



OFFICE OF MEDIA RELATIONS

(239) 590-1086 ◆ 1-800-590-FGCU ◆ Fax: (239) 590-1066

Florida Gulf Coast University, 10501 FGCU Blvd. S., Fort Myers, FL 33965-6565, www.fgcu.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
January 28, 2016

For information contact:
William Mitsch (239) 325-1365

FGCU's Everglades Wetland Research Park Welcomes Public for International Wetlands Day, Feb. 2

Naples center to showcase research and offer lab tours at open house

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Florida Gulf Coast University's Everglades Wetland Research Park (EWRP) will showcase its research and welcome visitors for an open house and lab tours Tuesday, Feb. 2 in celebration of International Wetlands Day.

The EWRP 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. It is located in the Kapnick Center at the Naples Botanical Garden, 4940 Bayshore Drive, Naples.

From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Feb. 2, visitors will be able to see where scientists as well as graduate and doctoral students study Everglades restoration, carbon presence and methane emissions in local ecosystems and coastal mangrove restoration. The park's main research laboratory features state-of-the-art technology that is expanding knowledge in wetlands and river biogeochemistry and ecology. Visual displays featuring wetlands of international importance will be on view throughout the day.

Scientific experts and wetlands managers also will examine the importance of these ecosystems in a panel discussion at 9:30 a.m. led by EWRP Director William J. Mitsch, eminent scholar and prize-winning wetland scientist. He holds FGCU's Juliet C. Sproul Chair for Southwest Florida Habitat Restoration and Management.

Panelists will include Suzanne Slear, president of Environmental Concern Inc., a nonprofit based in St. Michaels, Md., dedicated to working with all aspects of wetlands; and Derek Litchfield, chief of the Branch of Grants & Operations, Division of International Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Falls Church, Va.

The activities were planned as part of Ramsar's Wetlands Day celebrations around the world. Ramsar is an international treaty that the United States is a partner to through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the State Department. It was established in 1971 to promote conservation and wise use of wetlands. Mitsch is chairman of the U.S. National Ramsar Committee, an

association of NGOs and other members who support the goals of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

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. Mitsch's research also has shown they could play a role in mitigating climate change because of their ability to isolate carbon from the atmosphere.

"We call them nature's kidneys," he says. "They clean up water, they minimize flooding downstream and they're the best habitat on the planet."

For more information, contact Mitsch at (239) 325-1365 or wmitsch@fgcu.edu, or go to www.fgcu.edu/swamp.

-FGCU-