



## EDUCATION

### *Integration of Environmental Education with Ecological Research* by C. Ross Hinkle

Brevard County is in the process of obtaining a significant number of Environmentally Sensitive Lands as part of the Environmentally Endangered Lands Program (EEL). The network of areas obtained under this program will be excellent sites for ecological research and environmental education. It is expected that significant data will need to be collected at these sites for the development and implementation of management plans and

the monitoring of management activities.

A special effort needs to be made to encourage learning activities as part of the management program development for these sites. The integration of environmental education with research and management activities is beneficial. For example, the Long-Term Environmental Monitoring Ecological Research Program at John F. Kennedy Space Center has provided many opportunities for students to participate in ecological research. NASA has several programs that involve university faculty, graduate students, undergraduate students, high school and elementary teachers, and high school students in hands-on research activities. Students and faculty have participated in wildlife surveys, radio tracking of indigo snakes and gopher tortoises, vegetation studies, water quality studies, aquatic ecology studies, and many other environmental activities. These activities have varied from a very short-term "demonstration type" participation to an extended period of active data collection, analysis, and report development. Teachers and students benefit from the active participation in an operational research program which provides them with first-hand knowledge of ecological research, and the research program and researchers benefit from having extra help with field studies and the satisfaction of sharing their knowledge with others.

*C. Ross Hinkle is the Group Manager of Biological Research Programs for the Bionetics Corporation at John F. Kennedy Space Center. He received his M.S. and Ph.D. in Ecology from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Dr. Hinkle directs research programs in ecology, bioregenerative life support systems, and space biology. He is an adjunct assistant professor at the University of Central Florida and has worked with graduate students at the Florida Institute of Technology, the University of Florida at Gainesville, and the University of Virginia, Charlottesville. He is serving on the Brevard County Committee for the Selection of Environmentally Endangered Lands.*