

Boca Ciega Bay & Pinellas County AQUATIC PRESERVE

"All it takes is a look underwater to understand why these two aquatic preserves are located in Florida's most densely-urbanized county. The abundant, diverse aquatic resources must have been a key attraction to early settlers."

Randy Runnels, Aquatic Preserve Manager

Key Accomplishments

- Developed a new, boat-based video system for assessing possible impacts of projects like bridge replacements
- Provided technical expertise to reduce the impacts of dredging and beach renourishment projects on corals, seagrass, and other habitats
- Increased public awareness of local environmental resources and issues through displays at festivals, boat shows, and other events



Replacing Australian pines with native pines helps to stabilize shorelines

Project Spotlight Island Management

Because much natural shoreline in Pinellas County has been lost to dredging, seawall construction and other urban activities, the

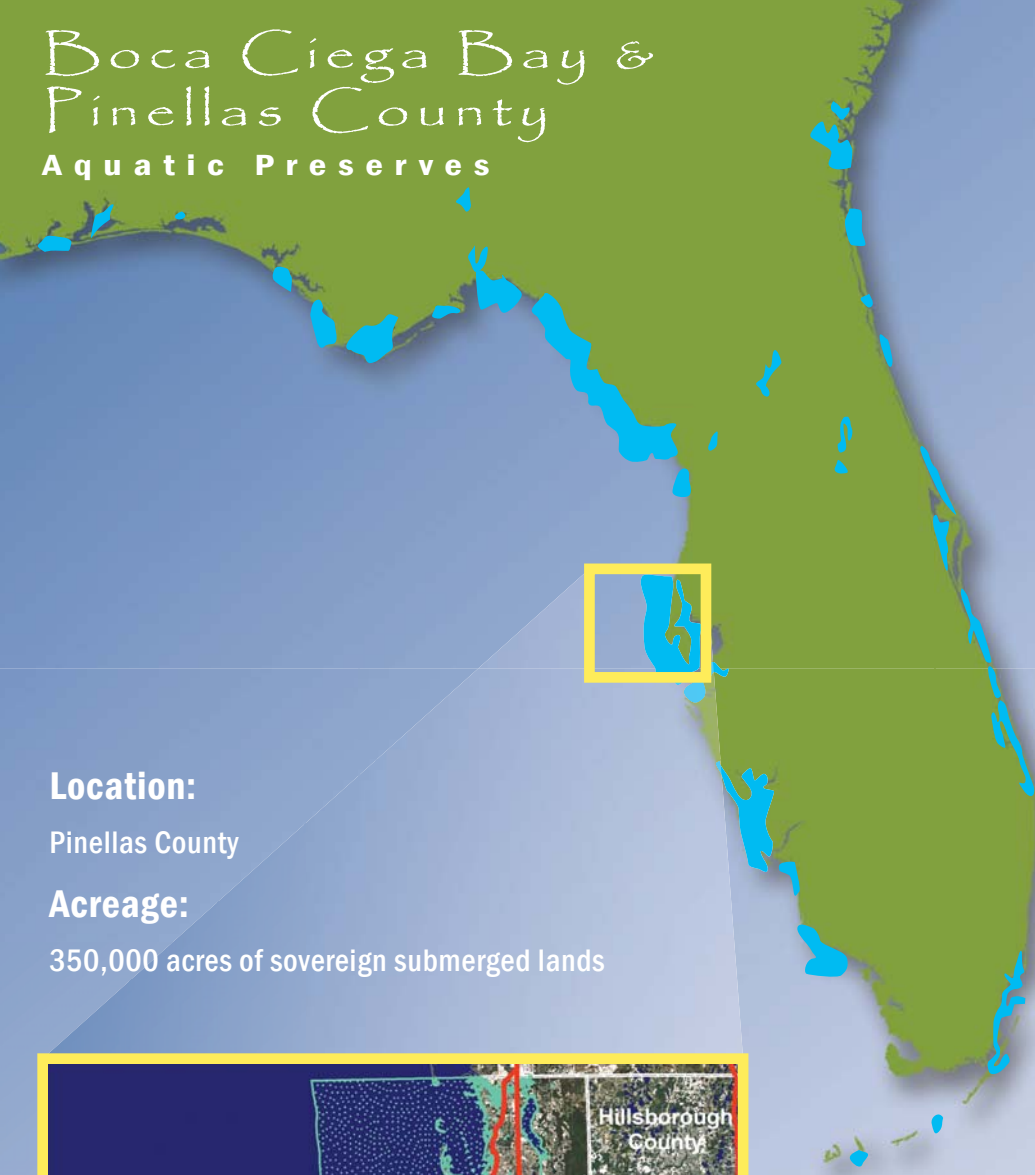


Building an interpretive trail as part of an Eagle Scout project

habitat afforded by islands has become especially important. Birds nest on the islands and in their vegetation, and marine animals thrive and reproduce in the seagrass and other habitats of the islands' shores. Because the islands are scattered throughout the aquatic preserves, effective, efficient management

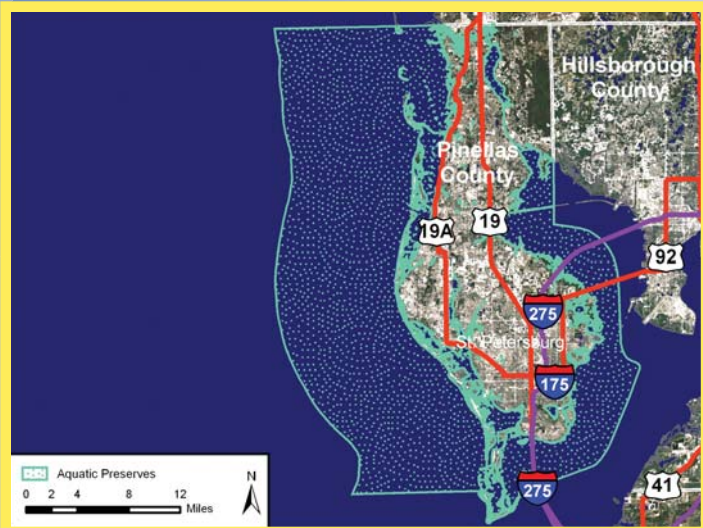
requires partnerships with local governments, organizations and individuals. Aquatic preserve staff work with all of these entities in removing exotic plants from the islands and replacing them with native Florida plants.

Boca Ciega Bay & Pinellas County Aquatic Preserves



Location:
Pinellas County

Acreage:
350,000 acres of sovereign submerged lands



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Aquatic Preserve Facts:

- The preserves include nearshore habitats along sandy beaches and mangrove dominated shorelines.
- Submerged habitats include oyster bars, seagrass beds, coral communities, and springfed caves.
- Abundant islands, including those formed from dredge spoil material, are also part of the preserve.
- Approximately 1/3 of Florida's coral species can be found in the Pinellas County Aquatic Preserve.



Signs are an important means of informing the public and recruiting volunteer participation.



Native plants like this railroad vine help stabilize shorelines.



Spectacular natural resources are located in close proximity to urban development



Balancing public access and environmental protection is one of the challenges facing Pinellas County.



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