



WINTER HAVEN

The Chain of Lakes City

2022 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Dear Polk County Legislative Delegation:

On behalf of the more than 49,220 residents living inside the City limits and the additional 40,000+ people residing in the Winter Haven service area, we want to thank you for your continued support. As we move forward, we ask you to keep Polk County, and specifically Winter Haven in mind as you build relationships, conduct business and make tough choices for the citizens of the state of Florida. City officials are more than willing to work closely with the Polk County Delegation to achieve desired outcomes. Please let us know how we can assist you with the upcoming session. Thank you.

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City of Winter Haven, Polk Regional Water Cooperative, Heartland Headwaters Act
Grant Submission

Submission 1: Septic to Sewer Program, Remediation Area 6A

Legislative Request

Support HEARTLAND HEADWATERS PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY ACT (HHPSA) project funding to protect the water resources in Polk County and the Heartland region as a matter of state interest with priority funding consideration.

The Septic to Sewer, Remediation Area 6A project, (submitted to the Polk Regional Water Cooperative for possible funding through the HHPSA) will remove pollution discharges from septic tanks that currently enter the groundwater system, which impacts Lake Hartridge and the Floridan aquifer from which Winter Haven receives its drinking water supply. Expected benefits include improved lake water quality, an increase of reuse water supply, and improved water quality of the Upper Floridan Aquifer. The City is requesting \$1,500,000 for the design and construction phase of the project.

Background

This is one of the projects implemented under Winter Haven's *One Water Master Plan* (1WMP) to manage all aspects of water for the most economic, environmental and socially beneficial results.

The City of Winter Haven serves a population of approximately 74,675, including 36,970 water accounts. Of these accounts, 22,900 use sewer service, and the remaining accounts (14,070) are on septic systems.

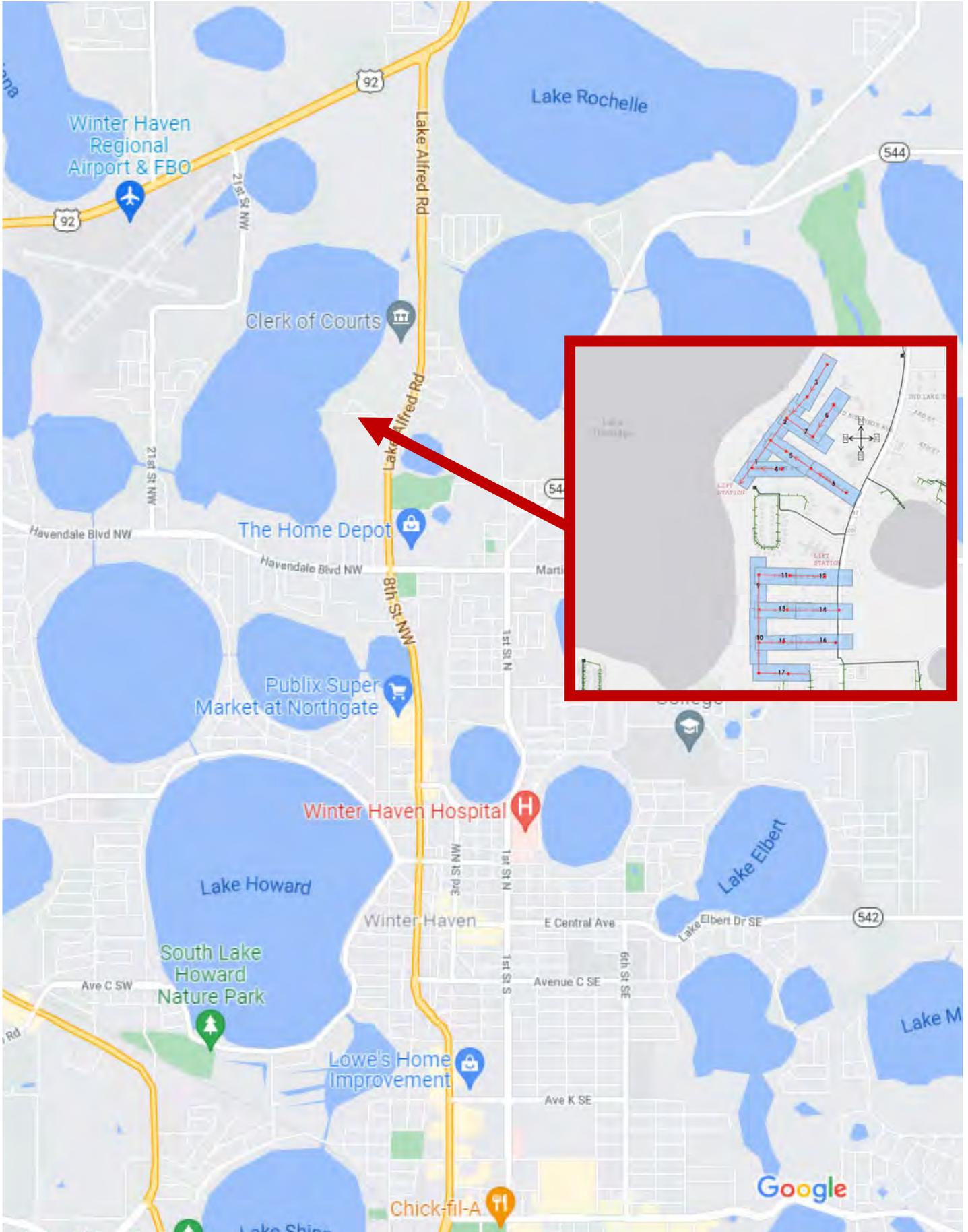
Winter Haven is located in a high recharge zone for the Floridan Aquifer and within the Southern Water Use Caution Area hydrologically impaired region. Almost half of the 50 lakes in Winter Haven are on the impaired list for water quality partially due to septic tank loading.

