

# Beauty of Okeehetee Park being trashed

## Your Turn

David Thomas  
Guest columnist

Okeehetee Park is a treasure. With over 900 acres, miles of fantastic trails, an innovative Nature Center, an elaborate "Shark" Wake Park, a mile-long walking/running track and two huge lakes, there is plenty of access for boating, fishing, water skiing, kayaking, and exploring.

A BMX track and three finely-manicured nine-hole municipal golf courses abut the park. There are numerous lighted ball fields, playgrounds for children and tennis and pickleball courts. There is even a professional 18-hole Frisbee course.

People ride bikes, walk, and roller skate around the countless trails. Families enjoy picnics, birthday parties and just hanging together in pavilions that are spread throughout the park. Fifty-plus benches were just added and strategically placed for visitors to relax and relish the panoramic beauty.

When I walk here early every morning, the views are truly breathtaking — from the vibrant colors of the foliage to the squirrels playing nutty games to the movements of the glistening waters. I feel alive, energized, and extremely fortunate to be able to walk surrounded by the artistic beauty of nature.

But this paradise in the heart of Palm Beach County is rapidly evolving into a human garbage can and I am angry. My blood boils when I see discarded plastic water bottles and bags, food containers, doggy bags filled with waste and countless personal protection equipment, including masks, gloves, and gowns, strewn everywhere throughout this beautiful oasis.

Garbage is deliberately left by visitors in plain sight of huge metal trash cans. Have these individuals no respect, no manners and no intent of being responsible? It appears to me that these litterbugs must have been raised in a pigsty.

In my opinion, they should be fined, made to wear an orange jumpsuit and spend a minimum of 10 hours of community service picking up garbage. There is no excuse — none — for visitors to turn this paradise into an eyesore.

Please, I beg everyone to respect the beauty that nature has bestowed upon us and really attempt to keep our planet pristine. Not just for us but for our grandchildren and future generations.

*David Thomas lives in Wellington.*