

## Brooker Creek Preserve

Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management's Environmental Lands Division manages Brooker Creek Preserve. Our mission is to provide sound stewardship to the County's wild lands and opportunities for the appreciation of their intrinsic value. Established in 1992 by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners, Brooker Creek Preserve remains the largest natural area in the County. At approximately 8,000 acres, the Preserve protects a wide diversity of natural communities and provides vital habitat for many organisms. The Preserve also protects a portion of its namesake, the Brooker Creek watershed, which includes a series of channels that meander all the way from Hillsborough County to Lake Tarpon. These streams hold water during the rainy season, help improve water quality for Lake Tarpon, and reduce flood impacts downstream.



## Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center

Completed in 2004, the Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center's mission is to empower citizens to make informed decisions about natural resources. The Center offers interpretive programs and hikes, special events, workshops, and educational programs. Visitors can also learn more about the Preserve by exploring the exhibits hall, by researching topics in the resource center, and by visiting the nature store.

## Hiking Trail Hours

Trails are open from 7:00 a.m. to 60 minutes before sunset. Please consult the "Trail Clock" at the trailhead for exact closing time.

## Trail Safety

- Remain on designated hiking trails.
- Consult the enclosed map while hiking.
- Return to your vehicle by closing time.
- Carry a cellular phone for 911 emergencies.

## Preserve Trail Rules

### Preserve Ordinance 08-29

- All flora and fauna are protected.
- Pack trash out or place in designated containers at the trailheads or Center.
- Releasing animals into the Preserve is illegal.

### The following are prohibited:

- Smoking and alcohol
- Weapons/firearms and fireworks/campfires
- All domesticated animals, including dogs and horses
- Unauthorized vehicles, including bicycles, motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles

## Other Amenities

- Restrooms are available at the Center.
- No restroom facilities are provided along the trails.
- An emergency phone is located on the southwest corner of the auditorium.

## About These Trails

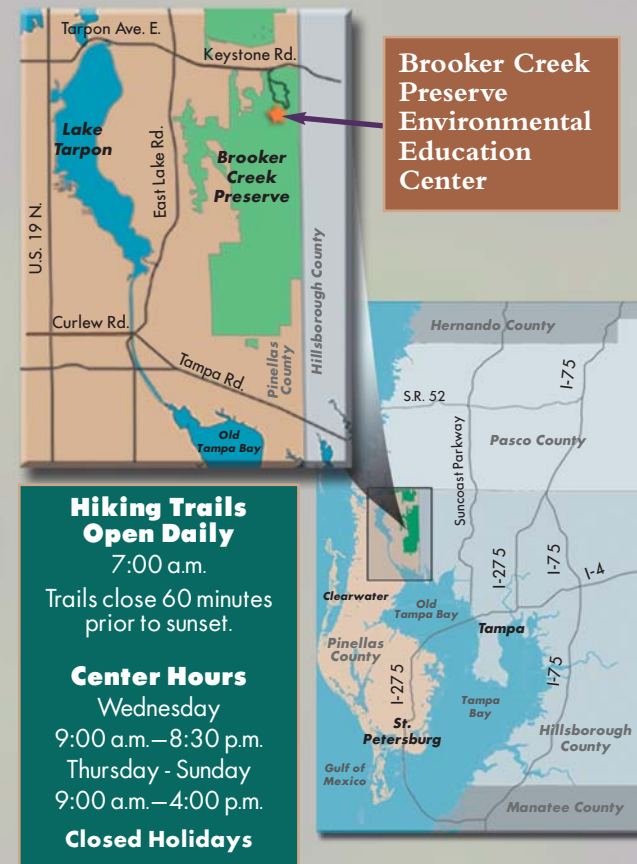
These hiking trails remain in a natural state to minimize the impact of our presence in this area. Elevated boardwalks are provided only on the Ed Center Trail loop. Some portions of the trails may have standing water during the rainy season. Portions of the trails may be temporarily closed due to prescribed or wildfire, high fire danger or standing water that is excessively high.

