

This trail is dedicated to **Mr. George E. LeStrange** (1912-1962), who loved the outdoors and was an avid fisherman.



**The 1 mile interpretive trail loop will explore the different plant communities and help you identify several common plants along Ten Mile Creek.**

**1) Wetland**—This area was dredged for sand. It is being restored with the planting of a variety of plants such as Baldcypress, rushes and sedges. These shallow waters are excellent sites to view wading birds that are in search of minnows, crayfish, worms and snails.

**2) Oaks**— The two most common species of oaks are in front of you.

**Live Oak**—*Quercus virginiana*—is to your right. This species is named for its longevity, reaching upwards of 300 years old. Its leaves are shiny green on top, and dull white below. It prefers well drained soils.

**Laurel Oak**—*Quercus laurifolia*— is located to your left. Unlike the Live Oak, this species is rather short lived, reaching a typical age of 80. Its leaves are shiny green on top and below, and the bark is smooth. Preferring wetter sites, it is a relatively fast grower. As you descend this slope, you are entering the historic floodplain of Ten Mile Creek.

**3) Old Ten Mile Creek**—In front of you is the historic Ten Mile Creek. The creek meandered through the floodplain, twisting and turning as it flowed to the Indian River. Most of the creek was straightened and dredged in the early 1900's, causing many of these historic creek beds to undergo significant ecological change.

The **Water Hickory** - *Carya aquatica*— to your left is the most common tree of the floodplain. With a trunk from one to two feet in diameter, its compound leaves are smooth and vary widely in length. A relative of the Water Hickory is the Scrub Hickory that occupies drier sites.

**4) New Ten Mile Creek** - Straightened and dredged for the purposes of flood protection and navigation, the new creek elevation was lowered about 5 feet, causing many of the historic oxbows to dry out. The dredging caused the waters to concentrate in a smaller area, increasing water flow, while habitat for wading birds was nearly eliminated.

**5) Beautyberry**— *Callicarpa americana* - The purple berries are important food sources of birds and other wildlife in the fall. Mockingbirds often establish territories around plants and drive off potential competitors.

**6) Sabal Palm** - *Sabal palmetto* - Florida's state tree is also known as Cabbage Palm, and was named as such because the edible bud tastes much like cabbage. The trunk appears to have been pushed to the ground probably by the huge steam dredges that placed the large piles of spoil along the new creek.

**7) Floodplain** -Throughout the floodplain, there are subtle elevation changes. In average summer rains, rainfall would accumulate in these slight depressions, and over time would slowly percolate through the hardpan into the water table. During excessive rainfall events such as hurricanes, the entire floodplain becomes flooded. These events often change the courses of the creeks, causing them to abruptly end and start elsewhere. You are now standing in one of the old oxbows.

**8) Marlberry** - *Ardisia escallonioides* - A common plant of hammocks, native peoples used the wood for making arrows. The leaves were mixed with tobacco to season or extend it. To your right is **Wild Coffee** - *Psychotria nervosa* - A shrub that grows to ten feet tall with thin branches. Leaves are dark green, glossy, oval, pointed up to six inches long with prominent veins. Produces a fruit of oval red berries that when roasted have been used as a coffee substitute.

**9) Ash** - *Fraxinus caroliniana* - Found typically in standing water, this ash usually has 7, 5-12 inch long leaves. Once the historic oxbows were altered, most of the ash has disappeared.

**10) Buttonbush** - *Cephalanthus occidentalis* - An excellent food for waterfowl as the seeds are eaten by mallards and wood ducks. The plant also provides excellent roosting and cover for a variety of birds when it forms dense thickets. Similar to ash, this plant has nearly disappeared in the upper reaches of Ten Mile Creek.

**11) Epiphytes** - On the branches of the Hickory is an epiphyte, Resurrection Fern. The Fern does not obtain any nutrients from its host tree. Other epiphytes include orchids and a variety of bromeliads, many of which are under threat of extinction from a non-native weevil. To your left you will see the end of the old oxbow that you have been walking along. Directly across the creek, you can see where it continued before the New Ten Mile Creek was dug, straightening the water body.

**12) Change** - As you climb the slope to the left, the soils become sandy and dry. Plants and trees have adapted to live in this harsh environment by developing various mechanisms to reduce transpiration rates. Many plants have thick leathery leaves to reduce moisture loss. Several have shallow root systems to intercept rainfall before it rapidly moves through the soil to the water table.

