

## Environmental Education Resources from Federal and State Agencies<sup>1</sup>

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Alison W. Bowers and Martha C. Monroe<sup>2</sup>

Going on a field trip? Want a spiffy new poster? Looking for a guest speaker? Or do you just need to know more about wildland fire, endangered species, coastal management, or invasive exotics? Many agencies are available to provide information, share resources, support field trips, and contribute to your environmental education (EE) programming and other needs relating to natural resources. This fact sheet explores federal and state agencies in Florida with major educational efforts. It will give you an introduction to these agencies, so you can contact individual parks, refuges, forests, and other offices to find out specific information about the specific, local programs they can provide.

### Federal Natural Resource Agencies

Several agencies of the federal government own and manage land in Florida and offer programs at the areas they manage. A few other federal agencies do not own land but do offer programs and resources through their local offices or state agency affiliate. Each agency operates under separate legislative mandates, so you can expect to find different management goals, programs, and resources at each

one. The federal government hosts a website (<http://www.ed.gov/free>) that lists hundreds of educational resources from over 45 federal agencies (See Table 1 for a summary of these federal contacts).

### Forest Service (FS)

The Forest Service, a branch of the United States (U.S.) Department of Agriculture, manages 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands, assists landowners through state and private forestry programs, and conducts natural resources research. The national forests are managed for multiple use in order to protect biodiversity, as well as to provide wood and other services to meet the needs of society. FS managers help people use and enjoy the forest, while conserving natural resources. Here in Florida, three national forests are managed through the National Forests of Florida office in Tallahassee. The three forests provide excellent hiking and camping opportunities. Each forest has a District Ranger and several staff to help with educational programs while meeting other priorities for the forests.

The FS's Conservation Education Program helps people appreciate and conserve the country's forest

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  2. Alison W. Bowers, Extension Assistant, and Martha C. Monroe, Associate Professor, School of Forest Resources and Conservation, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611-0410.

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resources. It consists of youth and adult programs, activities, curricular resources, and newsletters. Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl are two of the most recognized youth programs. The FS offers a lending library of videos on careers, forest management, wildlife, fire, and more.

National Forests of Florida, Tallahassee Office -- 850-523-8500.

Ocala National Forest -- Lake George District, 352-625-2520; Seminole District, 352-669-3153

Apalachicola National Forest -- Apalachicola District, 850-643-2282; Wakulla District, 850-926-3561

Osceola National Forest -- 386-752-2577

### **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, helps private landowners protect the natural resources on their land. It emphasizes science-based assistance and partnerships at the community level. The NRCS mission is to provide leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, improve, and sustain natural resources, primarily at the local level with each county's soil and water conservation district. The Florida branch of the NRCS is located in Gainesville.

The NRCS provides publications and curriculum guides on soil, soil conservation, backyard conservation, conservation history, land stewardship, and natural resource management. These materials can be ordered or downloaded from the Web (Table 1). The Gainesville office can provide posters, fact sheets, and brochures.

NRCS Branch Office -- Gainesville, 352-338-9500

Your county district office can be found in the government pages of your local telephone directory. Look under U.S. Government, Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

### **National Park Service (NPS)**

The National Park Service, a branch of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages 390 national parks, monuments, recreation areas, battlefields, historic structures, parkways, and wild and scenic rivers. The NPS preserves the valuable natural and cultural resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. Parks are managed for visitors but are not used to harvest resources. Florida has one world famous national park, the Everglades, and many smaller parks, battlefields, and monuments that preserve important aspects of our history. Most parks offer interpretive and educational programs, camping sites, and hiking trails.

Parks as Classrooms® is the curriculum-based education program that facilitates the connection between park education specialists and local educators. The resources available through this program vary from park to park but may include curriculum guides, videos, and workshops.

Big Cypress National Preserve -- Ochopee, 239-695-2000

Biscayne National Park -- Homestead, 305-230-1144

Canaveral National Seashore -- Titusville, 321-267-1110

Castillo De San Marcos National Monument -- St. Augustine, 904-829-6506

De Soto National Memorial -- Bradenton, 941-792-0458

Dry Tortugas National Park -- Key West, 305-242-7700

Everglades National Park -- Homestead, 305-242-7700

Fort Caroline National Memorial -- Jacksonville, 904-641-7155

Fort Matanzas National Monument -- St. Augustine, 904-471-0116

Gulf Islands National Seashore -- Gulf Breeze,  
850-934-2600

Timucuan Ecological & Historic Preserve --  
Jacksonville, 904-641-7155

### **Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)**

The Fish and Wildlife Service, a branch of the U.S. Department of the Interior, works to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations. There are almost 700 field units and installations across the country, including National Wildlife Refuges, fish hatcheries, ecological field offices, and law enforcement offices. The National Wildlife Refuge System consists of more than 93 million acres of land set aside for wildlife. Much of this land is in Alaska, although there are 28 refuges and one hatchery in Florida. Many refuges offer recreational and educational opportunities for visitors; a partial listing of Florida refuges appears below. Visit the FWS Web site for a complete directory (Table 1).