The City of Winter Haven completed its Septic to Sewer Master Plan in January 2021. The plan recommended priority areas for conversion to sewer. The Plan also recommended treating the additional wastewater created by the conversion into a resource for reuse purposes.

Cost Information

- **FY 2023 cost requested from State Legislature: \$ 1,500,000**
- Winter Haven's share of FY 2023 cost: \$ 1,500,000
- DEP Grant Funds: \$ 1,000,000
- Total FY 2023 Phase Cost: \$ 4,000,000

Septic to Sewer Program, Remediation Area 6A





City of Winter Haven, Polk Regional Water Cooperative, Heartland Headwaters Act
Grant Submission

Submission 2: Lake Howard Watershed Treatment Enhancement

Legislative Request

Support HEARTLAND HEADWATERS PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY ACT (HHPSA) project funding to protect the water resources in Polk County and the Heartland region as a matter of state interest with priority funding consideration.

The **Lake Howard Watershed Treatment Enhancement project**, (submitted to the Polk Regional Water Cooperative for possible funding through the HHPSA) will eliminate untreated stormwater from a combined County and City 550-acre watershed that discharges into Lake Howard, which is one of 16 lakes that make up the iconic Winter Haven Chain of Lakes. The City of Winter Haven is requesting \$450,000 to fund the construction of the wetland improvements.

Background

The project will redirect stormwater flow into a constructed wetland treatment system.

Construction of this green infrastructure project will provide improved infrastructure capacity to handle stormwater flow during saturated conditions, which will:

- prevent flooding in the surrounding areas
- Facilitate the treatment of stormwater prior to entering a TMDL impaired SWFWMD SWIM Priority Water Body
- provide habitat enhancement for an urban area
- supply regional hydrologic benefits
- enhance opportunities to expand recreational amenities

Cost Information

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|---|-------------------|
| • FY 2023 cost requested from State Legislature: | \$ 450,000 |
| • Winter Haven's share of FY 2023 cost | \$ 450,000 |
| • Outside share of FY 2023 cost | <u>\$ 0</u> |
| • Total FY 2023 Phase Cost | \$ 900,000 |



City of Winter Haven, Polk Regional Water Cooperative, Heartland Headwaters Act Grant Submission

Submission 3: Sapphire Necklace Creation

Legislative Request

Support HEARTLAND HEADWATERS PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABILITY ACT (HHPSA) project funding to protect the water resources in Polk County and the Heartland region as a matter of state interest with priority funding consideration.

