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DEP INTRODUCES NINTH 'LIFE' SITE IN FLORIDA

- State Park and Malone Middle School partner for environmental education-

MARIANNA – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today joined officials from the Jackson County School Board and seventh graders from Malone School to open a new Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE) program site. Located at DEP's Florida Caverns State Park, the LIFE site will provide students with an opportunity to experience science education outside the classroom.

“By participating in an interactive program, these Jackson County students and teachers are gaining first-hand knowledge and experiences that encourage future environmental stewardship,” said Greg Ira, Director of DEP's Office of Environmental Education. “Since the launch of our first LIFE site in 2004, we have used the methods of science to introduce students to the interactions between people and the environments they live in.”

The student's trip is the first of four they will make to Florida Caverns State Park this school-year to conduct hands-on, scientific field labs written by DEP's environmental education staff along with local teachers. Today's activity included three labs. In the first lab, students made scientific measurements using the scientific units for volume, mass, weight, time and temperature. Another lab examined two ways of looking at motion and the change in an objects position. The third lab involved a cave exploration where students examined cave formations and the conditions that gave rise to them. Each lab makes use of the unique resources at Florida Caverns State Park to illustrate and enrich the standards-based curriculum of the school.

Along with the DEP, the Florida Caverns State Park LIFE program site is supported by the Florida Springs Initiative, Chipola College, the Chipola Area Goundwater Outreach Program and the Jackson County School District. As part of the program, DEP will provide equipment and professional development opportunities for teachers. In addition, students will be encouraged to learn more about Florida's environment, while improving their understanding of math and science.

Since 2004, more than 2,600 future scientists and stewards have participated in the LIFE program. The LIFE initiative seeks to establish a series of field-based, environmental-science education programs around the state. Each of the nine existing programs is a partnership between the DEP and a local school district. The goals of the LIFE program are increased student achievement, teacher professional development in science, increased participation of underserved and under-represented populations, and increased stewardship of public lands.

For more information on DEP's LIFE program, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/ed.

