

# Coupon Bight & Lignumvitae Key

# AQUATIC PRESERVES

*“The Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve exemplifies valuable and diverse collections of habitat in Monroe County. Unique natural areas of seagrass beds containing hard bottom with diverse shallow patch reefs that provide life support for a myriad of bio-diverse resources.”*

*George Neugent, Monroe County Commissioner*

## Key Accomplishments

- Enhanced participation in the Seagrass Outreach Partnership (SOP) has allowed for a greater capacity to educate people about the importance of seagrasses to the local economy and ecology. The SOP was formed in 1997 and provides information that helps boaters minimize impacts to the many shallow seagrass beds in Florida waters.
- A strengthened relationship with DEP environmental resource permitting program has allowed for more streamlined approach when addressing projects within and adjacent to the aquatic preserves.
- Aquatic preserve educational signs have been redesigned and replaced in the lower Florida Keys. The signs were positioned along fishing bridges and in highly visible locations near and adjacent to the aquatic preserves to ensure the information was readily available to visitors.



Mangroves protect much of the shoreline surrounding Coupon Bight

## Project Spotlight

### Partnerships for Protection

Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve and Lignumvitae Key Aquatic Preserve are the two southernmost aquatic preserves. Both are located in the lower half of the Florida Keys archipelago and lie



Osprey in a tree

within the boundaries of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS). Established in 1990, the FKNMS afforded a higher level of protection through both state and federal management. Due to the increasing threats to each of the habitats that comprise the sub-tropical ecosystem of the Florida Keys, this state-federal partnership provides protection to 2,900 square nautical miles

surrounding the entire archipelago of the Florida Keys, including the Coupon Bight and Lignumvitae Key Aquatic Preserves. The Florida Park Service handles much of the site management of Lignumvitae Key Aquatic Preserve as part of the Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park which overlaps most of the preserve.

# Coupon Bight & Lignumvitae Key Aquatic Preserves



## Location:

Monroe County

## Acreage:

Coupon Bight encompasses 4,600 acres of sovereign submerged lands. Lignumvitae Key encompasses 7,500 acres.



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Christmas worm on a coral



Spiny lobster



Key deer in mangroves



Conch in seagrass

## Aquatic Preserve Facts:

- Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve encompasses 4,600 acres of seagrass meadows, hard bottom communities, mangrove wetlands and coral patch reefs.
- Lignumvitae Key Aquatic Preserve encompasses 7,000 acres of seagrass meadows, deep water channels, hard bottom communities and mangrove wetlands
- Along the southern boundary of Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve is a near-shore patch reef community, home to an array of sponges, soft corals, hard corals and algae.
- Rare wading birds can often be observed foraging in the shallow waters of the tropical lagoon and amongst the mangroves.
- The endangered Key Deer is a frequent visitor to the mangroves at the Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve. The mangrove fringe offers excellent cover for foraging.
- Activities within the preserves include boating, snorkeling, diving, commercial fishing, marine life collecting, charter sport fishing and recreational fishing for finfish and lobster.



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