

Fort Pickens

AQUATIC PRESERVE

"Ft. Pickens is a rare taste of "old Florida" and its undisturbed natural beauty makes it one of my favorite places to visit on the Gulf Coast."

United States Congressman Jeff Miller

Key Accomplishments

- Ft. Pickens is part of Gulf Islands National Seashore, one of the top ten most visited national parks in the U.S. and is a focal point of tourism for the Pensacola area. Ft. Pickens has been inaccessible by vehicle since Hurricane Ivan (September 2004); it is scheduled to reopen to public use in early 2006, but will only be accessible by boat. Relevant stakeholders (officials, including aquatic preserve staff, and community representatives) have agreed to collectively consider access solutions over the short term to ensure that the recreational values can continue to be experienced by visitors.
- Federal park rangers at Ft. Pickens have Jr. Ranger camps during the summer to educate children about the park. Day camp activities include dip netting, touch tanks, bird watching, plant identification and trail hikes. This demonstrates an interagency approach towards management of the Aquatic Preserve.



Propeller scars can have a dramatic impact on seagrass beds

Project Spotlight Seagrass Restoration Project

Seagrass beds have been declining in Big Lagoon. One of the reasons for decline has been identified as prop scarring from



Donor plants getting harvested

boater use. The Northwest Florida Aquatic Preserves office was awarded a seagrass restoration grant with the Gulf of Mexico Program. This entails replanting prop scars within the preserve in the eastern portion of

Big Lagoon, adjacent to the Gulf Island National Seashore. Approximately .25 acres of prop scars within the preserve will be transplanted with donor plants of shoal grass from various sites. After the prop scars have been transplanted the scars will be monitored for new growth for several years.

Fort Pickens Aquatic Preserve

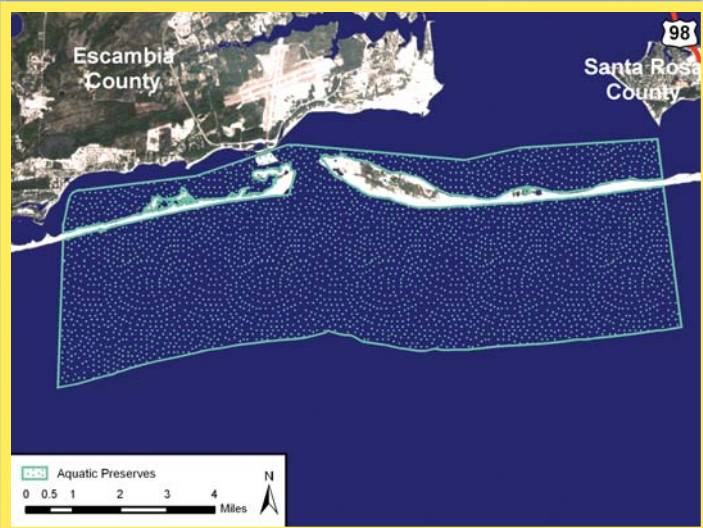


Location:

Escambia County

Acreage:

34,000 acres of sovereign submerged lands



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Aquatic Preserve Facts:

- The USS Massachusetts is an underwater archaeological preserve within the preserve on the Gulf of Mexico side. It and the Ft. Pickens rock jetties in the Pensacola Pass both provide excellent diving and fishing opportunities.
- Several types of snakes and land turtles are abundant in the coastal strands.
- Over 280 species of birds have been identified in the aquatic preserve and its adjacent upland areas.
- Marine mammals such as the bottlenose dolphin are often seen in and around the sea grass beds of the preserve feeding on the smaller fish.
- Coastal scrub communities of Santa Rosa Island and Perdido Key have populations of marsh rabbit, cotton rats, rice rats and the Perdido Key beach mouse which is a federally listed endangered species.



USS Massachusetts turret



Redfish fishing inside the preserve



Perdido Key beach mouse



Ft. Pickens



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