



a path for preserving nature, enjoying culture

Sketching

From managing water resources to teaching literacy, Lake County boasts a wide variety of services that are working toward protecting, bettering and promoting the many natural and leisure resources. Nature and leisure activities in Lake County are not only plentiful but are recognized across the state.

One of the biggest draws to Lake County is its natural beauty. Programs such as The Blue Ways Trail community development project promote the abundance of natural resources available to citizens and tourists. The Blue Ways Trail project is a series of recreational waterway trails scenically located along the lakes, rivers and canals of Lake County for canoeists, kayakers and recreational boaters. Maps and trail markers are provided to help paddlers and boaters guide their way through the water trails. The maps include launch areas, waterside restaurants, shops, camps and available hotels for travelers. The program enhances recreational and educational opportunities for both local residents and visitors, and it promotes economic development.

Pristine Protection

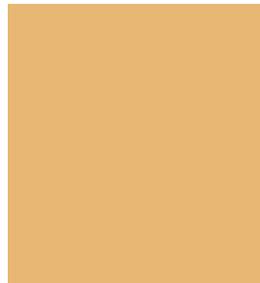
The Department of Environmental Services oversees care of Lake County's natural resources by proper management, testing and inspecting of water and refuse and ensuring compliance with all federal, state and local environmental regulations.

As part of the Department reorganization in 2004, an Administration Division was created to consolidate and streamline administrative functions. This new Division addresses all personnel, safety, regulatory and customer service issues, leaving operations staff to focus on technical needs.

Tackling Illiteracy

The Library Services Division hosted the First Annual Festival of Reading in April 2004, a celebration of National Library Week and an opportunity to showcase libraries in Lake County. The libraries and staff coordinated 27 events, which included authors, performers, speakers and workshops. Each member and

In 2003, more than 1.3 million items were circulated in the Lake County Library System – enough for each Lake County resident to have checked out five books.



branch library scheduled events that educated, entertained and promoted library services within the community.

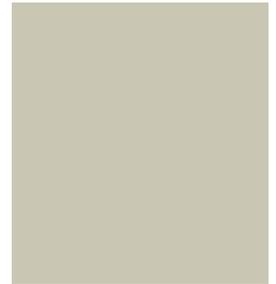
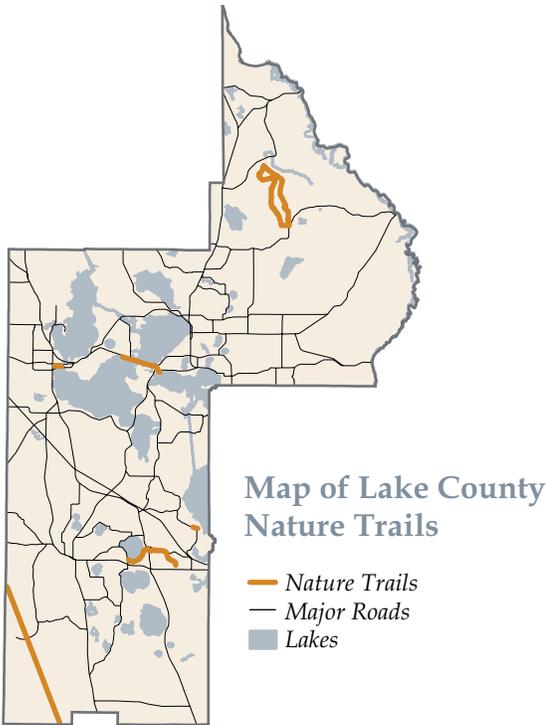
The Division received a \$68,000 Library Services and Technology Act Grant in 2004 to fund the third year of the Born to Read Family Literacy project. This program focuses on breaking the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy by providing programs to parents with small children and families, and tutoring services to adults in need. Since its inception in 2001, the program has registered more than 2,600 residents as

participants. The countywide Adult Literacy Program provides training in basic literacy and English for speakers of other languages. This year, the first edition of the “Literacy Family Lighthouse,” the monthly newsletter for the Library Literacy Program, was published.

Recreation Renaissance

Parks & Recreation handles maintenance and improvements at 35 County parks. This year, the parks department completed development of Pine Forest and Twin Lakes parks. These projects took four months to complete and

On average, each household in Lake County throws away more than 2,500 pounds of trash a year. Environmental Services programs, by reducing, reusing and recycling that waste, actually dispose of less than 500 pounds per household.



feature basketball courts, youth playgrounds, picnic areas, nature trails and parking lots. Twin Lakes Park was completed in cooperation with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection through a \$100,000 matching grant with the County.

Parks & Recreation developed the first dog park in Lake County and a hiking trail at Palatka Environmental and Agricultural Reserve (PEAR) Park in cooperation with volunteers from the PEAR Association. A Florida Department of Community Affairs grant for \$3.1 million is enabling the County to purchase 50 additional acres of parkland at the PEAR Gateway. The parks department also maintains hiking and nature trails through scrub jay conservation

areas at Palatka River and Pine Forest parks. In addition, a two-mile extension of the Clermont/Minneola Bike Trail along Old Highway 50 and Hancock Road was completed this year.

Attraction Favorites

The Lake County Historical Museum preserves Lake County history for all residents and visitors. With more than 30 new exhibits in 2004 and many special events, there is always something new to see and do at the Museum. In addition to Lake County residents, the Museum has had visitors from all 50 states and more than 35 different countries and hosted more than 50,000 visitors last year. The Museum was also named one of the top 100 museums in the state by "Florida Monthly" magazine.



The agricultural flavor of the Lake County community is evident throughout County-maintained facilities and programs. The Expo Center/Fairgrounds hosts various functions, including a weekly Farmers' Market and a variety of family-oriented events. Lake County 4-H offers many diverse program opportunities to young people between the ages of 5 and 18. Life skills are taught through different project areas such as animal science, horticulture and environmental education.

Agriculture Center staff organized the Lake County Beef Cattle Field Day at Kuharske Farms, which was attended by more than 60 farmers, ranchers, teachers and students. The

program was co-sponsored by the Lake County Cattlemen's Association and the Lake County Extension Service. Program topics included basic genetics and heifer development.

The Lake County Master Gardener and the Lake County Residential Horticulture programs received several awards this year. The children's garden program received an award at the State Master Gardener Conference. The Mobile Plant Clinic offers important educational materials to citizens about horticultural and other services provided by Lake County departments. This innovative approach by the program earned distinctive awards from the University of Florida and National Association of Counties.