The **Sapphire Necklace Creation** (Peace Creek Watershed Hydrologic Restoration Project submitted to the Polk Regional Water Cooperative for possible funding through the HHPSA) is a regional stormwater infrastructure improvement and hydrologic restoration project based on modeling and analysis completed by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD). It is an interconnected system of enhanced surface water storage (lakes, flood plains and wetlands, canal conveyance and groundwater infiltration) for reconfiguring the existing Peace Creek Drainage Canal (PCDC) and rebalancing the water budget of the watershed in the SWFWMD and PCDC Watershed in Polk County. The City of Winter Haven is requesting \$250,000 for design and construction of the project.

Background

The Sapphire Necklace Creation is multi-phased with the first phase focused on the Cypresswood area near the headwaters of the Peace Creek Canal, from Dundee Road (SR 542) to Cypress Gardens Boulevard. A conceptual plan is underway indicating how future area development can be a guide to resolving regional flooding, water quantity and quality degradation, and loss of habitat.

Once completed, the Sapphire Necklace Creation project will benefit the Polk County region, including the cities of Auburndale, Bartow, Dundee, Eagle Lake, Haines City, Lake Alfred, Lake Hamilton, Lake Wales and Winter Haven.

The project will increase lake levels, restoring lost storage, in the nine lakes in the Northern Winter Haven Chain of Lakes.

The project will restore approximately 10,000 acres of historic wetlands and up to 27,348 acre-feet of water storage for hydrologic/ecosystem restoration, in waterbodies including the Peace River; lakes McLeod, Starr and Wales, and the 16 lakes in the Southern Winter Haven Chain of Lakes.

