



# Our Natural Places

Management Brief

## Mariner's Point Management Area

### At A Glance...

- 76 acres in size
- Located near Tarpon Springs, FL
- Supports sandhills, saltwater marshes, and other natural communities



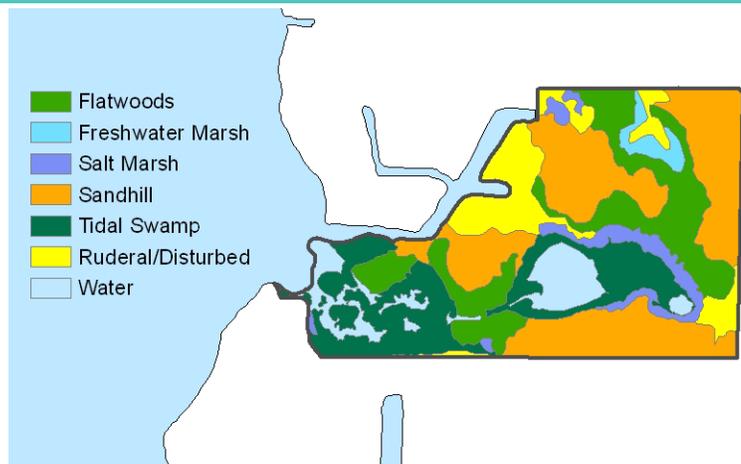
### Background

The Mariner's Point Management Area is located in Tarpon Springs, just east of the Gulf of Mexico. While the surrounding region has experienced dramatic changes over the years due to urbanization, the natural communities protected by this management area appear to have changed little. Historic aerial photographs suggest the area has continued to support a diverse array of communities, including the now relatively rare sandhills

avored for development. Hydrologic impacts have occurred, including the dredging of a freshwater marsh and a canal to Saint Joseph Sound. A stormwater culvert and sump are located in the southeastern corner of the property. The Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners acquired the property in 1990. This natural area is managed by the Department of Parks & Conservation Resources.

### Characteristics

Located in the Pinellas-Anclote River Basin, this management area is dominated hydrologically by tidal action in the adjacent canal and estuaries. Elevation ranges up to 20 feet above sea level, and the topography largely determines the type of natural community supported. Soils are diverse and range in classification from permanently flooded to well-drained fine sands. The area supports a diverse array of natural communities, including tidal swamp dominated by mangroves, tidal marshes dominated by rushes, and flatwoods dominated by pines and saw palmetto. Also supported are extensive sandhills, a unique upland community dominated by longleaf pine, oaks, wiregrass, and hogplum. Disturbance has resulted in ruderal areas



*Dominant natural communities of the Mariner's Point Management Area.*

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and has encouraged the spread of invasive exotic species, including Brazilian pepper, punktree, guineagrass, and air-potato. The spread of other exotics, such as carrotwood and camphortree, has been promoted by surrounding landscaping in nearby residential areas. Rare species that utilize the area include gopher tortoises and bald eagles.



*View within the Mariner's Point Management Area.*

## Management



*Overgrown areas are mechanically thinned.*

Since assuming management of this area, the county has focused its efforts primarily on fire management and on controlling exotic species through the use of chemical and mechanical treatments. While the uplands in this area would burn naturally, long-term fire suppression has resulted in overgrown conditions. This has increased the risk of wildfire and reduced biodiversity. To alleviate these problems, extensive areas have been mechanically thinned. To maintain the health of these areas, they will be burned routinely using prescribed fire as conditions allow. Firebreaks have been installed to support fire management activities. As with all small natural areas surrounded by development, exotics are an on-going problem. The boundary of the Mariner's Point Management Area has been secured with fences and signs have been posted. Additional efforts at this management area may include restoring the hydrology and planting native vegetation.

## Value

The Mariner's Point 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. For example, a wide variety of wading birds feed in the estuaries and gopher tortoises breed in the uplands. This management area also makes important contributions to the region's hydrology by improving the quality of surface water before it enters the Gulf of Mexico and by promoting the recharge of groundwater.



*The Mariner's Point Management Area provides habitat to many native species.*

## For additional information:

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