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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

‘Independence Day’ not a license to cut trees on public lands

July 11, 2024 – By most measures, revelers enjoyed the Fourth of July in Flagler County in typical ways – watching the parade in Flagler Beach, or cooling off at the newly reopened Splash Pad in Palm Coast, or watching the Fireworks Over the Runways at the Flagler Executive Airport. They also spent the long holiday weekend enjoying Flagler County’s wild places and parks.

Sadly, some chose to spend part of the holiday cutting down cypress trees at the county’s Lake Disston Boat Launch.

“The launch gives access to Lake Disston, a state designated ‘Outstanding Florida Waters,’ – because the lake is worthy of special protection to preserve its exceptional ecological significance,” said Forestry Supervisor Ralph Risch. “Cutting trees on the county’s public property is prohibited by both state and county ordinances.”

Some old-growth trees in Florida are over 500 years old, according to the University of Florida IFAS Extension. Cypress trees are among the most flood-tolerant of all Florida’s trees, which is why they dominate swamps that have long flood periods.

“They provide flood control and can maintain – or improve – water quality in the environment,” Risch said. “They can absorb storm runoff and can help slow flooding during heavy rain events.”

The technical term for the Cypress “knee” is pneumatophore, or air-bearing, according to the National Wildlife Federation. The knees bring air to the drowned roots.

Cypress trees provide habitat for amphibians like frogs and salamanders, as well as birds like wood storks and bald eagles.

“Please, enjoy Flagler County’s abundant natural resources,” Risch said. “As always, let’s continue to work together to preserve these wild places in our public spaces, and leave them for future generations to enjoy.”

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