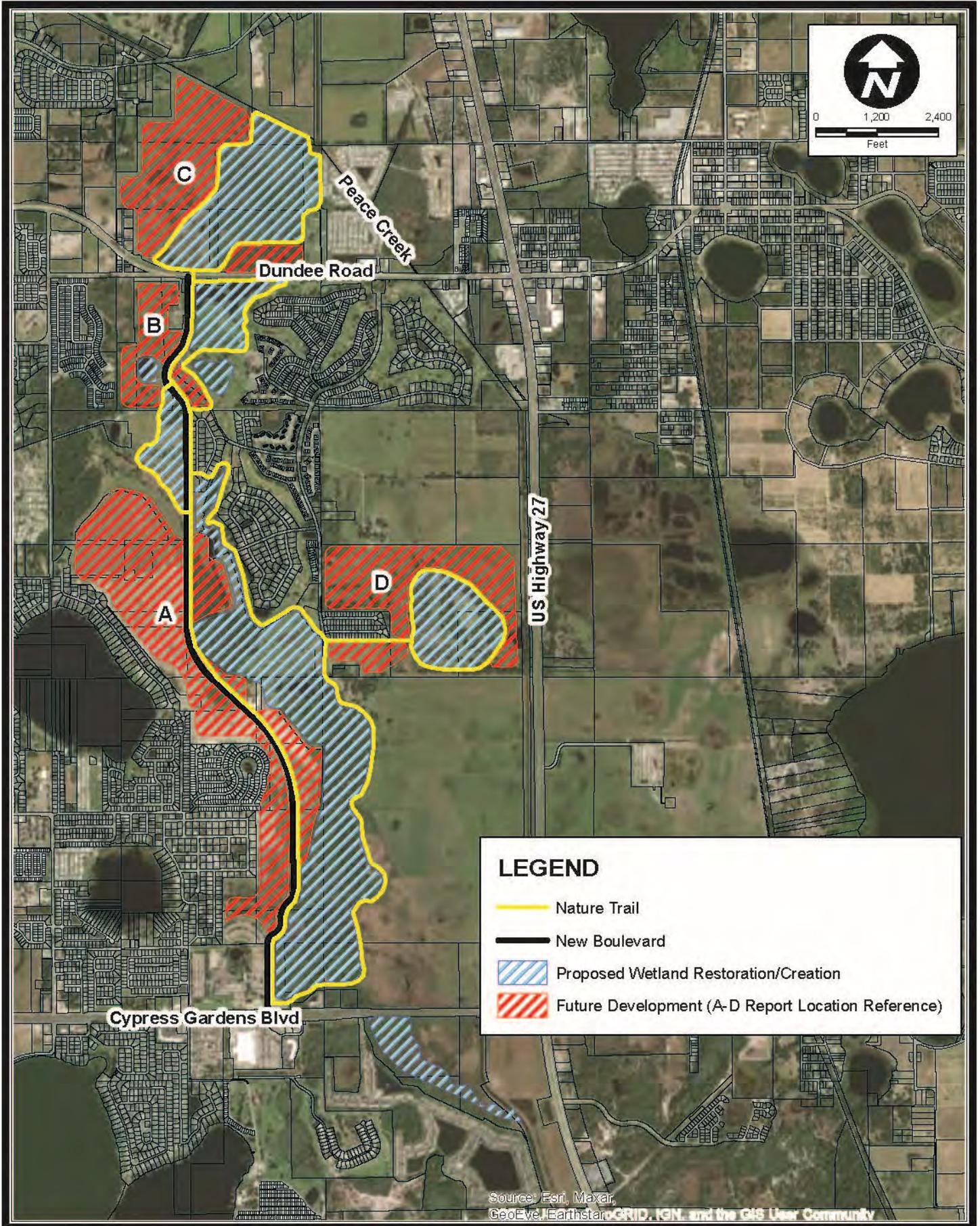
Operated as a system, the surface water storage areas would hold floodwaters to reduce flooding, and then release the water slowly downstream to increase base flow in the Peace Creek Drainage Canal and the Peace River during the driest times of the year, when water is most needed in the system. The water available for hydrologic restoration could be augmented with reclaimed water from the City using rapid infiltration basins (RIBs) or direct discharge to surface waters.

The project will be implemented largely through public-private partnerships and private investment, as development in the watershed occurs over the next 20 years.

Cost Information

- **FY 2023 cost requested from State Legislature: \$ 250,000**
- Winter Haven's share of FY 2023 cost \$ 250,000
- Outside share of FY 2023 cost \$ 0
- Total FY 2023 Phase Cost \$ 500,000

Sapphire Necklace Creation





Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) Grant Submission

Lake Conine Recreation Elements

Legislative Request

Support FRDAP project funding for acquisition and/or development of land for quality public outdoor recreation.

The City applied for a 2022/2023 FRDAP grant to help fund **Lake Conine Recreational Elements** that will complement the parks natural environment. The three trail components include a connecting trail to the state designated 3.6 mile Chain of Lakes Trail; an exercise trail and a loop nature trail. The northern edge of the site will include a playground, restrooms, fishing pier, kayak launch, picnic facilities, educational elements, landscaping, and site amenities. An elevated trail, overlook structures, and pier will provide impressive opportunities for the public to observe wildlife in a natural setting in the wetlands and along the shore.

Background

The Lake Conine Recreation Elements Project is located on the southeast shore of Lake Conine in the northeast area of Winter Haven. An original 1850 plat of the area depicts the lake and this historic wetland. Since then, development such as railroads, neighborhoods, roadways and infrastructure caused this area to be a nonfunctioning wetland full of overgrowth and muck. In the early 2000s, the City began the process to acquire this property to reestablish an effective wetland and stormwater treatment facility. Phase 1 of this project is underway, which includes regenerating the wetlands by allowing water from Lake Conine and runoff from the surrounding roadways and neighborhood to filter through a new wetland marsh system for improved water quality in Lake Conine. Work includes the removal of muck and nuisance exotics, and constructing a series of ponds, berms and stormwater infrastructure. The site will then be replanted with high-quality wetland trees and plantings. Once complete, the restoration of this wetland marsh system will provide a high quality natural habitat for wading birds, reptiles, fish and other species.

