

# The Role of the FIU Nature Preserve in Promoting Physical Activity

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## Abstract Details

The FIU Nature Preserve was established over thirty-five years ago as an environmental educational center where visitors could experience and learn about local south Florida ecosystems and organisms. This 16-acre facility in the heart of the MMC campus has recently become a popular outdoor fitness destination since the inauguration of a jogging path during Fall 2013. This study set out to quantify how many people visit the FIU Nature Preserve annually, who they are, and what they are doing there. It is also assessing the effect of the FIU Nature Preserve on the overall health of the university community since studies have found that physical activity and contact with nature are positively associated with good health. A pilot was completed during Fall 2014, and the study is on track to finish March 22, 2015. To measure current visitation, two types of surveys were done on seven days across seven weeks during the spring of 2015, visitation counts and in-person surveys. By understanding the reasons and ways people discover and embark on regular use of natural areas, land managers and policy makers can make more informed decisions. As human population and development continue to grow, new ways to integrate natural areas into our urban environment and our lifestyles must be found. In this way, natural resource conservation could be championed as a way for communities to promote physical activity and good health beyond simply using their intrinsic value.

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