



Our Natural Places

Management Brief

Joe's Creek Management Area

At A Glance...

- 300 acres in size
- Located near Seminole, FL
- Supports flatwoods and estuarine natural communities



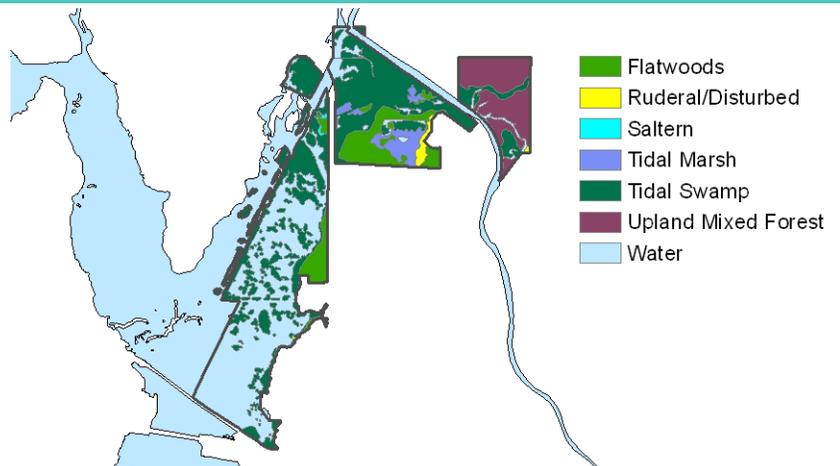
Background

The Joe's Creek Management Area is located near the city of Seminole along Boca Ciega Bay. Major changes have occurred over time in this part of the county. Historic aerial photographs reveal that the channelization of Joe's Creek had already begun by 1942. At that time, the natural communities were primarily estuarine and flatwoods, and agricultural pastureland was the only visible disturbance to the uplands. In the late 1960's,

portions of the management area were used as a borrow pit and disposal site for construction debris associated with nearby development and road projects. A portion of the estuary east of Park Street was also dredged for mosquito ditches at that time. Beginning in the late 1980's, the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners obtained the property in a series of acquisitions. This natural area is managed by the Department of Parks & Conservation Resources.

Characteristics

Spanning the Cross Bayou, Saint Joe Creek, and Long Bayou drainage basins, this management area is dominated hydrologically by the numerous branches of Joe's Creek and Boca Ciega Bay. The soils range from poorly drained to very poorly drained, as are characteristic of flatwoods and wetlands, respectively. This area supports a mosaic of saltwater and freshwater wetlands in addition to several small areas of pine-dominated flatwoods. Much of the management area is less than five feet above sea level, and some low-lying portions are frequently hydrated due to tidal changes. Saltwater mangrove swamps are dominated by red, black, and white mangroves, while the estuarine marsh consists of an assemblage of saltwort, buttonwood, marshelder,



Dominant natural communities of the Joe's Creek Management Area.

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rev. 5/11

white mangrove, giant leather fern, and waterhyssop. The flatwoods are comprised of slash pine, saw palmetto, and live oak. The freshwater wetlands support maidencane, smartweed, swamp fern, cinnamon fern, royal fern, soft rush, swamp bay, and wax myrtle. All of these natural communities have been previously disturbed to varying degrees, and so have been invaded by numerous exotic plants, many of which are considered to be problematic invasive species.



View of the Joe's Creek Management Area.

Management



Overgrown areas are mechanically thinned.

Since 1990, numerous projects have been completed at this management area, and these have resulted in the restoration of approximately 50 acres. Two projects were conducted in cooperation with Pinellas County Public Works in which mangrove swamps were restored by leveling the mounds created in conjunction with mosquito ditching. Volunteers helped to replant these sites with native vegetation. Another project was a joint effort by the Southwest Florida Water Management District and Pinellas County in which an intertidal pond was restored, exotic vegetation removed, and a saltern natural community created. Pinellas County also partnered with the Southwest Florida Water Management District and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to restore a highly impacted area previously used as a dump site. Other projects involved the mechanical thinning of overgrown flatwoods and the creation of a large littoral shelf and oligohaline wetland from what was previously a linear ditch. Future efforts will be directed toward clearing additional exotic vegetation.

Value

The Joe's Creek 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. Among the wildlife known to utilize the area are coyotes, diverse birds, raccoons, armadillos, marsh rabbits, snakes, and gopher tortoises. This management area also makes important contributions to the region's hydrology by improving the quality of surface water before it enters Boca Ciega Bay.



The Joe's Creek Management Area provides habitat to many native species.

For additional information:

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