

SUMMER Activity Guide

Southwest Florida
Water Management District



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EXPLORE DISTRICT PUBLIC LANDS

Visit one of Southwest Florida Water Management District's (District) many public conservation lands throughout west-central Florida for an outdoor exploration! From the sandy beaches on the Gulf of Mexico to the wild beauty of the Green Swamp, there is something for everybody. Many District lands also have facilities that are accessible for the mobility-impaired. Here are some tips to help plan your adventure.

Choose a recreation site

Go to the District's recreation webpage for more information on where District public lands are located and what type of activities you can do there. View the map to see what sites may be close by, or search by activity. Access the webpage at WaterMatters.org/Recreation.

You can also order a Recreation Guide to keep at home for easy reference! Free Recreation Guides are available for residents within the District's boundary. They can be ordered at WaterMatters.org/Publications.

Conduct a scavenger hunt

Spruce up your trip to a District land by going on a scavenger hunt! Work together to create a list of things you would like to look for before journeying out. Below is a list of ideas to get you started:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> An animal that lives in the water | <input type="checkbox"/> A hole in a tree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> An animal that lives on land | <input type="checkbox"/> Something red |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A bird | <input type="checkbox"/> Something blue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> An insect | <input type="checkbox"/> Something green |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A flower | |

Stay safe!



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VISIT A FIRST-MAGNITUDE SPRING

Florida has the largest concentration of springs in the world. A spring is a natural opening in the ground where water flows directly from the aquifer to the earth's surface. There are more than 200 springs within the District, five of which are considered to be first-magnitude springs. The five major springs are: Chassahowitzka Springs, Crystal River/Kings Bay springs group, Homosassa Springs, Rainbow Springs and Weeki Wachee Springs.

Plan a visit of your own this summer to see what makes these springs so amazing! Below is a list of locations you can visit to enjoy the springs and surrounding waterways. Be sure to check each site for hours of operation and associated fees. Learn more about the springs before you head out by visiting WaterMatters.org/Springs.

Chassahowitzka Springs

- [Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge](#) (Crystal River, FL)
- [Chassahowitzka River and Coastal Swamps](#) (Homosassa, FL)

Crystal River/Kings Bay

- [Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge](#) (Crystal River, FL)
- [Crystal River State Park](#) (Crystal River, FL)
- [Three Sisters Springs Center](#) (Crystal River, FL)

Homosassa Springs

- [Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park](#) (Homosassa, FL)

Rainbow Springs

- [Rainbow Springs State Park](#) (Dunnellon, FL)

Weeki Wachee Springs

- [Weeki Wachee Springs State Park](#) (Weeki Wachee, FL)



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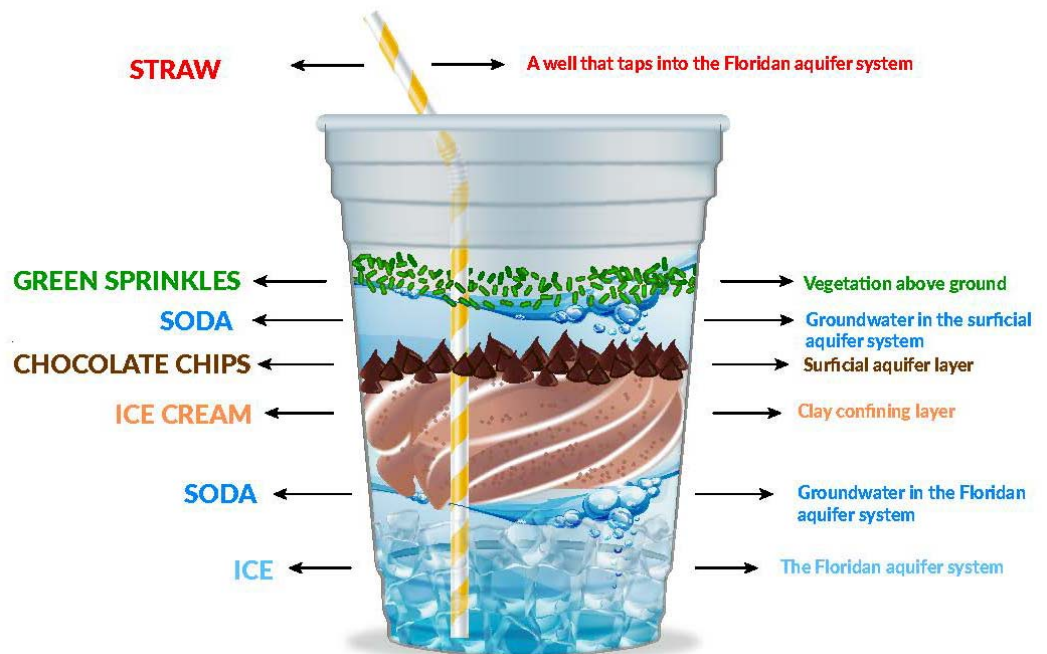
MAKE AN EDIBLE AQUIFER

