

North Fork, St. Lucie AQUATIC PRESERVE

"Nestled into the urban sprawl of Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie and Stuart, is a quiet and scenic retreat perfect for viewing manatees, birds, turtles, and alligators from a canoe or kayak."

Laura Herren, Aquatic Preserve Manager

Key Accomplishments

- Ongoing biological monitoring of fishes and invertebrates at hydrologic restoration sites (oxbow reconnection and berm breaches) along the upper reaches of the North Fork St. Lucie River will provide invaluable support for Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan studies.
- Review of the Project Development and Environment Study for the proposed Third East-West River Crossing over the North Fork St. Lucie River in Port St. Lucie promotes the development of a project proposal that is sensitive toward the aquatic preserve.
- Provide support to water quality improvement projects, including the ten-mile creek pilot reservoir and storm water treatment area project funded by South Florida Water Management District and US Army Corps of Engineers.



This fike net, used to monitor fishes and invertebrates, is placed at an oxbow reconnection site along the upper reaches of the North Fork.

Project Spotlight

Hydrologic Restoration of the North Fork St. Lucie River

Significant portions of the North Fork St. Lucie River were dredged in the early 1900s to support navigation and provide effective flood relief. Spoil from the dredging project was deposited along the banks of the newly created channel. These deposits resulted



Sailfin mollies have been documented to use the new berm breaches as a breeding ground.

in the isolation of wetlands and closure of oxbows which historically allowed the water to slowly meander south towards the St. Lucie Estuary.

Initial hydrologic restoration efforts along the North Fork St. Lucie River included an oxbow reconnection and three berm breach sites. Fish and invertebrate sampling at the restoration sites indicate increased levels of dissolved oxygen and use by several commercially important species, such as snook, snapper, shrimp, and blue crabs, as well as rare tropical peripheral fishes. Research and monitoring are performed in partnership with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

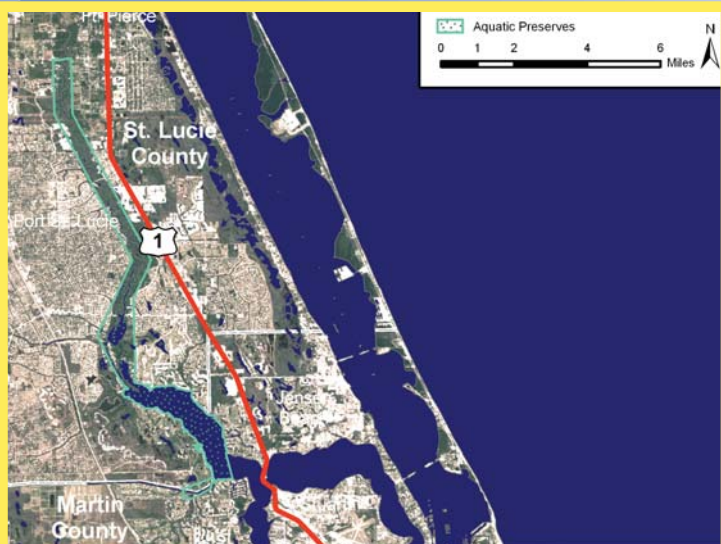
North Fork, St. Lucie Aquatic Preserve

Location:

East-central Florida in St. Lucie and Martin counties

Acreage:

The preserve is approximately 10 miles long and encompasses 5,000 acres of sovereign submerged lands



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Oaks along the North Fork provide shade for recreational fishermen and environmental artists



Maria Hefferman

These anhingas are a few of the individuals within a productive bird rookery supported by the North Fork.



Deena Wade

Learn about the natural treasures of the North Fork on the River Lilly River Cruise in Port St. Lucie.

Aquatic Preserve Facts:

- The North Fork St. Lucie River, designated as an aquatic preserve in 1972, is a freshwater system upstream and a brackish system near the St. Lucie Estuary.
- The river supports a variety of federally and state-protected species such as American alligators, manatees, river otters, nesting wood storks, little blue herons, brown pelicans, snook, and opossum pipefishes.
- Rare tropical peripheral fish species, such as gobies, sleepers, and pipefishes, are also found in the upper reaches of the North Fork and the two headwaters, five and ten mile creeks.
- The river is especially important habitat for the juvenile phases of commercially important species such as blue crabs, snook, snapper, drum, and shrimp.
- The North Fork St. Lucie River is part of Florida's "Save our Rivers" program.



Swamp lilies provide shelter for fish and protect shorelines from excess wave energy.



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