

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: *David Brown, 40*

Jupiter utilities director oversees water quality for citizens, nature

By LIZ BEST
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Growing up along the shores of the Chesapeake Bay in Annapolis, Md., David Brown developed a life-long love for the environment.

As director of utilities for Jupiter, Brown oversees water quality for 75,000 residents.

But it's what he does in his spare time that is really making a difference in the environment.

About four years ago, Brown joined the Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative, a group that strives to restore some of South Florida's wildest and most scenic areas.

"We know everything that needs to be done, but nothing was being done. Funding was missing," said Brown, who lives in Palm City with his wife, Stephanie, and their three children.

So the group contacted Sen. Ken Pruitt, R-Port St. Lucie and pleaded their case. He took their words to heart and agreed to sponsor and guide the group through the legislative process.

Six million dollars was appropriated for river restoration projects. The only catch is that local entities have to finance 50 percent of every project.

"So really, that \$6 million was seed money for \$12 million of projects," said Brown, who is chairman of the group. "A lot of people doubted us."

Brown is no politician. He has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Maryland in College Park, and an MBA from Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. He grew up crabbing and fishing the waters of the Chesapeake Bay and said he believes it is man's responsibility to maintain the wilderness for generations to come.

The first project they started involved Jones Creek, which had suffered for years due to runoff from a nearby industrial park. The park is now equipped with water quality treatment facilities thanks to the Preservation Initiative. They also are overseeing the dredging of 24,000 cubic yards of muck and slime from the bottom of the



CYDNEY SCOTT/Staff Photographer

creek.

Another project involves restoring 15,000 acres around the Loxahatchee Slough west of Jupiter.

"We're trying to re-create what the slough looked like," said Brown, adding that the slough project requires \$850,000 from the state and Palm Beach County.

Other projects being led by the Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative are installing a water control structure in Jupiter Farms, making improvements to water quality in Jonathan Dickinson State Park and the nearby Tanahketa Scout Reservation, and restoring

habitats along the wild and scenic corridor of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River.

Jones Creek is being restored in two phases, the second of which calls for a boardwalk to be built in the wilderness area near the Aquatic Complex on Toney Penna Drive.

"It's very pretty back there. It's like a different world. It's a very nice natural area," said Brown.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about the group is that they do it in their spare time. Brown says they meet over lunch once a month.

"But we have a lot of help. We

are a committee of 13 . . . we owe a lot of thanks to Ken Pruitt," said Brown, a fisherman who prefers the open water to the mucky swamp land. "I'm more of a water-side person. I like the downstream beauty more than the upstream."

What event in history do you wish you had witnessed?

"The Naval battles during the War of 1812 and the Revolutionary War."

Is there another profession you'd like to try?

"Ultimately I'd like to slow down the work side of my life and spend more time with my family."

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David Brown, the director of utilities for Jupiter, is chairman of the Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative, which received \$6 million in seed money from the state to help clean and restore the river area. He is pictured at Dubois Park along the Jupiter Inlet.