The FWS is responsible for protecting endangered species and can provide publications, maps, and videos on topics such as birds, fish, and wetlands. Earth Stewards is an environmental collaboration among the FWS, National Audubon Society, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, local organizations, and other agencies. Through the Earth Stewards program, natural resource professionals work with educators to create a community and issue-based, multidisciplinary curriculum that utilizes National Wildlife Refuges to teach about ecosystems and how young people can become stewards of fish and wildlife habitat.

Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge --  
Crystal River, 352-563-2088

Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge --Vero  
Beach, 772-562-3909

St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge --  
Apalachicola, 850-653-8808

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge -- St. Marks,  
850-925-6121

Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge --  
Crystal River, 352-563-2088

Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge --  
Chiefland, 352-493-0238

J. N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge  
--Sanibel, 239-472-1100

Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge --  
Naples, 239-353-8442

Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge -- De  
Leon Springs, 386-985-4673

Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National  
Wildlife Refuge, Boynton Beach, 561-732-3684

Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge -- Hobe  
Sound, 772-546-6141

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge  
--Titusville, 321-861-0667

National Key Deer Refuge -- Big Pine Key,  
305-872-2239

Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge -- Vero  
Beach, 772-562-3909

Welaka National Fish Hatchery -- Welaka,  
386-467-2374

Panama City Ecological Services Field Office --  
Panama City, 850-769-0552

South Florida Ecological Services Field Office --  
Vero Beach, 772-562-3909

North Florida Ecological Services Field Office --  
Jacksonville, 904-232-2580

### **Department of Defense -- Eglin Air Force Base**

Eglin Air Force Base, in the Florida panhandle, is a 724-square-mile military reservation. Activities on this land include hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, cycling, as well as military maneuvers. The Natural Resources Division (locally known as Jackson

Guard) of the Environmental Management Directorate Division can provide information and maps of the area. The Outdoor Recreation program offers water safety and diving classes, deep sea fishing charters, camping, and boating facilities.

Natural Resources Division -- 850-882-4164

### **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**

The mission of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is to protect human health and safeguard the natural environment upon which life depends. The EPA regulates and protects clean air, clean and safe water, waste management, restoration of contaminated sites, environmental risk management, and compliance with environmental law. Florida is part of Region 4, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, but the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is charged with carrying out many EPA programs to protect air and water quality and manage waste in Florida.

The EPA Office of Environmental Education offers a cornucopia of environmental education materials: curriculum and activity guides, technical reports, fact sheets, grants for environmental education projects, awards, community service project ideas, workshops, and conferences. The curriculum guides and other publications cover a vast array of topics including solid waste, non-point pollution, human health, endangered species, service learning, global warming, and energy conservation. The EPA sponsors the Adopt Your Watershed campaign to help individuals and organizations protect and restore rivers, wetlands, lakes, estuaries, and other water sources. The Region 4 office in Atlanta provides a video library and maintains a speakers bureau.

EPA Region 4 -- Atlanta, GA; 1-800-241-1754

Florida Department of Environmental Protection  
-- Tallahassee, 850-245-2118

### **United States Geological Survey (USGS)**

The U. S. Geological Survey, in the Department of Interior, conducts research and provides information on natural hazards, natural resources, and the environment. USGS facilitates solutions to

national and global natural resource issues by supplying vast amounts of earth and biological data. The USGS maintains a state office in Tallahassee and field offices in Altamonte Springs, Ft. Myers, Gainesville, Homestead, Jacksonville, Miami, Ocala, Ochopee, St. Petersburg Beach, Stuart, Tallahassee, Tampa, and West Palm Beach.

The USGS offers many educational materials about biology, geology, mapping, and water. You can order or download teaching packets, posters, fact sheets, booklets, and CD-ROMs. USGS has created several fascinating 3-D paper models that illustrate the dynamic concepts of many natural resources including volcanoes, earthquakes, and coral reefs. Part of the USGS Web site, The Learning Web, is an outstanding source of activities and information.

