

HSWCD Happenings

First Kids Day Programs a Success

The Highlands County Soil and Water Conservation District held two AKids Days≡ this summer - Kids Day at the Lake and Kids Day at the Farm. The goal of these events was to teach children a few things about farming and lakes while having fun and providing a memorable experience.

On the Farm, kids were introduced to farming facts through an interactive CD ROM developed by the Farm Service Agency, they touched animal pelts, made bug masks, viewed soil demonstrations, and looked at insects under microscopes at a series of booths after viewing the A Moo to You video from the National Dairy Council.

At the lake, kids viewed a boating safety video, played an interactive watershed game to see how their actions affect water quality, they saw a fish slide presentation, learned about aquatic plants, and were able to hold sand fleas - much to their delight.

Water Lettuce - No, You Can't Eat it!

This floating plant is a problem in Florida waters, where it can take over large areas of lake in a short period of time or clog canals with dense growth, usually in conjunction with water hyacinth. Scientists disagree as to whether this invasive plant is exotic (non-native) or native. The leaves of this plant are furry and the roots dangle below the floating portion, removing nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus from the water. Water lettuce and hyacinth are generally controlled through spraying. Please help keep this weed under control by not transporting it from one lake to another, or to your pond or canal!

The highlight of both days was probably meeting, touching and getting their picture taken with a live 2 foot alligator, Al, on loan from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Additional Kids Days are planned for evenings during this school year.

In other HSWCD news...

The HSWCD sponsored a Lake Olivia Clean-up in July, and volunteers helped pick up trash in and around the lake. A larger Lake Clean-up is planned for Lake Jackson on November 15th.

The HSWCD will be offering several classes this fall and winter. Lakes for the Homeowner will include free instruction on topics such as lake science, watersheds, aquatic plants and algae, lake management and environmental concerns, and fish and wildlife.

The Master Conservationist program will be taught on four Wednesday afternoons in January - see our web site for detailed agendas and more information. We will also be offering the Florida Master Naturalist Coastal Ecosystems class early in 2004 - visit masternaturalist.org for more information and course schedules.

Water Lettuce