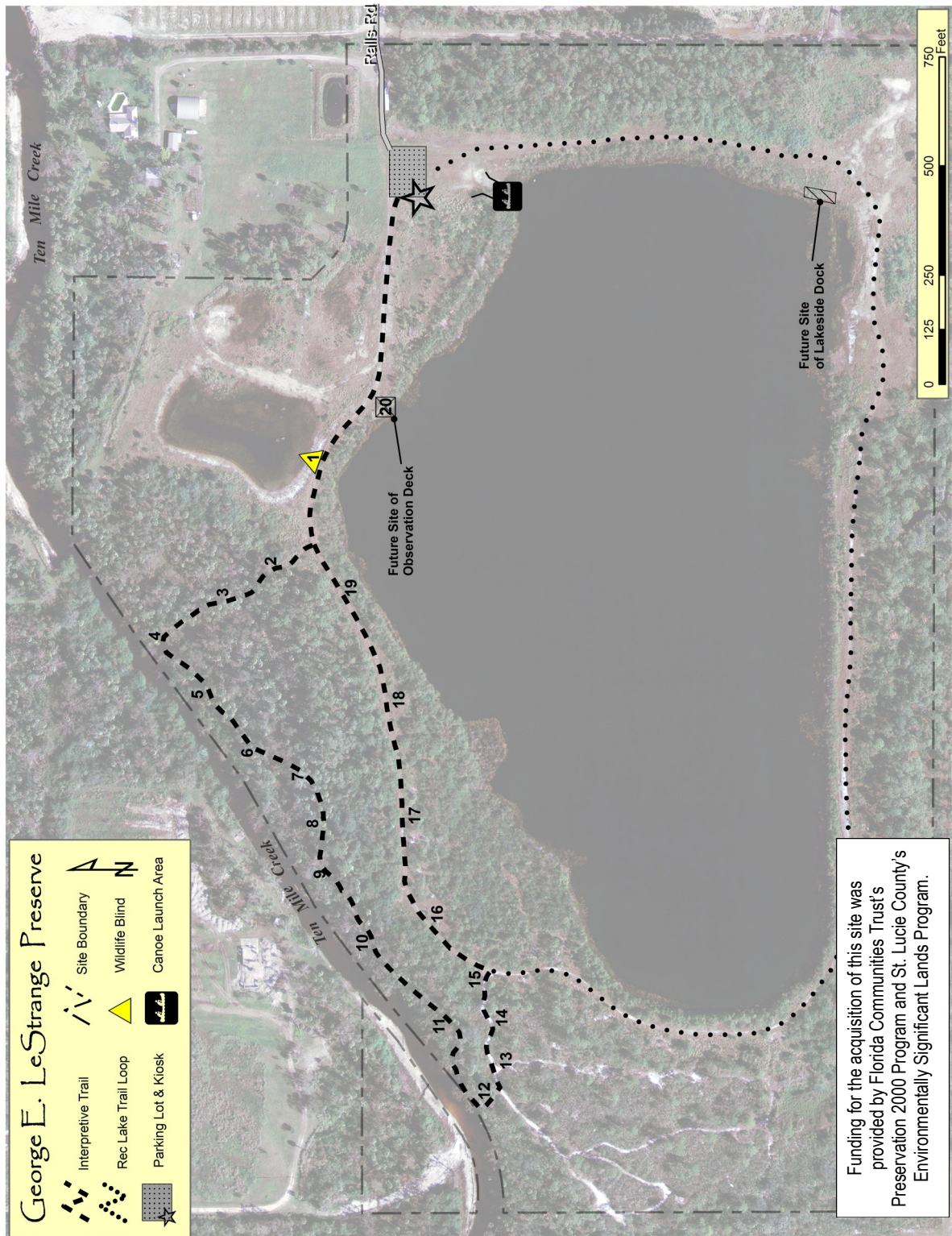
**13) Sand Live Oak** - *Quercus geminata* - has thick leaves with rolled edges. The leaves are dark green, somewhat corrugated on top, and white on the bottom. These small trees may grow very old, reaching 200 years of age.

**14) Tallowwood** - *Ximenia americana* - Other names: Spanish plum, hog plum, purge nut: Shrub or small tree up to twenty-three feet in height, containing sharp thorns. The fruit is a favorite of the Gopher Tortoise.

**15) Scrub Oaks** - There are many "scrub" Oaks in the area. To your right is the **Myrtle Oak** *Quercus myrtifolia*. Myrtle Oaks have thick waxy leaves that are turned downward. The leaf margins are smooth, not wavy. To your left is the **Chapman Oak** *Quercus chapmanii* with wavy leaf margins. These oaks provide an abundant source of acorns for wildlife, especially squirrels.

**16) Wax Myrtle**—*Myrica cerifera*—The leaves of this plant are aromatic when crushed, and were used by early native peoples and pioneers as a natural insect repellent. Wax from the berries was also used to make candles and soap. The fruits of this plant is very important to native birds, especially wintering warblers and other migrants.

**17) Restoration**—In front of you are the effects of restoration activities. Exotics had taken over and once removed, the land is slowly reverting back to a natural condition, with the establishment of a variety of early successional plants such as crotalaria, saltbush, hairy indigo, frostweed and bidens. In just a few years, the site will look completely different with the natural seeding of slash pine and cabbage palm.



George E. LeStrange Preserve is a 94 acre site that contains a large catch and release lake, canoe & kayak launch and 1 mile of interpretive trail that runs along Ten Mile Creek.

Electric motors are permitted on the lake. Please note; that small Jon boats must be carried from the parking area to the launching site.

The trail head and parking area is located at the end of Ralls Rd. 1/5 mile north of Selvitz Rd., Fort Pierce.

**Guidelines and Safety Information:**

- Be cautious of uneven trail surfaces
- Please remain on the trails.
- Carry adequate drinking water.
- In case of lightning, seek a low area away from trees, fence lines and tall objects.
- In case of emergency, call 911.
- While hiking the trail you may encounter animals indigenous to this area. Please observe from a safe distance.
- Leave all plant life intact.
- Please leave site cleaner than you found it. "Pack it in, pack it out."
- If heading out on lake, use safety gear.
- Use at own risk.

**To learn more about St. Lucie County's natural heritage, there are more than 20 self-guiding interpretive trails located within the Natural Areas/Preserves. Each trail describes the most common plants, as well as significant geographical and historical features of the site.**

# George E. LeStrange Preserve

## Interpretive Trail

St. Lucie County  
 Environmental Resources  
 Department  
 2300 Virginia Avenue  
 Ft. Pierce, FL 34982  
 772-462-2526

[http://www.stlucieco.gov/erd/environmental\\_lands.htm](http://www.stlucieco.gov/erd/environmental_lands.htm)  
 Site Open: Sunrise to Sunset (6/13)