

Administration

1769 E. Moody Blvd Bldg 2
Bunnell, FL 32110



www.flaglercounty.gov

Phone: (386)313-4001

Fax: (386)313-4101

Written by:

Julie Murphy, PIO, MPIO

Flagler County

Communications Coordinator

(386) 313-4039

Email jmurphy@flaglercounty.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Don't pick palmetto berries on Flagler County property – it's unlawful

August 8, 2023 – Palmetto berries on Flagler County public lands might be tempting to pick, but county ordinance forbids it.

“The word is out that there is no palmetto berry picking allowed on county-owned lands. The FCSO arrested several trespassers who were picking palmetto berries at county parks back on August 1, and then this morning our caretaker at River to Sea walked outside and saw several guys with berry picking apparatus. They took off and left their gear when they saw him,” said Flagler County Public Lands and Natural Resource Manager Mike Lagasse. “While some private property owners allow the harvesting of the berries with permission, picking palmetto berries is not allowed on Flagler County owned or managed preserves and parks.”

Flagler County ordinance also prohibits the removal of soil, rock, sand, stones, trees, shrubs, plants, or wood materials. Violators can expect to pay a penalty of up to \$500.

“Palmetto berry harvesting activities reduce the amount of food available for wildlife and can create unwanted trails and debris on our public lands,” Lagasse said. “These berry pickers are working in hazardous conditions, damaging our parks, and interrupting food sources for our native wildlife. Out-of-county private companies profit off it. Also, keep in mind Gopher tortoises are a threatened wildlife species and are protected by state law.”

This palmetto berry harvesting has in the past been problematic for private property owners and for the county's many natural areas including MalaCompra Park, River-to-Sea Preserve, and Varn Park in northeastern Flagler County. Other areas of concern include Haw Creek Preserve, Princess Place Preserve, Shell Bluff, and Betty Steflik Preserve.

“People might say they have permission to pick the berries, but this is absolutely untrue of Flagler County public lands. Palmetto berries are an important wildlife food,” Lagasse said. “There are no licenses in effect for individuals to harvest palmetto berries from county-owned properties.”

Andy Dance
District 1

Greg Hansen
District 2

David Sullivan
District 3

Leann Pennington
District 4

Donald O'Brien, Jr.
District 5

Those who suspect they have seen someone harvesting palmetto berries on county-owned property, are asked to report it to Lagasse at 386-313-4064 or call the Flagler County Sheriff's non-emergency number, 386-313-4911.

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