

PBC awarded 1\$M from EPA for tree canopy in Glades

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Palm Beach County Awarded \$1M from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to Expand Tree Canopy in Glades Communities

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) selected Palm Beach County (PBC) to receive a one-million dollar grant from the EPA Environmental Justice Government-to-Government (EJG2G) program to fund regreening efforts in the PBC Glades community. The EJG2G program provides funding to support government activities that lead to measurable environmental or public health impacts in communities disproportionately burdened by environmental harms.

For the Resilient Glades Tree Campaign, PBC's Office of Resilience and Parks & Recreation Department will work with Community Greening, a local urban forestry nonprofit, to expand tree canopy in the Glades region, including the South Bay, Belle Glade, Pahokee and Canal Point communities. The Resilient Glades Tree Campaign will plant trees at six PBC parks, host at least eight tree giveaway events where Glades residents will receive native and fruit trees, pilot a small urban food orchard and support Community Greening's youth workforce development team. The project will decrease urban heat impacts, improve air quality, absorb stormwater, increase native biodiversity and increase access to fresh produce. This project proposal was prepared with support from the PBC Cooperative Extension Service, the City of South Bay, the City of Belle Glade, the City of Pahokee, the Palm Health Foundation and Florida Clinicians for Climate Action.

"Through resiliency workshops we held earlier this year in the Glades, we heard from participants about how climate change is impacting them and what they wanted the county to help fund. People explained how extreme heat combined with a lack of tree canopy coverage is a big problem for their community and prevents them from enjoying outdoor recreation spaces safely. They wanted to see more shade trees invested in their parks, and we are thrilled to work with community members to help bring funding to do just that," said Megan Houston, PBC Office of Resilience director.

"Local parks play a critical green infrastructure role. We are thrilled to work with our partners to increase tree canopy in the Glades Region, further mitigating the urban heat island effect, making our community more climate resilient and providing additional wildlife habitat in our parks. PBC Parks & Recreation is looking forward to the community joining us in this exciting effort," said Jennifer Cirillo, PBC Parks and Recreation Department director.

“Community Greening looks forward to working with the Glades community to expand the tree canopy. Residents will receive free fruit and native trees to plant in their yards, volunteers will help add shade to their neighborhood public parks and local teens will earn money to help maintain the trees. The EPA’s investment speaks to the groundwork, collaboration and critical need to plant more trees in this area of Palm Beach County,” said Mark Cassini, Community Greening executive director.

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