St. Martins Marsh

AQUATIC PRESERVE

"The St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserve is one of the best investments ever made by the State of Florida. Whether it's as a buffer to hurricanes' impacts, a producer of commercial and recreational fisheries or an ecotourism magnet, the preserve is the investment that keeps on giving generation after generation."

Gary Maidhof
Citrus County Development Services Director

Key Accomplishments

- St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserve staff partners with local commercial blue crab fisherman and members of the community to identify, retrieve, and dispose of derelict blue crab traps.
- Each year, the aquatic preserve staff participate in many public outreach events and educational programs including Florida Master Naturalist, Citrus Springs Elementary Wetlands Fair, Bay Fest, Refuge Week, FWC's Fishing Clinic, Earth Day and Save Our Waters Week festivities to promote CAMA goals, preserve management, and environmental stewardship.
- A GIS database has been established to record seagrass and marsh scars within the preserve. This information will enable better protection measures for these valuable resources. Preserve staff has partnered with The Nature Conservancy to restore approximately 1300 ft. of prop scars within the preserve.
- Every school semester, the aquatic preserve staff mentor high school students from the Environmental Science Academy. Students participate in various projects gaining practical hands on experience.

Aerial view of St. Martins Marsh

Project Spotlight

Water Quality Monitoring Program

St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserve collects valuable water quality data through a variety of successful partnerships. Project COAST began in 1997 in conjunction with University of Florida. Nutrient and other water quality data is taken monthly at 30 fixed stations throughout coastal Citrus County. Using the latest technology, staff administer a continuous water quality monitoring program at five fixed stations in partnership with Citrus County and SWFWMD. All of these programs provide resource managers with important water quality information which enables better assessment of the estuary's health. For example, Project COAST water quality has been used to assess Total Maximum Daily Loads of the Springs Coast. The data obtained from the preserve's continuous water quality program is important information that is being used to address Minimum Flows and Levels for the Crystal and Homosassa Rivers.

Staff need to maintain and collect the data from the water quality dataloggers

St. Martins Marsh

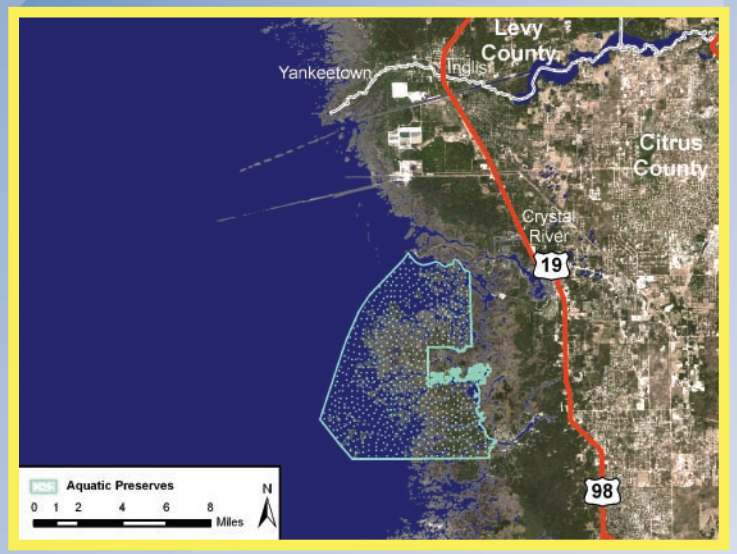
Aquatic Preserve

Location:

Citrus County

Acreage:

23,000 acres of sovereign submerged lands



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Environmental Science Academy interns conducting diamondback terrapin surveys.

Star coral and loggerhead sponges are some predominant hardbottom species.

Every winter flocks of white pelicans return to St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserve.

Aquatic Preserve Facts:

- The St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserve was established on October 21, 1969.
- St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserve's freshwater tributaries includes two 1st magnitude spring fed rivers; the Homosassa River to the south and Crystal River to the north.
- Spring discharge does not fluctuate dramatically from season to season allowing a constant flow of freshwater into St. Martins Marsh's productive and well balanced estuary.
- The area's vast coastal salt marshes, mud flats, oyster bars, mangrove islands, and seagrass beds are the southern terminus for migratory waterfowl of the Atlantic and Mississippi flyways. St. Martins Marsh provides stopover and wintering areas for many migratory species.
- The Springs Coast is characterized by unique limestone outcroppings and exposed karstic features. Habitats associated with these areas are hardbottom sponge and coral communities and sargassum meadows.

Large expanses of salt marsh filter pollutants before reaching the estuary.

Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas

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