

APPENDIX 15

Responses to Acquisition and Restoration Council Recommendations

Two recommended changes to the draft 2007 Shell Key Management Plan were received from members of the Acquisition and Restoration Council on December 13, 2007.

Vicki Larson of Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) pointed out that *Halodule wrightii* is an older species name for shoal-grass and that *Halodule beaudettei* is currently the proper name. Upon verification with David Crewz and Penny Hall of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, it was determined that *Halodule wrightii* is the proper name for the species found in Tampa Bay. Therefore the suggested change was not made.

Vicki Larson also requested that the Plan include additional information concerning the importance of seagrass beds to the marine fisheries they support. This recommendation was incorporated on page 31 of the Plan in the Marine Grass Bed section. Specifically, the proposed draft was modified by including the following text (indicated in underline format) to this section:

Marine Grass Bed. Seagrass beds of four species fill in the majority of the area east of Shell Key. Turtle-grass (*Thalassia testudinum*) is the dominant seagrass in the middle and eastern areas of the Preserve. Shoal-grass (*Halodule wrightii*) was the dominant seagrass from the mid to western areas. Small patches of Widgeon-grass (*Ruppia maritima*) and Manatee-grass (*Syringodium filiforme*) are found throughout the Preserve. This zone is densely vegetated and is a rich feeding zone for wintering, nesting and resting migrant birds as well as for resident bird species. Further, the seagrass beds provide opportunities for West Indian manatees (*Trichechus manatus*) to feed on grasses, bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) to feed on fish, and numerous fish species to feed on other fish and plankton.

The seagrass beds within the Preserve support healthy nursery and feeding areas for many species of both recreational and commercial fish species. The grasses are particularly important for juvenile fish to conceal themselves from larger predators such as birds and other fish. Aquatic use zones were established in 2000 (Figure 9) and posted in 2001 to help minimize impacts to the seagrass beds.