More than 90 percent of the water supply in west-central Florida comes from groundwater within the Floridan aquifer. This is the deepest aquifer in Florida. An aquifer is an underground layer of spongelike rock that can hold and release water. Explore the many layers that make up an aquifer by creating one you can eat! Follow the directions below.

Materials:

- Clear plastic cups
- Clear soda (such as Sprite or ginger ale)
- Chocolate ice cream
- Crushed ice
- Green sprinkles
- Mini-chocolate chips or chocolate sprinkles
- Spoons
- Straw

Make an Edible Aquifer



Activity Directions:

1. Fill the cup halfway with ice. This represents the limestone layer of the Floridan aquifer.
2. Add clear soda. This represents the groundwater in the Floridan aquifer.
3. Add a big scoop of chocolate ice cream. This represents the clay confining layer. This layer can be up to 300 feet thick in some places!
4. Add a few spoonfuls of mini-chocolate chips. This represents the surficial aquifer layer, which is a shallow aquifer system that is usually characterized by sandy soil.
5. Add a little more soda. This represents the groundwater in the surficial layer.
6. Add green sprinkles. This represents the vegetations on the ground, such as grasses, shrubs and trees.
7. Add a straw. This represents a well that taps into the Floridan aquifer. Drink up!

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MAKE A MUDDY BUDDY

Drought-tolerant grass seed is not just a water efficient option for Florida landscapes, but also makes for easy to grow Muddy Buddy hair! Before making your Buddy Muddy, research what it means for a plant to be drought-tolerant. Take it a step further by learning about [Florida-Friendly Landscaping™](#) and how following certain practices can help plants to thrive while protecting our waterways!



Materials:

- 9 oz. cup
- Soil
- Drought tolerant grass seed (*example: Bahia grass*)
- Small circle stickers for eyes (*optional*)
- Permanent markers

Activity Directions:

- **Step 1:** Create the Muddy Buddy – The first step is to design your Muddy Buddy by making a face. Use the circle stickers for the eyeballs and draw other features onto the cup. Be creative!
- **Step 2:** Add the soil – Fill the cup up with soil. Do not fill to the very top edge.
- **Step 3:** Add the seed – Sprinkle grass seed onto the top of the soil.
- **Step 4:** Grow your Muddy Buddy – As this is new seed, water your Muddy Buddy a little bit everyday for a week and place it somewhere sunny to germinate, like on a windowsill or patio. Once hair starts to sprout, reduce your watering to once a week, or only when your Muddy Buddy looks like it needs water. Remember, too much water is not good for your grass. (*Signs your Muddy Buddy might need water is if the soil is very dry, the grass blades start to fold in half or the grass blades turn brown.*)

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GET CREATIVE (PERFECT FOR A RAINY DAY!)

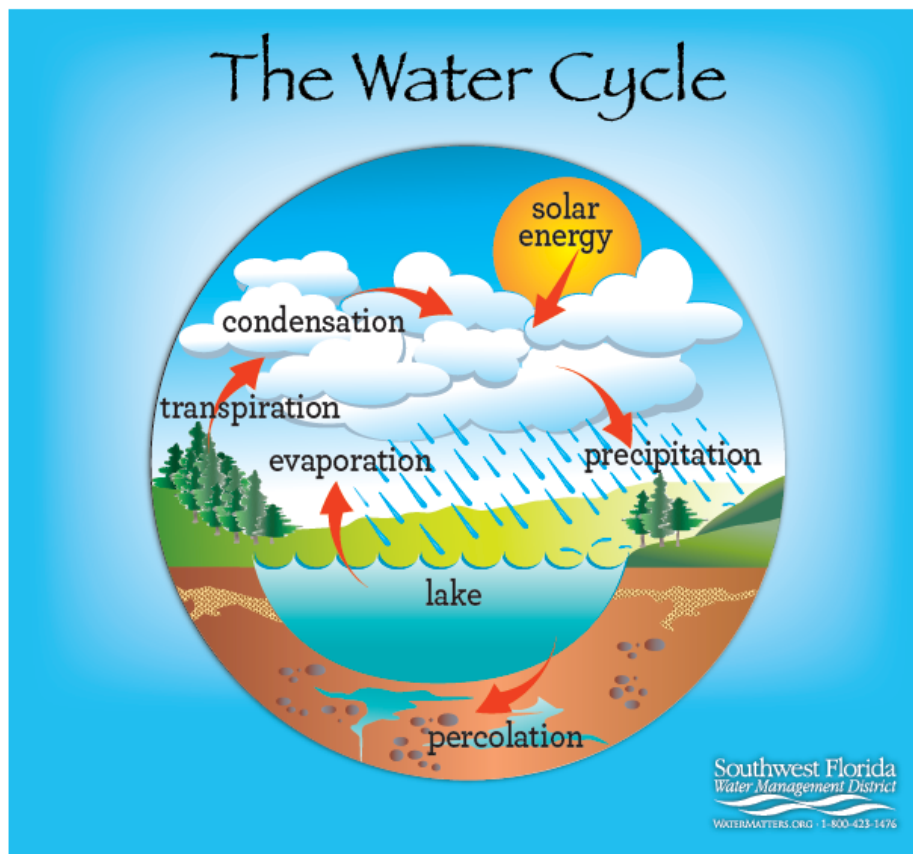
For rainy days or days when it is just too hot to venture outside, get creative! Below are ideas of ways you can have fun learning about our water resources right at home.

