicate that even in peak usage hours (11:00 AM - 1:00 PM; Monday - Friday), there is a 14% unoccupied rate. Also to note, the City is currently constructing an additional 900 parking spaces in two garages on Clematis Street.