

# Lake Worth Lagoon

## TIMELINE

**1870s:** Settlers begin to build home sites around "Lake Worth," a freshwater lake. It is named after General William Worth.

**1877:** Pioneers dig the first stable inlet north of its current location (Lake Worth Inlet), and Lake Worth begins to change into a saltwater lagoon.

**1885 – 1892:** Because a letter sent from Palm Beach to Miami has to travel by boat and rail through New York City and Havana, Cuba – a two-month journey – the first U.S. Mail route by the Barefoot Mailmen starts carrying mail by boat and on foot from Jupiter to Miami, a one-week round trip.

**Late 1800s:** Henry Flagler builds the Florida East Coast Railroad from St. Augustine to Palm Beach. The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway is dredged from Lake Worth Lagoon to Jupiter Inlet.

**Early 1900s:** Flagler extends the railroad to Key West. The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway is completed from the Lake Worth Lagoon to Biscayne Bay.

**1925:** Lake Worth Inlet is deepened and widened to improve shipping, transportation and water quality. The sediment dredged to enhance the inlet creates Peanut Island. To provide drainage for western development, the West Palm Beach Canal (C-51 Canal) is dredged, creating a significant freshwater inflow into the lagoon.

**1927:** South Lake Worth Inlet is completed.

**Mid-1900s:** Additional canals are dredged to allow for development, increasing stormwater inflow into the lagoon. Pollutants from freshwater and sewage inflows result in unacceptable water quality. Seagrass populations in Lake Worth Lagoon decline.

**1960s – present:** During extensive cleanup efforts, sewage is diverted to treatment plants. However, freshwater discharges from drainage canals remain a source of stormwater pollution. Seawalls now replace most of the mangrove shoreline.

**1990:** The Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management publishes a Lake Worth Lagoon Natural Resources Inventory and Resource Enhancement Study. Environmental restoration efforts begin.

**1990s:** Palm Beach County restores Munyon Island and places artificial reefs in the lagoon. Both projects increase fish habitat. Studies show that seagrass populations have increased. Seasonal coastal cleanup days include the lagoon.

**1998:** A management plan is developed to improve water quality and wildlife habitat, provide for human uses of the lagoon and increase public awareness about human impacts.

**2000 – present:** Local, state, and federal funding supports projects to improve natural habitat and lagoon water quality. Palm Beach County completes numerous environmental restoration projects: Peanut Island, John's Island, Snook Islands Natural Area and the Ibis Isles Restoration Project.

**2009:** The Lake Worth Lagoon Initiative forms a Steering Committee and three working groups focused on Habitat, Water, and Public Outreach.

**2013:** The Lake Worth Lagoon Management Plan is updated to identify new goals for environmental enhancement and protection, water quality improvements, and public outreach efforts.

**Today:** Many partners continue efforts to improve water quality, restore habitat, prevent pollution and involve the community in taking care of the lagoon.



**Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners**

**Department of Environmental Resources Management**

2300 N. Jog Road - Fourth Floor, West Palm Beach, FL 33411-2743

Phone: 561.233.2400 [www.pbcgov.com/erm](http://www.pbcgov.com/erm)

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