Create a water cycle collage

Collages are easy to create and you can't go wrong! Challenge yourself to not just create a nature-themed collage, but one that represents the water cycle. Use the illustration below as a guide of what colors and patterns to look for as your flip through magazines or newspapers for collage parts!

Materials:

- A piece of paper or poster board
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Magazines/Books/Newspapers



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Imagine a new species

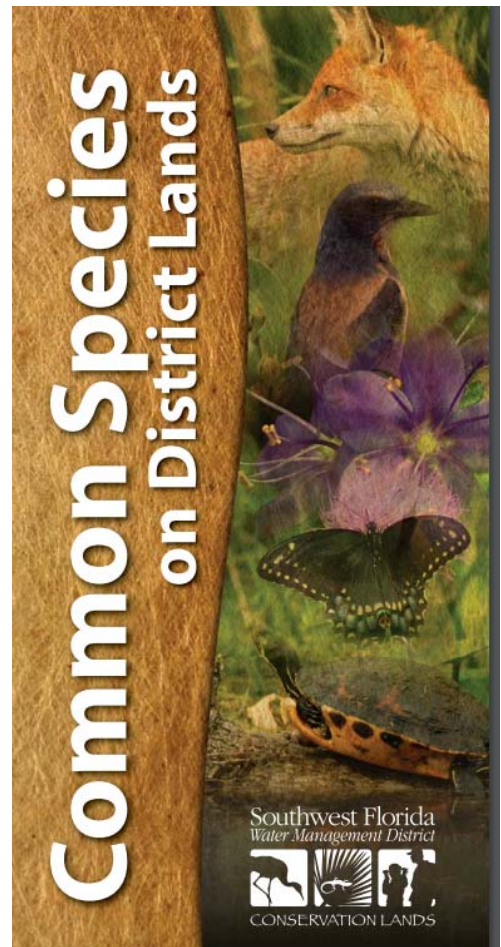
Florida's water resources are home to a variety of habitats where plants and animals of all different shapes and sizes live. Learn about the various species that can be found in west-central Florida and then try to imagine your own!

View the District's "Species Guide: Common Species on District Lands" to find out more about species in our area. The Species Guide is available to view or order on the District's free publications page at WaterMatters.org/Publications.

Activity Directions:

After learning about local species, try to imagine your own! What new species would you like to see wandering in or around our waterways?

- **Step 1:** Name your species
- **Step 2:** Draw your species
- **Step 3:** Describe your species
 - Does it have any special talents? Can it swim, fly, run super-fast, etc.?
 - What does it eat? Is it an herbivore (plant eater) or carnivore (meat eater)?
 - What does it look like? Is it a certain size or color for a reason?
 - Where does it live? Does it prefer salt or fresh water? Can it burrow in the ground?
- **Step 4:** Bring your species to life
 - Use materials you have at home to make a 3-D model of your species. Some helpful items may be clay, playdough, cardboard, feathers, glitter, paint, chenille stems and more! Get creative with what you have available.



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Order District coloring pages

Coloring pages and activity sheets are available to order on the District's free publication page. Order a variety to have on hand for a rainy day! All you'll need is some crayons or markers to make the pages come to life. Order at WaterMatters.org/Publications.