USGS State Representative Office --  
Tallahassee, 850-942-9500

### **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is part of the Department of Commerce. NOAA's mission is to describe and predict environmental changes and to conserve and manage the coastal and marine resources in the United States. There are five major agencies within NOAA: National Weather Service; National Ocean Service; Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research; National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Sources; and National Marine Fisheries Service. The National Weather Service has offices throughout the state and the National Marine Fisheries Service has offices and laboratories in St. Petersburg, Miami, and Panama City. NOAA supports the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, a network of 27 national reserves that protects over one million acres of estuaries. Florida is home to three Estuarine Research Reserves, which are managed by Florida DEP through a cooperative agreement with NOAA.

NOAA provides a wealth of educational materials on weather, climate change, oceans, coastal areas, satellites, space, and careers. NOAA is a major supporter of the Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) Program, a

worldwide, school-based education program where teachers and students measure and report environmental data. The three Estuarine Research Reserves have educational visitor centers and a variety of programs.

Apalachicola Reserve -- Franklin County,  
850-670-4783

Guana Tolomato Matanzas Reserve -- St. Johns  
and Flagler Counties, 904-823-4500

Rookery Bay Reserve -- Collier County,  
239-417-6310

## State Agencies

Florida agencies have a long-term commitment to environmental education, though their funding for EE programs changes from year to year. In 1992, the State Committee for Environmental Education (SCENE) was established to facilitate the dispersal of the EE information and materials of all state agencies. They produced the SCENE Directory, a listing of EE materials and programs organized by keywords and contact information for state agencies involved in EE endeavors. The SCENE Directory is available at Florida County Extension Offices and online at <http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/Extension/scene.htm>. (Table 2 provides state agency contact information.)

### Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection protects air and water quality, ensures proper waste management, carries out EPA programs, manages the state park system, and oversees a land buying program. DEP consists of six regulatory districts in Florida, with each office providing information, speakers, programs, and other services.

DEP's Office of Environmental Education (OEE) works to improve environmental literacy and citizenship among Florida residents and visitors. The OEE produces and maintains a collection of EE materials and is involved with public outreach and education for DEP. The Division of Recreation and Parks is responsible for the management of Florida's award-winning system of 159 state parks, trails, and

recreation areas. These parks provide a myriad of recreation and education opportunities for visitors such as swimming, hiking, canoeing, camping, snorkeling, bird watching, and bicycling. A park guide is available by contacting DEP. The Office of Greenways and Trails oversees 38 canoe trails with over 1,000 miles of waterway, over 200 miles of multi-use trails, and the 110 miles of the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway in north central Florida. This Office has an educational program called Team Green (Teach Everyone Awareness Matters -- Greenways and Trails Reconnect Everyone with the Environment and Neighborhoods). Team Green assists educators in teaching about and using greenways and trails. The program focuses on the subject areas of science, social studies, history, and economics.

### Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS)

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services works to protect consumers and support Florida agriculture. This involves a wide range of responsibilities such as investigating business practices, inspecting scales and gas pumps, working with farmers, managing more than a million acres of state forest lands, and protecting homes from wildfires. The Division of Marketing and Development is responsible for the education and communication programs of DACS. This Division helps support Florida Ag in the Classroom, a non-profit organization that helps educate Florida youth about the role of agriculture and its relation to the environment, economy, health and quality of life for Florida citizens.

The Florida Division of Forestry (DOF) a branch of DACS, works to protect and manage forest resources in Florida. DOF's main programs focus on state land management, wildfire, and forestry technical assistance through fifteen district offices. DOF manages 33 state forests that cover more than one million acres. Management of these forests combines public use and protection of biological diversity. Major education efforts include the Future Farmers of America (FFA) Forestry Contests, Forestry Training Camp for FFA high school students, and the Florida Forests Forever Showvan

and CD-Rom. Contact information for your county forester can be found in the government pages of your local telephone directory. Look under State Government, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry.

DOF is a supporter of Project Learning Tree (PLT) in Florida. PLT is an interdisciplinary, national curriculum resource for grades Pre-K-12. PLT provides activities to teach young people about trees and forests while developing critical thinking skills, decision-making abilities, and a commitment to the environment. Activities have been correlated to the Sunshine State Standards. Educators attend workshops held across the state to obtain the curriculum materials and receive training in the use of these materials.

### **Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC)**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission manages Florida's fish and wildlife resources for their long-term welfare and the benefit of people. The major units focus on wildlife, freshwater fisheries, marine fisheries, law enforcement, environmental services, informational services, and marine research. The FWCC is divided into five administrative regions across the state.

