

## Living Harmoniously in Hammock Dunes

**Location:** Palm Coast, FL

**Population:** 523

**Size:** 1,012 acres

**Type of property:** Private community

**Type of membership:**  
Sustainable Communities Program

**Member since:** May 2013

**Certified since:** October 2018



Hammock Dunes, Florida

Hammock Dunes is an oceanfront golf community of 1,012 acres with 2.3 miles of beach on the Atlantic Ocean. In its unique natural setting in Palm Coast, Florida, tucked in a hammock of pines and palms between the Atlantic Ocean and the Matanzas River (part of the Intracoastal Waterway), Hammock Dunes is in one of the last maritime hammocks on the east coast. A maritime hammock is a predominantly evergreen hardwood forest growing on stabilized coastal dunes lying at varying distances from the shore,<sup>1</sup> and Hammock Dunes Owners Association works hard to conserve and support this environment.

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Hammock Dunes' relationship with Audubon International began in the early 2000s when the Hammock Dunes Club registered their two golf courses in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf. Both the Hammock Dunes



Hammock Dunes is home to two, certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary golf courses.

Oceanfront Links and Creek courses ultimately achieved certification in the program, and this accomplishment helped to galvanize momentum among the entire community to begin thinking about sustainability throughout all of Hammock Dunes. A few years later, the Hammock Dunes Owners Association joined the Sustainable Communities Program (SCP) and hit the ground running.

Through the Sustainable Communities Program, communities are guided through a customized journey to become healthy and vibrant places in which to live, work, and play by focusing on the three pillars of sustainability: economic vitality,

1. Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida: 2010 edition – Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI). [www.fnai.org](http://www.fnai.org)

a healthy local environment, and quality of life for citizens. After joining the SCP in the spring of 2013, Hammock Dunes began taking a comprehensive look at their community's past and present efforts to be more sustainable, as well as options to continue its efforts into the future.

After developing a long-term sustainability plan, complete with measurable goals and a timeline for completion, and upon initial implementation of those goals, communities are eligible for certification in the Sustainable Communities Program. Hammock Dunes is implementing action items from their adopted long-term sustainability plan and measuring initial progress towards its chosen sustainability targets. Hammock Dunes' accomplishments include:

- **Outreach and Education:** Environmental education is integrated into many aspects of Hammock Dunes community life. Ongoing programs and efforts include wildlife walks and monthly articles in the community newspaper about sound environmental practices and native species.
- **Citizen Engagement and Service:** In addition to donating significant time and resources to help meet regional needs in education, housing, and arts, Hammock Dunes residents demonstrate their environmental commitment by participating in Whitney Lab's Whale Watch teams and the Flagler County Turtle Patrol. These efforts earned Hammock Dunes the Florida Communities of Excellence Award for their civic involvement initiatives in 2009.
- **Environmental Partnerships:** Through a partnership with the Dunes Community Development District and St. Johns Water Management District, Hammock Dunes uses reclaimed water for all irrigation. This has helped the community reduce its use of potable groundwater supplies and become more environmentally friendly. To address problems of invasive exotic plant species, the community has worked with Friends of A1A and spent more than \$100,000 to remove Brazilian pepper trees and Virginia creeper vines near the community.
- **Natural Area Preservation:** To preserve native species a policy was adopted that limits the removal of native plants (unless diseased) and requires replacement with plants native to the Florida region. Additionally, another community policy was adopted that requires the use of native plants or xeriscaping on common areas.



A component of the Sustainable Communities Program is a demonstration project, which is to provide educational information about sustainability to its residents. Walking paths and golf courses integrated with the natural landscape were enhanced by the 'Audubon Trails to Fitness' project, which created trail maps and kiosks with information about local wildlife. From Left to Right: Kellie Jebbia, Marge Rooyakkers, Tony Papandrea cut the ribbon at the Audubon Trails to Fitness dedication ceremony.



Hammock Dunes is in one of the last Maritime Hammocks on the east coast

- **Wildlife Conservation:** As part of the community's master plan, over 700 acres of natural open space is protected through conservation easements and restrictions. Educational signs posted around the community encourage awareness about wildlife, and multiple boardwalks and beach access points offer opportunities for viewing shorebirds, dolphins, and whales.

- **Sustainable Housing:** In order to ensure diverse, sustainable, and affordable housing for residents, the Design Review Manual was updated to include green criteria.
- **Resident Engagement & Awareness:** A self-guided nature tour through the community was developed to increase resident knowledge about the environmental setting of the community, including its unique natural assets and sustainability practices.
- **Corporate Commitment:** Hammock Dunes takes great pride in their resident sea turtle population, and does everything they can to ensure their safety. This includes installing light fixtures in common areas with turtle friendly lighting technology.
- **Dune Enhancement:** Annually, Hammock Dunes enhances their sand dune network by densely planting sea oats, rail road vine, and dune sunflower in the landscape to protect against dune erosion, which ultimately protects the community from an ocean breach during a storm surge.



Left to Right: Jessica Latus (Audubon International), Marge Rooyakkers (HDOA Audubon Committee Board Chair), and Travis Houk, LCAM (Southern States Management Group, Inc.) receiving the Sustainable Communities Award at their designation ceremony in October 2018.

After four years of hard work, the Hammock Dunes Owners Association received designation as an Audubon International Certified Sustainable Community in October 2018, making them the first private community in Florida to receive this designation. A dedicated Board of ten administrators embraced the Audubon International Sustainable Community Program and the residents also fully supported the efforts put forth by the Hammock Dunes Owners Association (HDOA) Audubon Committee. Marge Rooyakkers, HDOA Audubon Committee Board Chair, led the initiative, and is to be commended for her hard work and dedication to this process. In addition, Travis Houk, Licensed Community Association Manager with Southern States Management Group, Inc., was the pivotal staff for the effort.



Interpretive signage on the golf course to help residents identify wildlife.

Ms. Rooyakkers, congratulated the community on receiving the Certified Sustainable Community designation, “Hammock Dunes residents, management and staff joined in a common cause to fashion our community to be a sustainable community established by Audubon International. For almost two decades we have been involved with Audubon International programming, starting with our two golf courses becoming certified members in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf. We are a very conservation-oriented community, and we want our grandchildren to have a healthy environment they can pass down to their children. We look forward to working with Audubon International for many years to come.”

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