

Apalachicola Bay

AQUATIC PRESERVE

"The Apalachicola River, Floodplain, and Bay comprise one of the most biodiverse and productive riverine and estuarine systems in the Northern Hemisphere. The historic natural function and cultural heritage of the surrounding communities remain much of the way it has been for generations of commercial fishermen on one of Florida's last working waterfronts. This ecosystem and its people are truly an American Treasure."

*Dan Tonsmeire
Apalachicola Riverkeeper*

Key Accomplishments

- Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA) staff responsible in both the Aquatic Preserve Program and the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System work collaboratively on submerged aquatic vegetation research and monitoring and the best management practices for this habitat in the area. The preserve has completed three years of monitoring to date.
- Increased communication and collaboration with the DEP regulatory offices through regular review of permit applications. Comments and site inspections are completed as necessary to ensure that these ecosystems are protected for future generations.
- Staff aided with compliance by responding to public reports of violations and reporting these incidents to the district offices.
- In order to promote use of sustainable resources, staff participate in public events and workshops, including Estuaries Day and Seagrass Awareness Month. These events target youth from local schools. Staff are currently coordinating with a local elementary school to give regular presentations on the important resources in the surrounding bay systems.



Shrimpboat in the sunset

Project Spotlight

Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program

Staff are partnering with members of the community to participate in the efforts to remove derelict crab traps from the bay waters



Derelict crab trap exposed by low tide

each year. These traps are no longer fished, but remain in the water because they have been lost to storms, tides or currents, have deteriorated floats, lines or knots, have been clipped by boat

propellers, or have been cut intentionally by vandals. Negative impacts created by derelict traps may include, mortality of blue crabs and bycatch, navigational hazards, user group conflicts, visual pollution and impacts to sensitive habitat.

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Aquatic Preserve



Location:

Franklin and Gulf counties

Acreage:

80,000 acres of sovereign submerged lands



Local Contact:

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Oystermen



Shoreline of the Apalachicola Bay



Rainbow over the bay



Sunrise over the bay

Aquatic Preserve Facts:

- Apalachicola Bay is one of the most productive estuarine systems in the Northern hemisphere as a result of the overall good water quality.
- Apalachicola Bay is an exceptionally important nursery area for the Gulf of Mexico.
- Over 95% of all species harvested commercially and 85% of all species harvested recreationally in the open Gulf have to spend a portion of their life in estuarine waters. Blue crabs, for example, migrate as much as 300 miles to spawn in Apalachicola Bay.
- Apalachicola Bay is a major forage area for such offshore fish species as gag grouper and gray snapper.
- The area is a major forage area for migratory birds, in particular for trans-gulf migrants in the spring.



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