



DATE: January 19, 2005

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NatureScape Broward Meeting Ushers in 2005 "Year of the Environment"

When she accepted the gavel and became Mayor this past November, Broward County Mayor Kristin Jacobs proclaimed 2005 as the "Year of the Environment." On Thursday, January 20, Mayor Jacobs will welcome the members of the NatureScape Task Force to discuss issues pertinent to the year ahead. NatureScape Broward was initiated by Mayor Jacobs in 2002 and today is one of Broward County's most innovative water management programs. The meeting is open to the public and will begin at 3:00 p.m in room 302 at the Broward County Governmental Center, 115 South Andrews Avenue in Fort Lauderdale.

"I brought together the NatureScape task force and I'm so proud to say that we've come such a long way, and together have accomplished so much," said Mayor Jacobs. "Our goal this year to reach for new heights and take this unique water conservation project to the next level. The NatureScape task force is a hard-working dedicated team and we have lots planned for the year ahead!"

The NatureScape Broward program is receiving statewide recognition. On January 14, Mayor Jacobs discussed the program at the 20th Annual Conference of the Everglades Coalition in Naples. A number of other counties are currently trying to mimic Broward's success with the program, and Brevard County has specifically modeled the "Backyard Brevard" program on NatureScape Broward. NatureScape is also being featured in a two-part segment on New Florida, a weekly television news magazine produced by WPBT. The first segment will air on Thursday, February 17 and the conclusion will air on Thursday, February 24. Times vary depending on cable system.

There are currently more than 750 NatureScape-certified properties in Broward County. Tradewinds Elementary (5400 Johnson Road, Coconut Creek) was awarded an Emerald Award by NatureScape Broward in the School/Municipality/Government category for its landscaping, which includes butterfly gardens, native tree walking paths and a continued commitment to the environment. Tamarind Village at the Township (2550 Calamondin Circle, Coconut Creek) received an award in the Special Achievement category. This

177-home community modified its irrigation system, re-landscaped a number of common areas and now benefits from reduced water and maintenance costs. The BP America, Inc., Site 5116 (250 E. Sample Road, Pompano Beach) has a native landscape with added features such as a bat house and pond and is certified through the University of Florida's Florida Yards and Neighborhoods program and the National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat program.

NatureScape Broward is a program of the Broward County Environmental Protection Department and is part of its Water Matters outreach initiative. The NatureScape program aims to reduce the amount of water used for irrigation and improve the quality of Broward's water resources by encouraging the use of Florida-friendly landscape practices, including planting native plants and integrated pest management. Water Matters is Broward County's effort to coordinate the sources and users of water in the county in order to bring about effective and efficient water management.

It is estimated that in Broward County up to 50 percent of total household water consumption is due to outdoor applications—namely landscape irrigation. Native plants have adapted to South Florida's unique environment and generally require less supplemental irrigation than non-native plants. Native plants also require less pesticide and fertilizer application and provide sustainable habitat for wildlife. Reducing or eliminating the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers helps control pollution and helps keep waterways free of pesticides and fertilizers. In Broward County, properties that meet certain requirements can be certified as environmentally-friendly through the NatureScape Broward program.

"One of the main goals of the NatureScape Broward task force is to get the entire county certified by the National Wildlife Federation," said Mayor Jacobs. "Once we have 7,000 certified sites in Broward, we'll be the first county in the country to receive that special recognition."

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