

Indian River

Vero Beach to Ft. Pierce & Jensen Beach to Jupiter Inlet

AQUATIC PRESERVES

“From the time of the Ais Indians, the Indian River Lagoon has been and remains an important feature that continues to shape the lives of those who reside near it, recreate within it, and earn a livelihood from it.”

Laura Herren, Aquatic Preserve Manager

Key Accomplishments

- Community water quality and shoreline concerns have been addressed through a series of management initiatives including larval oyster recruitment, survivorship, and reef formation studies.
- The coordination of a volunteer-based spoil island enhancement program designed to improve resource quality for recreation, education, and native wildlife has been considered by the community and preserve management as a great success.
- A partnership with St. Johns River Water Management District has benefited seagrass species diversity and density monitoring efforts between Fort Pierce and St. Lucie Inlets.
- A Coastal Zone Management grant award has provided for the identification and production of engineer drawings for five potential Indian River Lagoon seagrass restoration projects.
- CAMA's support of restoration works of a St. Lucie County spoil island has contributed to the creation of nearly 10 acres of mangrove and seagrass habitat.



Volunteers of all ages support CAMA's Spoil Island Enhancement Project.

Project Spotlight

Spoil Island Enhancement Program

Spoil islands, once state-owned submerged lands, were formed between 1953 and 1961 with the creation of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway. Since then, these islands have become



popular recreational areas, educational outlets, and home to many native species of plants and animals. The colonization and survivorship of native vegetation, which is necessary to support native wildlife, has been heavily influenced by the high

density of invasive, exotic species like Brazilian pepper and Australian pine. Dedicated volunteers assist Southeast Aquatic Preserves Field Office staff each month between October and April with enhancement activities such as trail blazing, camp-site creation, shoreline stabilization efforts, exotic species removal, creation of educational kiosks, and biological monitoring. A volunteer appreciation day picnic is held each May. Funding for island enhancement is provided by the Southeast Aquatic Preserves Field Office and Florida Inland Navigation District.

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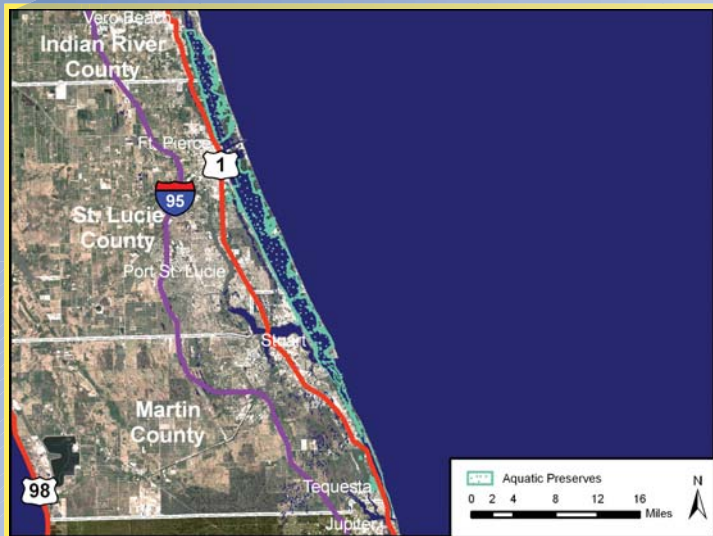
Aquatic Preserves

Location:

East-central Florida in Indian River, St. Lucie, and Martin counties

Acreage:

The Vero Beach to Ft. Pierce Aquatic Preserve is 12 miles long and encompasses 11,000 acres. The Jensen Beach to Jupiter Inlet Aquatic Preserve is 37 miles long and encompasses 22,000 acres.



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Jerry Metz



Many marine organisms spend a portion of their lives seeking food and shelter in seagrass beds, such as this turtle grass.

Jerry Metz



Due to their ability to efficiently dissipate wave energy and provide essential fish habitat, red mangroves are commonly used in natural shoreline stabilization projects in the southern Indian River Lagoon.



Recreational spoil islands are ideal settings for camping, snorkeling, picnics, and fishing.

Aquatic Preserve Facts:

- The Indian River Lagoon is one of the most biologically diverse estuaries in the nation.
- One of 28 estuaries in the country in Environmental Protection Agency's National Estuary Program, the Indian River Lagoon is the only estuary with this designation (1990) on the east coast of Florida.
- Supports seagrass beds, mangroves, drift algae, salt marshes, oyster bars, tidal flats, and spoil islands which serve as important spawning and/or nursery grounds for commercially important species, such as shrimp, groupers, snappers, snook and drum.
- Popular activities include boating, recreational and commercial fishing, wildlife observation, snorkeling, and photography.
- Spoil islands provide visitors with camping, fishing, picnicking, hiking, snorkeling, and birding opportunities.



Seagrasses, such as this paddle grass, often grow in areas colonized by other benthic organisms such as sponges and algae.



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