

Wetland park offers mix of fresh and saltwater ecosystems



Participants in the Cay Creek clean-up project included Terrell Chipp, city of Midway (seated front); and standing left to right, Thomas Angell, Verdant Enterprises, Brian Barton, Georgia Power; Tyriek Holmes, city of Midway; Clemontine Washington, mayor of Midway; Stiles Westbrook, city of Midway; and Christa Hayes, Coastal Wildscapes.

Thursday, Sept. 15, 2016 – Just south of Savannah in Liberty County, Cay Creek Wetland Park is an intriguing mix of fresh and saltwater ecosystems, a serene preserve rich in biological diversity.

Its forests and swamps are home to more than 100 species of plants and trees, as well as any number of wild animals in their natural habitats: beavers, snakes, lizards, wild boar and birds, among others.

It is an area treasured by local community leaders and environmentalists for its natural tranquility and unique educational opportunities, which is why many of them joined together earlier this summer to participate in a clean-up of the Cay Creek Wetland Interpretive Center, the park's centerpiece.

“Georgia Power has partnered with Coastal Wildscapes, the city of Midway, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and others to create a five-acre wetland demonstration landscape and outdoor

classroom within the park,” explained Brian Barton, senior environmental specialist at Georgia Power. “The purpose of the interpretive center is to engage the community in a model for coastal wetland sustainability.”



Georgia Power’s Brian Barton helps remove rocks and other debris during a clean-up project at the Cay Creek Wetland Park in Liberty County.

Barton participated in the clean-up on behalf of Georgia Power. Other volunteers included Midway Mayor Clemontine Washington, Christa Hayes of Coastal Wildscapes and representatives from area businesses.

Washington **wrote** to express her appreciation for Georgia Power’s ongoing partnership and support of Cay Creek projects, especially the most recent clean-up in late July.

“You worked untiringly to remove invasive plants and repair damage caused by severe thunderstorms in July,” Washington wrote.

Located just a mile from Interstate 95 south of Savannah, the center is owned and maintained by the city of Midway. Entrance is free to the public.

The park exhibits many of Georgia's coastal habitats, including upland maritime forest, upland pine flatwoods, open wetland, freshwater tidal swamp, marsh hammocks and brackish tidal marsh. Bay, cypress, and oak trees are abundant, as are palms, palmettos, and magnolias.

Each habitat is structurally unique. The contrast from forest to freshwater swamp to brackish swamp makes it a natural classroom, and there are plenty of interpretive signs about the plants and animals found in each of the habitats.

An elevated boardwalk through the wetlands has an overlook that extends into Cay Creek and a 15-foot tower boosts visitors into the tree canopy, an ideal perch for bird watchers. The interpretive center also includes a dynamic plant and pollinator garden.