

**Best Practices**

The Florida Recreation and Park Association adopted a comprehensive Strategic Plan in 2015. That Plan is based on four foundational pillars – Health, Community Building, Environmental Sustainability and Resiliency, and Economic Impact/Development.

The Association is in search of Best Practices in each of these four areas, which can serve as a resource for parks and recreation professionals. We realize that “Best Practice” can be broadly applied and the meaning varies depending on the environment and industry one works within.

For the purposes of the FRPA Strategic Plan, the Association’s Board of Directors has adopted and will apply the following definition:

FRPA Strategic Best Practices – Methods, professional guidance, benchmarks and technical expertise centered around a FRPA strategic pillar (Health, Environment, Community Building, Economic Impact) that are evidence-based or proven through experience to support positive results and may be replicated or utilized by other parks and recreation agencies toward achieving a similar desired outcome.

“Evidence-based or proven through experience” indicates that the best practice has had some research, or long term monitoring conducted to show that the practice is having a positive outcome when applied. For example: When applying the best practice of mowing and over-seeding in this manner, for a period of one year, we have been able to extend the life of our turf by 6 months thus reducing expenses $X; OR When integrating physical activity and nutrition education in our after school programming, we partnered with the University of XYZ to measure increased health of participants, and have shown a 24% reduction in BMI of participants.

We realize that there may be a plethora of “success stories” that are not evidence based, but have produced positive results for an agency, and may also have value as a shared resource.

Submissions will be evaluated by the Best Practice Workgroup to determine if the submission meets the criteria of “Best Practice” as we have defined, or if it should be catalogued as a “success story”.



**Best Practice Submission**

Agency: \_\_Marion County Parks and Recreation\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_Leah Hoffman\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Email: \_\_\_Leah.Hoffman@marioncountyfl.org \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone with Area Code: \_\_\_\_352-671-8560\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Area of Best Practice:** ENVIRONMENTAL PILLAR: Invasive Exotics
ex: managing spread/public outreach/identification/eradication

**Summary of Best Practice:** (include description of the practice, reason for adopting/implementing best practice, measurement of effectiveness of the practice, what is your evidence that the practice is working, etc.)

**Exotic, Feral & Nuisance Animals**

*Exotic and feral animals are species not indigenous to Florida that occur here usually because of human-aided range expansion or translocation. Exotic and feral animal populations are regarded, together with exotic invasive plants, as the main threats to healthy natural biological diversity within the County. In order to protect and preserve native wildlife and plants from predation, disease, and other impacts presented by exotic and feral animals and to maintain the integrity of ecosystems and ecological processes it is necessary to control the number of exotic and feral animals. Examples of exotic and feral animal species include foreign wildlife, feral dogs, feral cats, and feral hogs.*

*If such an animal is found within a Marion County park, staff will contact the Operations Manager or Animal Services, whichever is appropriate to have the animal removed. Only Natural Resource and Park Ranger staff are to handle domestic, exotic, feral or nuisance animals for any reason.*

***Nuisance Animals***

*Nuisance animals are individual animals of native species whose actions create special management problems. Examples of animal species from which nuisance cases may arise include raccoons, gray squirrels, armadillos, bears, poisonous snakes, coyotes and alligators. The following problems with nuisance animals in general may occur:*

*Potential threat to humans of physical injury (bites; scratches) or disease occurs due to diseased animals, abnormal or conditioned animal behavior patterns, including persistence in high public use areas.*

*Unacceptable damage occurs to park facilities or other public or private property.*

*Unacceptable damage occurs to valuable park natural resources.*

***Policy***

*The Parks and Recreation Department, through the Parks Operations Division, will seek to reduce the adverse impact of exotic and feral animals on the natural biodiversity of the County by:*

*Removing, where practical, all exotic and feral animals from parks except where provisions are included in park management plans for retaining some feral animals for specific management or conservation purposes.*

*Ensuring that all exotic and feral animal control be humane and done by the most appropriate methods. Control may include commercial harvesting and utilization of feral animals but it is understood that in many situations this may be inappropriate or inadequate and other control methods must be used. Exotic and feral animals may be trapped and removed or destroyed in a humane manner where appropriate. The Parks Operations Division is responsible for disposing of exotic and feral animals in a manner that maintains the integrity of ecosystems and ecological processes.(3/22/11)*

*Implementing approved exotic and feral animal management programs which have clear measurable objectives, including follow-up monitoring to gauge effectiveness and suggested revisions as control priorities change.*

*Co-operating with landholders and local authorities to ensure that all unmanaged exotic and feral animal populations are controlled as far as is practical.*

*Explaining to landholders and the public generally the reasons why feral animal control programs are desirable and necessary.*

*The Parks and Recreation Department, through the Parks Operations Division, will seek to reduce the threat to humans and adverse impact of nuisance animals on park lands, public facilities and adjacent private property of the County by:*

*Educating park visitors through appropriate methods to avoid careless or deliberate encounters with potential nuisance animals and thereby avoid exposure to their hazards.*

*Anticipate, detect, and resolve nuisance animal situations before they become critical.*

*Eliminate or modify a food source or visitor behavior which attracts animals to public areas.*

*Discourage nuisance animals that approach humans for food, or that approach high public use areas.*

*Relocate nuisance animals, if practicable, after consultation with Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Relocation to occur within the same property whenever possible, and if not, to other properties with permission and FWC permit, if required.*

*Ensure that all persistent nuisance animal control be humane and done by the most appropriate methods. Control*

*may include relocation, but it is understood that in many situations this may be inappropriate or inadequate and other control methods must be used such as firing paintballs and loud noise devises to discourage the animal from continuing its nuisance activity.*

*Native animals exhibiting behaviors of being diseased (ex: rabies; distemper) shall be humanely destroyed, when possible, and safely transported to a testing facility. These animals will be trapped or captured and humanely destroyed when practical to reduce the threat to humans and other animals. If the animal is found to be infected with a disease that is dangerous or fatal to humans, the Department shall immediately report the findings to the*

*County Health Department and take any other appropriate action necessary.*

*Nuisance animals on the State or Federal protected species list shall be address through the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission or appropriate agency. When necessary a wildlife trapper will be contracted to remove exotic, feral and nuisance animals on County owned/managed lands by legal humane means*

**Frequency Best Practice is Applied:** (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, bi-annually, annually)

**As needed.**

**Who Performs the Best Practice Function within your Agency:** (contracted, in-house parks staff, in-house recreation staff, citizens, etc.) parks staff, recreation staff, citizens

**Positive Outcome of the Best Practice** (please summarize the evidence based benefit that has been derived by the agency from the best practice)**: better control and efficiency**

**Awards/Recognitions/Designations Received as a Result of the Best Practice** (please share any awards or designations received, or publications that have featured this best practice)**: None**

**Grants or Funding Received (if any): None**

**What other Best Practices would you suggest we collect?**

**Submit this Form electronically to** **charla@frpa.org**

Type directly onto this document, and submit as a Word Document. Please DO NOT pdf the form.