

# Volunteer Opportunities

## You can help...

We need your help to restore EEL lands in Miami-Dade County! You can get involved from September through April. Together, we will help protect our rare native habitats by removing exotic vegetation, enhancing trails, restoring native vegetation, and conducting clean-up activities.

Volunteers are taught to identify various invasive non-native plants while gaining a better understanding of the rare ecosystems and local habitats unique to South Florida.

Participants can earn community service hours.



DEPARTMENT OF REGULATORY AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES

### Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program

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Miami-Dade County

## ENVIRONMENTALLY ENDANGERED LANDS PROGRAM



# Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program

## The Miami-Dade County Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program

Local voters created the Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program in 1990 to protect lands that contain the natural forests and wetland plant communities that sustain rare plants, animals and their habitat. These lands support a diversity of species, outstanding geologic and natural features, and function as a sustaining component of our ecosystem.

Acquiring, protecting and restoring these habitats is important to all of us. Not only are we protecting important biodiversity, but also open green space where growth and development seem limitless.

Open space is important for our quality-of-life, but also for the recharge of our drinking water aquifer and to lessen flooding during heavy rains.

Just as important, these lands help preserve our shared natural heritage - the diverse wildlife and lush native plants that live in South Florida - for the enjoyment of this and future generations



Gopher tortoise

## Invasive exotic plants

Non-native plants have been introduced to South Florida as landscape materials intentionally or have made their way here by accident. Once established, non-native plants can replace native species damaging the habitat needed to support rare plants and animals. Heavy machinery and extensive labor must be used to eliminate these destructive and invasive exotic plants.



Hand removal of invasive ornamental landscape plants

## Invasive exotic animals

Just like non-native plants, non-native animals can have a devastating impact on natural lands. These animals also need to be removed to prevent the damage that they cause.

### You can help...

- ❖ Avoid using invasive non-native plants in your yard. Check out a list of plants to avoid at [www.fleppc.org](http://www.fleppc.org).
- ❖ Don't turn non-native pets loose. Consult a vet, local animal shelter or the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to find out how to get rid of unwanted animals. ([www.myfwc.com](http://www.myfwc.com)).



A native gray fox on alert in a Miami-Dade County EEL preserve.

## Prescribed fire

Many of Florida's ecosystems are fire dependent, requiring periodic fires to keep them healthy and vibrant. Fire benefits natural areas by improving wildlife habitat and increasing flowering and fruiting of native plants. Also, conducting controlled prescribed burns can reduce the risk of wildfire.

### You can help...

- ❖ Support the use of prescribed fires on conservation lands.
- ❖ Dispose of all trash and debris properly.



Fire plays an important role in the ecology of South Florida landscapes.