

Rookery Bay - & Cape Romano - Ten Thousand Islands

AQUATIC PRESERVES

"This estuary is an amazing place that provides a pristine sanctuary for both wildlife and people, located in one of the fastest developing areas in the nation. We are working with the community to establish a sense of stewardship for the Bay, through research and education."

Gary Lytton

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Manager

Key Accomplishments

- Established the Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center in 2004, a \$5 million, 16,500 square foot facility providing educational opportunities for over 12,000 people annually through general admissions, school classes, public education programs, professional workshops and other events
- Working in cooperation with the South Florida Water Management District, AP staff applied data collected from Henderson Creek to technology resulting in a more natural and gradual introduction of fresh water into the estuary, while maintaining flood control and aquifer recharge in the watershed
- Restored hundreds of acres of native plant communities on adjacent barrier islands, promoting dune stabilization and enhancing nesting habitat for sea turtles and other wildlife
- Established a partnership with the University of Florida's Sea Grant Program to monitor public access points and help minimize coastal resource threats such as water quality degradation, loss of habitat, and incompatible public use
- Coordinated with Collier Mosquito Control District to develop a solution on pesticide drift that reduces non-target mortality while improving effectiveness of chemical use and saving money
- Through the Friends of Rookery Bay, community volunteers contribute over 9,000 hours per year for ongoing research and monitoring, restoration efforts, and special events.



Scientists and volunteers aboard a research vessel in the Ten Thousand Islands

Project Spotlight

Everglades Restoration Research

The Rookery Bay and Cape Romano - Ten Thousand Islands aquatic preserves are located on the edge of the Everglades, and poised to experience some major ecological changes in conjunction with



Aerial view of backwater flats

Everglades Restoration. The Southern Golden Gate Estates is the first of many Everglades regions to receive major hydrologic restoration efforts. The restoration project aims to restore sheetflow to a 55,000-acre area of swamp that once drained into the estuaries of the Cape Romano - Ten Thousand Islands Aquatic

Preserve. These estuaries are known to be nursery habitat for sharks and other marine life, including commercially important pink shrimp and blue crabs. Pre-restoration monitoring research in these bays has been conducted by preserve scientists since 1998 to establish a baseline with which post-restoration studies can be compared so that a quantitative evaluation can be conducted in the years to come.

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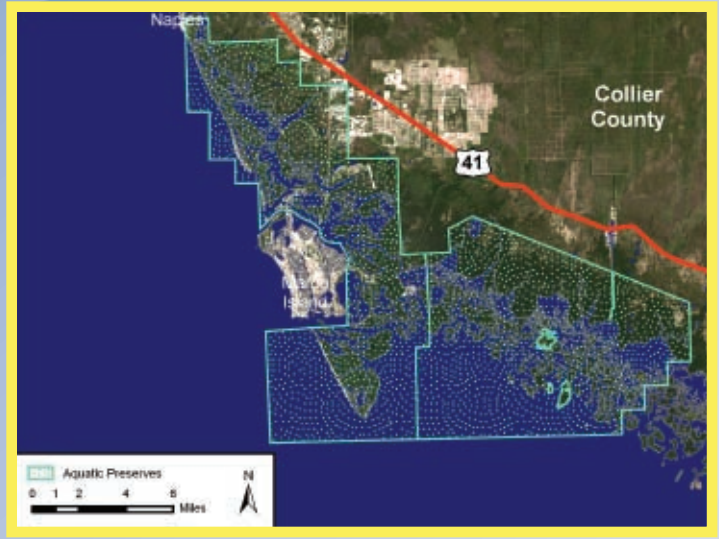


Location:

At the western edge of the Everglades on the Gulf Coast of Florida in Collier County

Acreage:

110,000 acres of sovereign submerged lands



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Aquatic Preserve Facts:

- These aquatic preserves are recognized for containing some of the few relatively undisturbed mangrove estuaries remaining in the United States.
- Over 70% of commercially important fish and shellfish species rely on estuaries at some stage of their lives.
- Cape Romano-Ten Thousand Islands was one of the first aquatic preserves designated in October, 1969.
- Rookery Bay was established in August, 1977.
- The preserves consist predominately of fringing mangroves and mangrove islands with oyster bars, seagrasses and salt marsh.
- The waters and adjacent uplands of the aquatic preserves provide habitat for over 200 species of fish, 150 species of birds and other wildlife, including the West Indian manatee, least tern and loggerhead sea turtle.
- Pristine coastal areas within the aquatic preserves are critical to Collier County's \$859 million tourism industry.



Mangroves on the beach



Roseate spoonbills



Oysters exposed by the tide



Dune sunflowers



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