

# Our Natural Places

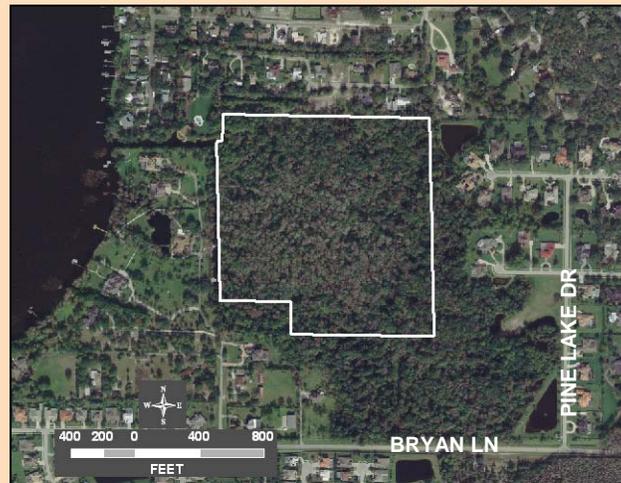
Pinellas County

Management Brief

## Lake Tarpon Management Area

### At A Glance...

- 39 acres in size
- Located near East Lake, FL
- Supports floodplain swamps and bottomland forests



### Background

The Lake Tarpon Management Area is located in the East Lake region of unincorporated Pinellas County just east of Lake Tarpon. This part of the county has experienced dramatic changes over the years due largely to urbanization. Remarkably, the natural communities within the management area have undergone very little change. The property has remained relatively intact and untouched by silvicultural practices and

encroaching development. It provides unique insight into the ecological characteristics of an old-growth, wetland forest. The Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners acquired the land in 1997 and 1998. This natural area is managed by the Department of Parks & Conservation Resources.

### Characteristics

Located within the Lake Tarpon Drainage Basin, this management area is dominated hydrologically by nearby Lake Tarpon and associated canals. Elevation ranges up to 10 feet above sea level and low-lying areas within the region flood frequently. Soils are predominantly classified as mucks and represent a highly variable mix of sand, decomposed organics, and peat accumulations. The natural communities are a tightly intertwined and complex mosaic of mature floodplain swamp, floodplain forest, and bottomland forest, depending upon subtle differences in topography throughout the area. The northwest corner of the property is slightly higher in elevation, perhaps associated with the deposition of spoil material when



*Dominant natural communities of the Lake Tarpon Management Area.*

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canals were dredged, and it supports mesic flatwoods. The management area sustains an impressive and diverse array of native plants, with a cathedral-like forest canopy and magnificently large old-growth trees. Species include pop ash, sweetbay magnolia, swamp tupelo, laurel oak, pond cypress, and American elm. Some disturbance has resulted from neighboring residences, which has encouraged the spread of invasive exotic species such as air-potato, skunkvine, Chinese tallowtree, carrotwood, and guineagrass. Rare species include Virginia chain fern, netted chain fern, giant airplant, northern needleleaf, and Florida butterfly orchid.



*View within the Lake Tarpon Management Area.*

## Management



*Exotic species are periodically removed to maintain healthy natural areas.*

Since assuming management of this area, the county has focused its efforts on exotic species control, boundary protection, and biological assessments. Extensive work has been conducted to remove exotic vegetation along the northern boundary, and these areas were chemically treated to slow the re-establishment of invasive species. Other areas are selectively treated to remove occasional exotics. As with all small natural areas surrounded by development, nuisance exotics will be an on-going challenge. The boundary of the Lake Tarpon Management Area has been secured with fences, and signs have been posted to identify the area. Additional efforts in this management area may include conducting detailed hydrologic studies as well as monitoring the status of native species supported by this unique natural resource.

## Value

The Lake Tarpon 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 enhancing native biodiversity, it supports countless organisms ranging from microbes to mammals. It represents a unique and irreplaceable natural resource in that it supports the last known old-growth wetland forest in the region. This management area also makes important contributions to the region's hydrology by improving the quality of surface water and promoting the recharge of groundwater.



*The Lake Tarpon Management Area supports many native species.*

## For additional information:

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