Lake Conine is located within the Upper (aka Northern) Winter Haven Chain of Lakes, which consists of eight lakes navigable through a series of canals and lifts. Lake Conine is adjacent to the Southern Winter Haven Chain of Lakes, which consists of 16 lakes navigable through a series of canals. A lock system is in place connecting the Southern Chain and Upper Chain of Lakes. All 24 lakes are connected via the lock system, canals, and lifts.

Lake Conine is an Impaired Florida Water Body. The poor water quality of the lake has an overall effect on the water quality of the other lakes within the Upper Chain. The development of the restored historic wetland marsh system within the park will dramatically improve the lake's water quality. Because Lake Conine is connected to at least twenty-three other lakes, its improved water quality will assist with the overall water quality of the Southern and Upper Chain of Lakes.

Cost Information

FRDAP Application Request: \$200,000

Complete Park Renovation Costs: \$1.9 Million

Local Dollars Leveraged: Over the past two decades, the City has spent approximately \$100,000 in land acquisition costs, and is currently funding \$1.19 Million of the \$3.4 Million Wetland Restoration Project. Additional funding to build out the recreational components is included in the 2021/2022 City of Winter Haven Budget. Other funding partners include FDEP, SWFWMD and Polk County.

LAKE CONINE

Lake Conine Recreation Elements





Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) Grant Submission

South Lake Howard Trail Nature Park Expansion

Legislative Request

Support FRDAP project funding for acquisition and/or development of land for quality public outdoor recreation.

The City applied for a 2022/2023 FRDAP grant to complete the **South Lake Howard Trail Nature Park Expansion**. The project includes an exercise trail, nature trail, boardwalk system, playground, picnic areas, outdoor classroom, disc golf, parking lot/trailhead, kayak launch (non-motorized boating), new fishing pier (no boat access) and educational components. The trails will become part of the Lake Howard Trail System, and will connect to the City's 13+ miles of trails including the state-designated 3.6 mile Chain of Lakes Trail.

Background

Winter Haven's first trail system was developed as part of the South Lake Howard Nature Park in 2001, and is now part of a robust trail network of over 13 miles. This innovative nature park was developed around stormwater components to filter and clean runoff prior to entering Lake Howard, while offering a loop trail system, boardwalks, educational signage, site amenities, restrooms and picnic areas for public use. This ultra-popular park and trail system also serves as a natural habitat for an array of birds and animals.

As part of the City's long term trail and park planning, an adjacent parcel was purchased in 2020 to expand the park's trails and stormwater system. The parcel is uniquely wedged between the existing park, adjacent roadways and area neighborhoods. The City is currently working on the first phase (not part of the FRDAP grant) improvements, which includes converting an aged stormwater pipe into a system of sedimentation ponds, wetland marshes and flowways. This infrastructure will filter area stormwater prior to entering Lake Howard, and will create natural areas and habitat, similar to the adjacent nature park. Additionally, an aging structure on the parcel is being repurposed as a natural resources office and educational headquarters. The City's plan is to not only enhance the park with recreational amenities, but also use this park and lake access for water and natural resources educational purposes for youth camps and programs, civic groups and schools.

The City is working to connect this project to the City's overall trail system including the regional 3.6 mile Chain of Lakes Trail (designated trail within the FL Greenways and Trails System). Additionally, citizens will be able to utilize the trailhead and kayak launch to access the Chain of Lakes Blueway (designated on the OGT Opportunity Map Series), connecting the Winter Haven Chain of Lakes. This project supports the City's focus to provide clean lakes, offer access to expanding recreational opportunities and connected trail systems, and enhancing the "One Water" concept and natural resources education.

Cost Information

FRDAP Application Request:	\$200,000
City of Winter Haven match	\$200,000

South Lake Howard Trail Nature Park Expansion

