

# Brooker Creek Preserve

## About the Hiking Trails

Four miles of trails remain in a natural state to minimize the impact of our presence on the land. Because of this, at times portions of the trails may have areas of shallow to deep standing water. Elevated boardwalks are provided only on the Ed Center Trail loop. Portions of the trails may be temporarily closed due to prescribed burns, wildfires or high fire danger.

### Trail Rules Pinellas County Code Chapter 90:

- Releasing animals into the Preserve is illegal.
- All flora and fauna are protected.
- Place trash in designated containers.

### Trail Safety:

- Remain on designated hiking trails.
- Carry a cell phone for 911 emergencies.

### The following are prohibited:

- Smoking
- Alcohol
- Hunting
- Dogs and all domesticated animals (horses allowed on designated trails)
- Fireworks, campfires and explosives
- Unauthorized vehicles, including bicycles and motorcycles (except on paved public entrance road), and all-terrain vehicles



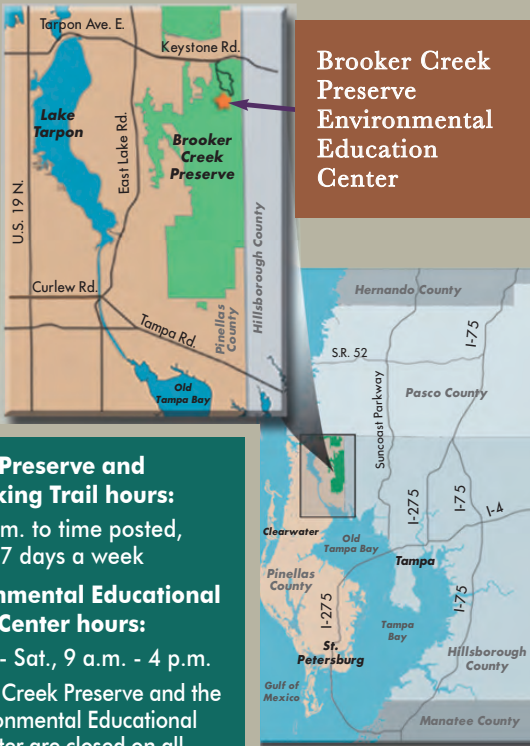
**Hikes:** Free, guided hikes are offered every Saturday morning.

**Parking:** Overnight parking is not allowed. 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.

**Picnic Facilities:** The screened-porch area, picnic pavilion and outdoor shelters are available on a first come, first serve basis.

### Other Amenities:

- Restrooms are available in the Classroom building and the Environmental Education Center during open hours.
- No restroom facilities are provided along the trails.
- An emergency phone is located on the southwest corner of the auditorium.



### Preserve and Hiking Trail hours:

7 a.m. to time posted,  
7 days a week

### Environmental Educational Center hours:

Thurs. - Sat., 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Brooker Creek Preserve and the Environmental Educational Center are closed on all Pinellas County holidays. The preserve's hiking trails are closed the Friday after Thanksgiving and December 25.

## The Environmental Education Center

Our mission is to empower citizens to improve their quality of life and establish a connection with their environment through research-based educational programs focused on natural, cultural and historical resources. The center offers educational programs, hikes, special events and workshops. Visitors can also learn more about the preserve by exploring the

exhibits, and investigating the resource room.

**Special Events:** The Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve sponsor annual fall and spring festivals. Summer camps are also available for kids.

**Resource Center:** Natural resource books, guides and brochures are available for further research.

**Exhibits:** Permanent exhibits provide a variety of interactive educational displays for all ages.

**Nature Store:** Books, guides, shirts, hats, toys, snacks, nature-based souvenirs and more.

**Programs:** Classes are offered on a variety of natural-resource topics, from energy conservation to the birds in your backyard.

Brooker Creek Preserve  
Environmental Education Center  
3940 Keystone Rd., Tarpon Springs, FL 34688  
For additional information, call us at (727) 453-6800.



[www.brookercreekpreserve.org](http://www.brookercreekpreserve.org)



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# BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE

## Wildlands Hiking Trails & Environmental Education Center



A Pinellas County Government Program

Visitors looking for a quiet place to stroll and a fascinating place to learn will enjoy the hiking trails and Environmental Education Center at Brooker Creek Preserve. The trails wind over creek crossings and through majestic pines, oaks and cypress, 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.





# The Trails

## Ed Center Trail

Visitors to the center can easily add a stroll along this trail to their visit. Elevated boardwalks keep visitors' 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

Along this section, hikers encounter alternating dry trails through the pine flatwoods and wet trails through the forested wetlands. 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.