The Office of Community Relations is responsible for much of the agency's environmental education materials. It offers numerous publications, coloring books, and activity guides that cover wildlife, fishing, gun safety, outdoor ethics, and conservation. FWCC sponsors two curriculums, both of which have been correlated to Florida's Sunshine State Standards. Educators can learn how to create an effective outdoor classroom with the Schoolyard Wildlife curriculum. The FWCC partnered with the Defenders of Wildlife to present the Black Bear Program, a curriculum about the natural history and conservation needs of the black bear. Both programs are available only by attending a workshop. FWCC operates several youth camps to teach about wildlife, fisheries, and hunting. The Everglades Youth Conservation Camp offers one-day, three-day, and week-long programs for schools and individuals.

The FWCC promotes Project WILD in Florida. Project WILD is a national, interdisciplinary conservation and environmental education program that teaches young people, in grades K-12, about wildlife. The activities in the curriculum guide can be used in formal and nonformal programs and have been correlated to the Sunshine State Standards. Workshops are held throughout the state for educators to learn about and receive Project WILD resources.

### **Water Management Districts (WMD)**

The quality and quantity of Florida's wetlands and water resources are managed by five Water Management Districts. These districts are responsible for creating flood protection programs, developing water management plans, performing research, overseeing well construction, and acquiring and managing lands to protect water resources. The five districts are: Northwest Florida Water Management District, South Florida Water Management District, Southwest Florida Water Management District, St. Johns River Water Management District, and Suwannee River Water Management District.

Each WMD provides its own set of educational programs and materials and the extent and range of materials vary. One district may offer a speakers bureau, video library, and curriculum guides, while another district might offer grant opportunities and fact sheets on water conservation. All districts manage water conservation areas that are set aside to protect watersheds and are often open to the public. These areas can serve as field trip destinations and provide recreational opportunities such as hiking, camping, bicycling, and canoeing.

One educational program supported by four of the WMDs is Project WET (Water Education for Teachers). Project WET is an interdisciplinary, national curriculum promoting awareness and appreciation of water resources. The activities have been correlated to the Sunshine State Standards and can be used in classrooms and extracurricular programs. Educators interested in receiving the curriculum must attend a Project WET workshop.

### **Department of Education (DOE)**

The Florida Department of Education provides assistance and resources for the educational system throughout Florida. DOE sets state standards, certifies teachers, and provides for school safety.

The Bureau of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment houses an environmental education curriculum specialist. Environmental education publications and programs are available from this office on biodiversity, solid waste, and teaching materials. DOE provides support for the Florida Interdisciplinary Learning Resources in Environmental Education (FIREE), a database of information on EE programs and materials.

### **Department of Community Affairs (DCA)**

The Florida Department of Community Affairs supports Florida communities in dealing with growth, development, and revitalization and by providing assistance in times of disasters. DCA's five service areas are emergency management, housing and community development, community planning, coastal management, and land acquisition. The Florida Communities Trust, a division of DCA, is the lead agency for Florida Forever, the state's major land acquisition program.

DCA can provide information on environmental topics such as wildfires, flooding, weather, energy efficiency, transportation, and radon. The Coastal Management program offers information on water quality monitoring, coastal ecology, and nonpoint source pollution.

### **Department of Transportation (DOT)**

The Florida Department of Transportation is responsible for moving people and goods efficiently through Florida while also preserving the environment. DOT, divided into eight districts, oversees 41,000 miles of the state highway system and 6,000 bridges and is involved with transportation alternatives, public transportation, and safety programs.

DOT offers an Adopt-A-Highway program where organizations make a two-year commitment to pick up trash along a stretch of highway. In return,

DOT provides safety information, safety vests, litter bags, and litter pickup. DOT's Environmental Management Office (EMO) administers the Scenic Highways Program and Highway Beautification Program. EMO offers a number of publications on wildflowers, archeology, cultural resources, scenic highways, and greenways.

### **Florida Institute for Phosphate Research (FIPR)**

The Florida Institute for Phosphate Research conducts and funds research that focuses on the phosphate mining and fertilizer industry in Florida. FIPR provides information and a K-12 curriculum that addresses phosphate-related issues while building skills in math, science, social studies, and language arts. The lessons in this curriculum have been correlated to the Sunshine State Standards.

### **Public Service Commission (PSC)**

The Florida Public Service Commission is responsible for setting utility rates and ensuring efficient, safe, and reliable utility services in Florida. The utilities they oversee are electric, gas, telephone, water, and water resources. The PSC provides numerous consumer brochures and fact sheets that address topics such as energy and water conservation (Table 2).

