



# Our Natural Places

Management Brief

## Cabbage Key Management Area

### At A Glance...

- 334 acres in size
- Located near Tierra Verde, FL
- Supports coastal hammocks and estuarine natural communities



### Background

The Cabbage Key Management Area is located in the Tierra Verde area of unincorporated Pinellas County. In addition to uplands found along the Pinellas Bayway, it includes several mangrove islands and 260 acres of Tampa Bay. This part of the county has experienced major changes over the years due to urbanization. Historic aerial photographs indicate that, prior to being connected to the mainland, the islands of the region had very

little development and were primarily estuarine and coastal hammock natural communities. Prior to 1965, the islands were connected by causeways and bridges to form what is now known as Tierra Verde. Subsequent development in the region included residential housing and a golf course. The management area was acquired by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners in 1979 and is managed by the Department of Parks & Conservation Resources.

### Characteristics

Water from the Cabbage Key Management Area drains to Tampa Bay on the east via surficial flow and to the waters of Shell Key Preserve to the west via a drainage ditch. The ditch connects two oligohaline ponds that are the last remnants of an estuarine cove that once existed prior to development. The surrounding contributing drainage area is comprised primarily of highly-fertilized St. Augustine lawns and ornamental vegetation, a tennis court, and a baseball field. The sandy marine soils are very well-drained, characteristic of coastal hammocks. The estuarine communities are small mangrove islands that are frequently flooded and very poorly drained. The coastal hammock is predominantly comprised of mature live



*Dominant natural communities of the Cabbage Key Management Area.*

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oaks, cabbage palms, wax myrtles, and longleaf pines. The vegetation along the littoral zone of the ditch is primarily red and black mangroves with a transition to cattails in the low-salinity ponds. The seagrasses to the east are expansive and healthy, and primarily consist of turtlegrass and shoalgrass.



*View within the Cabbage Key Management Area.*

## Management



*Overgrown areas are mechanically thinned.*

In 2006, a restoration project was completed on approximately 20 acres of coastal hammock. This was a joint effort with Tampa Bay Watch and their volunteers, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, and Pinellas County. Contractors cut, treated, and mulched exotic vegetation in the hammock and along the shorelines of the wetlands. Brazilian pepper and lead tree were the predominant exotic species treated. Volunteers helped to replant the site with native vegetation, including muhly grass, sand chardgrass, sabal palm, and sea grape. Many native species were discovered once the exotic vegetation was removed. For example, slender sandbur, never before recorded in Pinellas County, was found along with the rare pricklypear and giant airplant. Additional restoration efforts will be directed toward removing additional exotic vegetation and preventing the re-invasion of previously treated areas.

## Value

The Cabbage Key Management Area has special significance to local residents and provides economic and environmental benefits to its neighbors. However, this natural space, similar to others within Pinellas County, provides valuable services to all residents and visitors to the region. By protecting native biodiversity, it supports countless organisms ranging from microbes to mammals. For example, the two oligohaline ponds are utilized by diverse migratory waterfowl each year. The coastal hammock communities represented in this area have all but vanished elsewhere in the region due to urbanization. This management area also makes important contributions to the coastal environment by protecting seagrass beds that provide essential habitat to many marine organisms.



*The Cabbage Key Management Area supports many native species.*

## For additional information:

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