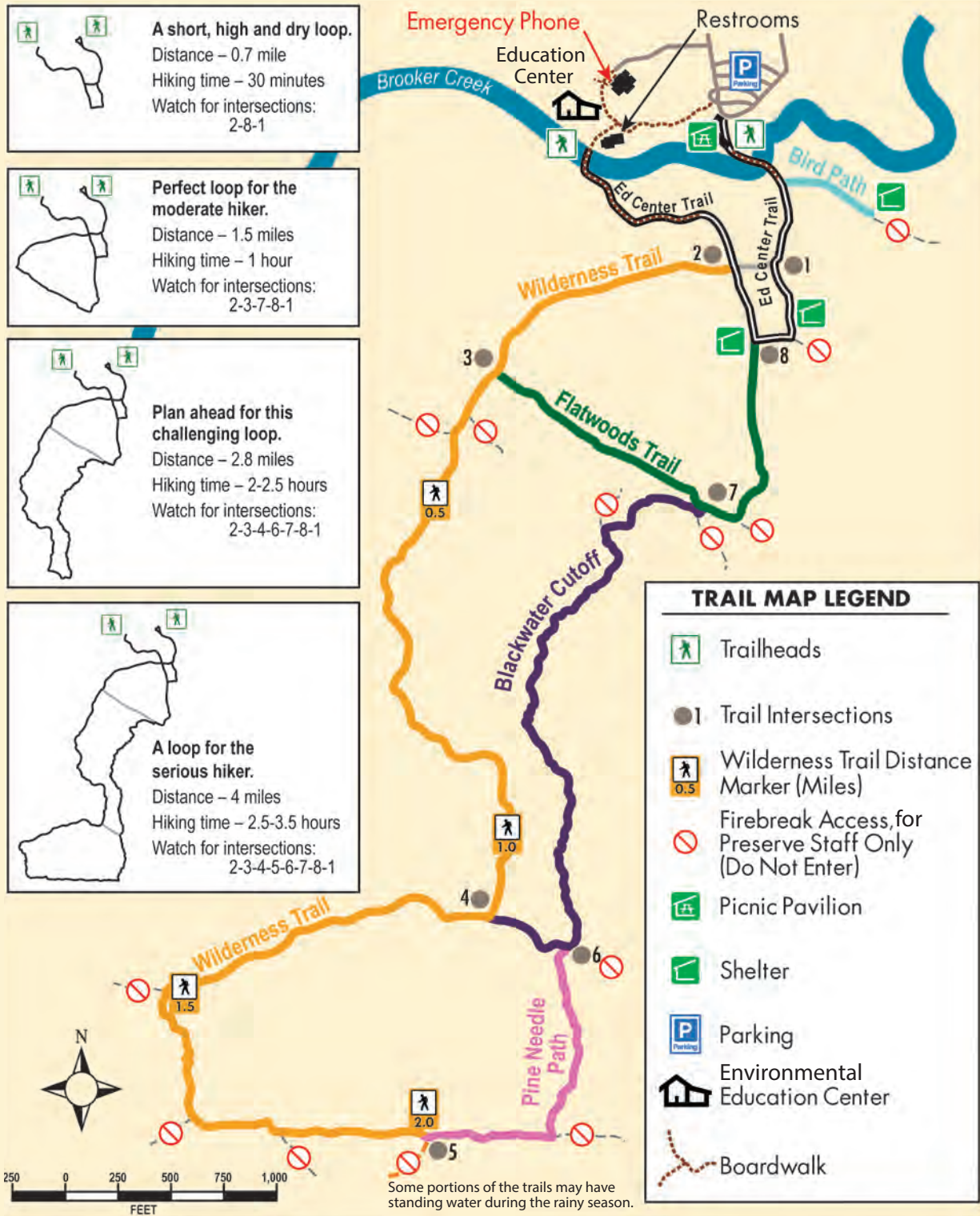
## Wilderness Trail

This trail crosses through forested wetlands, two channels of Brooker Creek, a cypress swamp and more pine flatwoods. Restoration is ongoing to bring these trails to grade, which will not only make the trails a little drier, but 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 to see residential migrating birds.

*The Brooker Creek Preserve, managed by Pinellas County, is a valuable, natural land preserve in an ever-increasing urban area. Pinellas County gave this property a special protection status and seeks to promote awareness of the need to protect vital watersheds and natural lands in Florida.*



# The Habitats



## 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 (May - Oct.). 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,

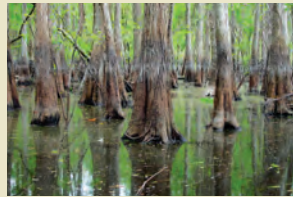
thereby reducing the number of sun-loving shrubs and ground cover. Wild turkeys and white-tailed deer are often seen foraging for acorns intermixed with the leaf litter.



## Pine Flatwoods

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

Catesby's lily. Once exploited as a natural source of turpentine, longleaf pine communities can be restored through frequent fire. Prescribed burning every 3 to 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.