## Hiker's Companions

Water, sunscreen, a hat and sturdy closed-toe shoes, insect repellent, snacks, binoculars, and a cellular phone (for emergencies) are recommended companions for all hikers.

## Parking

Overnight parking is not allowed. For your safety, the license plate number of vehicles remaining in the parking lot after closing will be shared with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office. Violators may be ticketed.



For additional information,  
please call us at (727) 453-6800  
Guided interpretive hikes reservations:  
(727) 453-6910

Brooker Creek Preserve  
Environmental Education Center  
3940 Keystone Road  
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688



[www.pinellascounty.org/environment](http://www.pinellascounty.org/environment)

Pinellas County complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. To obtain accessible formats of the document, please contact the Department of Environmental Management at: (727) 464-4761/TDD (727) 464-4106

# BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE

## Wildlands Hiking Trails

Hikers looking for a quiet place to stroll in Pinellas County will enjoy hiking at Brooker Creek Preserve. These trails wind over creek crossings, through majestic pines, past stately cypress, and under large protective oaks, affording visitors a chance to experience the Preserve's many ecosystems. Take a step and return to nature by enjoying a stroll through "Our Wildest Place."



A Pinellas County Government Program

## Hiking Trails

Help us foster understanding of outdoor ethics by observing all trail rules and being considerate to fellow hikers.

### Ed Center Trail

Visitors to the Center can easily add a stroll along this trail to their visit. Elevated boardwalks keep visitor's feet dry as the trail meanders through bottomland swamps toward drier, shady oak hammocks. Impressive views of Brooker Creek are possible from the bridges that span the Preserve's namesake.

### Flatwoods Trail

As its name implies, this dirt trail winds through several pine flatwoods communities. Most are on a normal prescribed burn rotation. Note the low-growing saw palmetto, abundant grasses and flowering plants that are all indicators of a healthy pine flatwoods system.

### Blackwater Cutoff

Hikers encounter alternating dry trails through the pine flatwoods and wet ones through the forested wetlands along this trail. Near the northern portion of this trail, hikers cross Channel S, one of the 13 channels of Brooker Creek.

