

# Loxahatchee stars in 'Our Signature'

By Michelle Sheldone  
Staff Writer

## REVIEW

The locally filmed documentary about the Loxahatchee River features a cast of characters you're likely to spot at the local Publix, a nearby restaurant, the Juno Beach pier or area events.

And we're not talking Burt Reynolds.

In "Our Signature: The Wild and Scenic Loxahatchee," a water district executive (Rick Dent) sheds his stiff shirt and tie to get knee deep and down to some angling. A retired biologist (Dick Roberts) finds his way out of the scrub jay habitat and on to the bow of a boat. A Florida senator (Ken Pruitt) takes time from the Tallahassee rat race to stroll a serene shoreline.

Dent, Roberts and Pruitt may not be walking the red carpet any time soon, but they're really just the supporting cast to the top-billed beauty anyway: The Loxahatchee

### At a glance

➤ "Our Signature: The Wild and Scenic Loxahatchee River"

➤ The Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative is providing the DVD free to public and private schools, public libraries and environmental centers throughout Martin and North Palm Beach Counties.

➤ Extra copies are free to the public.

➤ Also free are signed posters of Clyde Butcher's "Loxahatchee 14," that serves as art for the DVD cover.

➤ For more information or to obtain copies, call Loxahatchee River District water resources director Paul Millar at (561) 747-5700.

River.

Director Elam Stoltzfus, who served also as cinematographer, exposes the tributary in all its magnificence: "Tea-colored" waters filmed

from above carve a winding path amid copious foliage until they convene with seas of the Atlantic. Viewers coast with the on-water camera around each of the river's curves as if they were witnessing first-hand a tempestuous, ever-changing mix of cypress, ferns and more — an enchanted forest, if you will.

Pelicans dive for food, turtles sunbathe atop rocks, osprey alight into lofty nests, and gators seemingly grin in what Pruitt calls a "golden treasure running through our communities."

Environmental photographer Clyde Butcher in the film refers to the Loxahatchee as the "Yosemite" of Florida.

"It's like going down a canyon," he says. "Your head clears. Your vision comes back."

Jupiter author and historian Jim

See **LOXAHATCHEE**, A15

## LOXAHATCHEE

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Snyder narrates.

Snyder penned the book, "Five Thousand Years on the Loxahatchee," a historical must-read for area students and newcomers, as "Our Signature: The Wild and Scenic Loxahatchee River" is a must-see.

The river was the first in Florida to receive a federal "Wild and Scenic" designation, and it is intrinsically linked with the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee. The Loxahatchee River Preserva-

tion Initiative, headed by David Brown and designed to seek financial support for the waterway's preservation and restoration, produced the 20-minute documentary that details this.

"We're never going to have a system like we did historically," says South Florida Water Management District's Patti Sime.

The goal: to "peel back the effects of development," says Brown.

About 500 acres of the watershed's former 750 acres were lost as the Palm Beach Gardens-through-Hobe

Sound population rose to 80,000, bringing with it encroaching salt water and construction. The Preservation Initiative wants to protect the river for current and future generations and to date has gathered more than \$7 million for such projects as wetlands restoration and stormwater treatment areas.

"Our Signature" also stars Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Colleen Castille and Martin County's own Kim Love.

*Staff Writer Kit Bradshaw contributed to this report.*