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Join FGCU for World Wetlands Day Celebration Feb. 2
Activities include free lecture, tours of Naples research facility

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) will celebrate World Wetlands Day on Thursday, Feb. 2 with activities highlighting the importance of preserving, restoring and managing aquatic ecosystems and showcasing research at the university's Everglades Wetland Research Park in Naples.

An open house with guided tours will be held from 1 to 6:45 p.m. at the facility based at the Harvey J. Kapnick Education and Research Center at the Naples Botanical Garden, 4940 Bayshore Drive.

The public is also welcome to observe and participate in the U.S. National Ramsar Committee annual meeting from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. The committee — which promotes the conservation and sustainable use of domestic and international wetlands — will be discussing wetlands in Florida and the United States that could be designated as Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance. Recommendations are welcome.

Activities will conclude at 7 p.m. with the second presentation in the 2017 Moonlight on the Marsh Distinguished Lecture Series — “Rethinking conservation and development in South American wetlands: A challenge beyond the borders” by Dr. Luisa Fernanda Ricaurte. A consultant for the Alexander von Humboldt Institute in Bogotá, Colombia, Ricaurte has more than 22 years of experience working in wetland science, ecosystem management and sustainability sciences.

Wetlands comprise about 7 percent of the Earth's terrestrial surface, but their value surpasses their volume. They naturally filter and retain water, help prevent flooding and provide habitat and food for wildlife. In South America, wetlands cover approximately 20 to 30 percent of the land but are under pressure due to high economic and demographic growth. Wetlands loss in

urban areas there has reached up to 98 percent, according to Ricaurte, and rural wetlands are exposed to strong threats, especially from mining and industrial agriculture and livestock.

“These activities are the main causes of regime shifts in wetlands, which dramatically affect the provision of ecosystem services,” she said. “The well-being of many groups of people depends to a certain degree on the provision of ecosystem services.”

Established in 2012, FGCU’s Everglades Wetland Research Park is dedicated to research on the wise management of freshwater and coastal ecosystems of Southwest Florida and the Florida Everglades and to the protection and enhancement of wetlands and water resources worldwide. More details and information about upcoming Moonlight on the Marsh lectures are available on the park’s website, www.fgcu.edu/swamp.

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