### Pine Needle Path

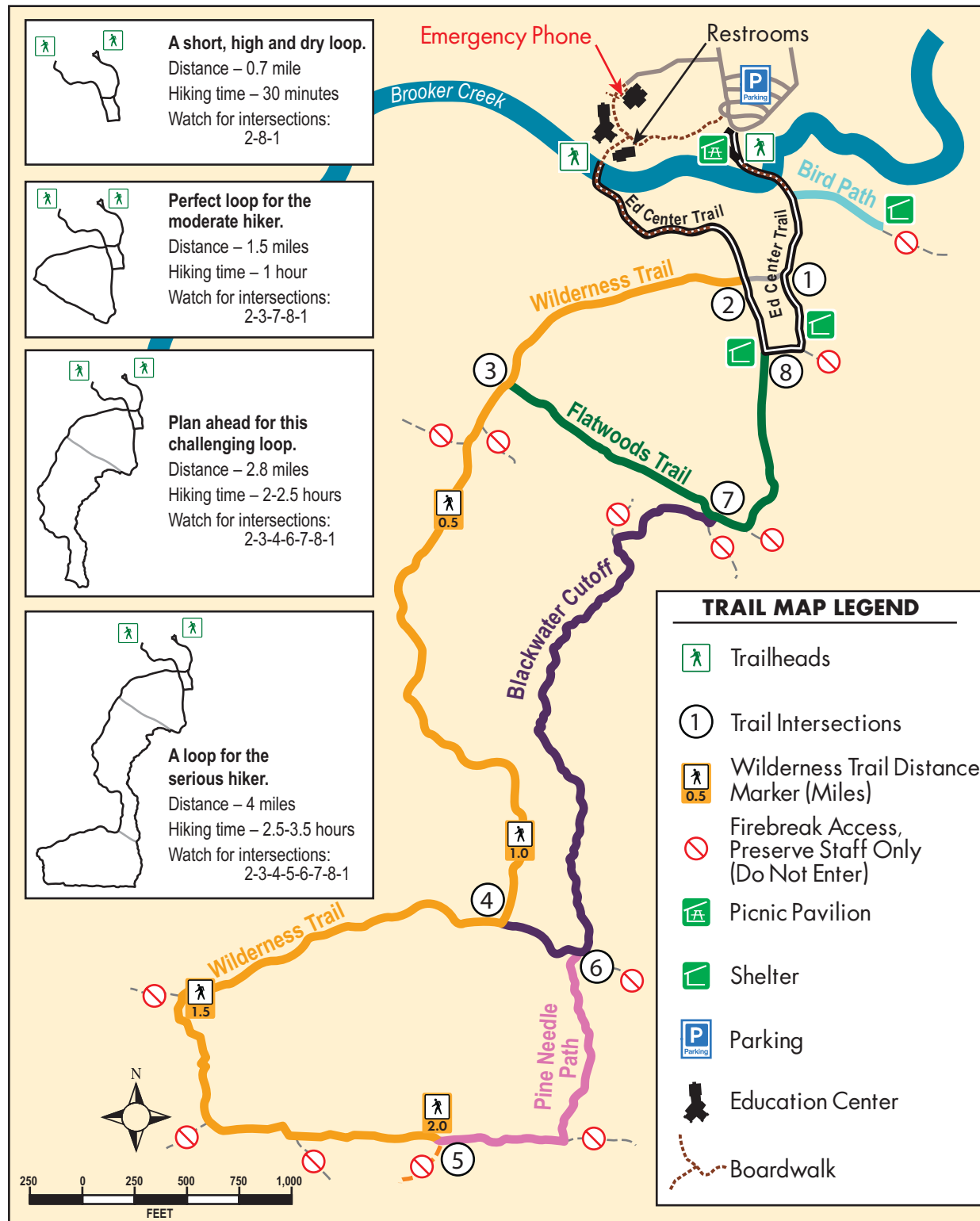
This trail begins at the edge of a cypress swamp and winds through a pine flatwoods community.

### Wilderness Trail

This trail crosses through forested wetlands, two channels of Brooker Creek, a cypress swamp, and more pine flatwoods. Restoration is on-going to bring trails back to grade. This will not only make the trails a little drier, but it will also improve the hydrology and overall health of the Preserve's ecosystems.

### Bird Path

This short path through an oak hammock ends at a freshwater marsh. A viewing blind enhances opportunities for bird enthusiasts.



## Forested Wetlands

The headwaters of Brooker Creek lie in a series of cypress domes approximately eight miles east of the Hillsborough/Pinellas county border. The creek system

consists of 13 meandering channels, most of which hold flowing water only during the rainy season. Eventually, all the channels merge into one that outflows into Lake Tarpon. The Brooker Creek floodplain includes all the adjacent bottomland hardwood forests and cypress swamps, which partially rely on the creek for water and hold floodwaters during heavy storms.



## Oak Hammocks

Given fire suppression, sandy soils, and a long period of time, sandhills will eventually become oak hammock communities. These towering oaks provide ample shade,

thereby reducing the number of sun-loving shrubs and ground cover. Wild turkeys and white-tailed deer are often seen foraging for acorns intermixed with the leaf litter.



## Pine Flatwoods

Dominated by tall longleaf or slash pines, this sunny community is surrounded by a blanket of saw palmetto, native grasses, forbs, and the beautiful, but threatened,

Catesby's lily. Once exploited as a natural source of turpentine, longleaf pine can be restored through frequent fire. Prescribed burning every 3-5 years favors the fire-resistant longleaf pine and encourages wiregrass growth.



## Cypress Domes and Swamps

Bald cypress, black gum and buttonbush dominate these cool and moist communities. Noted for holding water for long periods of time, swamps

are wooded wetlands teeming with life. From frogs to marsh rabbits, squirrels to owls, dragonflies to spiders, the swamp is always a busy place.