**Table 1.** Summary contact information for federal agencies.

Federal Agency	Main Website	Phone Number	EE Website
Forest Service	<a href="http://www.fs.fed.us">http://www.fs.fed.us</a>	202-205-8333	<a href="http://www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/ce/">http://www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/ce/</a>
Natural Resources Conservation Service	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov</a>	1-800-THE-SOIL	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/education">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/education</a>
National Park Service	<a href="http://www.nps.gov">http://www.nps.gov</a>	202-208-6843	<a href="http://www.nps.gov/learn">http://www.nps.gov/learn</a>
Fish and Wildlife Service	<a href="http://www.fws.gov">http://www.fws.gov</a>	202-208-4717	<a href="http://www.fws.gov/educon.html">http://www.fws.gov/educon.html</a> and <a href="http://www.fws.gov/educators">http://www.fws.gov/educators</a>
Environmental Protection Agency	<a href="http://www.epa.gov">http://www.epa.gov</a>	202-564-4700	<a href="http://www.epa.gov/epahome/educational.htm">http://www.epa.gov/epahome/educational.htm</a>
United States Geological Survey	<a href="http://www.usgs.gov">http://www.usgs.gov</a>	1-888-ASK-USGS	<a href="http://www.usgs.gov/education.html">http://www.usgs.gov/education.html</a>
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	<a href="http://www.noaa.gov">http://www.noaa.gov</a>	202-482-6090	<a href="http://www.education.noaa.gov">http://www.education.noaa.gov</a>

**Table 2.** Contact details for state agencies.

Florida State Agency	Main Website	Phone Number
<b>Dept. of Environmental Protection</b> Office of Environmental Education Office of Greenways and Trails Division of Recreation and Parks	<a href="http://www.dep.state.fl.us/">http://www.dep.state.fl.us/</a> <a href="http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/ed">http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/ed</a> <a href="http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt">http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt</a> <a href="http://www.dep.state.fl.us/parks">http://www.dep.state.fl.us/parks</a>	<b>850-245-2118</b> 850-245-2130 1-877-822-5208 850-245-2157
<b>Dept. of Agriculture &amp; Consumer Services</b> Division of Marketing and Development Division of Forestry Project Learning Tree	<a href="http://doacs.state.fl.us/">http://doacs.state.fl.us/</a> <a href="http://www.fl-ag.com/">http://www.fl-ag.com/</a> <a href="http://www.fl-dof.com/">http://www.fl-dof.com/</a> <a href="http://sfrc.ufl.edu/plt">http://sfrc.ufl.edu/plt</a>	<b>850-488-3022</b> 850-487-8000 850-488-4274 352-846-2329
<b>Fish &amp; Wildlife Conservation Commission</b> Office of Community Relations Project WILD	<a href="http://www.myfwc.com">http://www.myfwc.com</a> <a href="http://www.myfwc.com/educator">http://www.myfwc.com/educator</a> <a href="http://www.myfwc.com/educator/projwild.html">http://www.myfwc.com/educator/projwild.html</a>	<b>850-488-4676</b> 850-488-4676 561-625-5142
<b>Water Management Districts</b> Project WET	<a href="http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/watman">http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/watman</a> <a href="http://www.sjrwm.com/education/wet.html">http://www.sjrwm.com/education/wet.html</a>	<b>See website</b> 386-329-4563
<b>Dept. of Community Affairs</b> Coastal Management	<a href="http://www.dca.state.fl.us">http://www.dca.state.fl.us</a> <a href="http://www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/dcp/Coastal/index.cfm">http://www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/dcp/Coastal/index.cfm</a>	<b>850-488-8466</b> 850-922-1767
<b>Dept. of Transportation</b> Environmental Management Office Adopt-A-Highway	<a href="http://www.dot.state.fl.us">http://www.dot.state.fl.us</a> <a href="http://www.dot.state.fl.us/emo">http://www.dot.state.fl.us/emo</a> <a href="http://www.dot.state.fl.us/publicinformationoffice/moreDOT/adopt.htm">http://www.dot.state.fl.us/publicinformationoffice/moreDOT/adopt.htm</a>	<b>850-414-4100</b> 850-414-4447 1-800-BAN-LITT
<b>Institute for Phosphate Research</b>	<a href="http://www.fipr.state.fl.us">http://www.fipr.state.fl.us</a>	<b>863-534-7160</b>
<b>Public Service Commission</b>	<a href="http://www.psc.state.fl.us">http://www.psc.state.fl.us</a>	<b>1-800-342-3552</b>
<b>Dept. of Education</b> EE Curriculum Support	<a href="http://www.firn.edu/doe">http://www.firn.edu/doe</a> <a href="http://www.firn.edu/doe/curriculum/environ/index.htm">http://www.firn.edu/doe/curriculum/environ/index.htm</a>	<b>1-800-445-6739</b> 850-245-0758