

SHELL KEY PRESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

SUGGESTED REVISIONS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS DIVISION
TARPON SPRINGS, FL 34688

WINTER/SPRING 2007

The following suggestions (not prioritized) are made with three key tenets in mind: (1) Shell Key Preserve includes the island and all its waterways, (2) Shell Key Preserve is an integral part of a local coastal system but with global connections for some species of conservation concern, and (3) Shell Key Preserve is a microcosm of the global conservation picture as exemplified by the multiple human-caused forces historically influencing the Preserve.

1. Pets and other domestic animals, including dogs, should not be allowed in the Preserve in accordance with Preserve Ordinance 2-6; or should not be allowed during the nesting season for shorebirds; or should not be allowed except on leash.
2. Possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages should not be allowed in the Preserve in accordance with Preserve Ordinance 2-6.
3. Nonnative species of flora and fauna should be removed aggressively from the Preserve in accordance with the BOCC-approved Shell Key Preserve Management Plan and in accordance with standard conservation procedures.
4. Raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) should be removed from the Preserve in accordance with the BOCC-approved Shell Key Preserve Management Plan and in accordance with standard conservation procedures.
5. New or improved means of law enforcement should be pursued to implement existing County regulations.
6. All signage should be changed or improved in accordance with regulatory requirements, including possible off-shore markers.
7. The annual carrying capacity of the Preserve should be studied, especially the human impact during Memorial Day, Fathers' Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day.
8. The overall camping experience at the Preserve should be improved in accordance with current guidelines for sustainability and for public health and safety (including portable camping toilets and fire pits), or eliminated entirely from the Preserve; if allowed, camping should be via permit or license to use.
9. Emergent lands within the Preserve should be managed actively with primary emphasis on natural resource protection, including habitats for species of conservation concern (e.g., *Calidris canutus* or red knot); the Environmental Lands Division should continue to adjust the boundaries of the core bird preservation area to reflect changes in the island's geology. Preserve boundaries should be expanded to include any new accreting islands.
10. The staff and volunteers of the County's Environmental Lands Division should improve the quantity and quality of education programs at the Preserve, especially with regard to stewardship issues such as trash, camping practices, bird identification and appreciation, and coastal ecology.
11. Water quality testing should be conducted regularly in the Preserve, especially for nitrogen and fecal coliform; use of fertilizers within the watershed should be monitored and/or controlled for environmental impact.
12. Internal combustion engines should be studied for possible negative impacts on Preserve flora and fauna; or should be eliminated entirely from the Preserve.
13. The feeding of birds and other wildlife in the Preserve should be prohibited at all times.
14. Sea turtles in the Preserve should be monitored and protected at all times.

SUGGESTED REVISIONS FROM STAKEHOLDERS continued

15. As the management authority, the County's Environmental Lands Division should create a scientific advisory committee to review and comment on proposed research and land management projects within the boundaries of its properties, beginning with Shell Key Preserve.
16. Efforts to monitor and survey birds utilizing the Preserve should be continued.
17. All commercial businesses operating within the boundaries of the Preserve, including shuttle transport, should be regulated or licensed and must provide basic education of the Preserve to all customers.
18. No persons shall be allowed within the boundaries of the Preserve for a period of 6 months to a year during the migratory and nesting seasons for species of conservation concern for birds.
19. Each element of the Plan must have a predefined set of criteria and a data collection plan. The Plan must be based on scientific data that are designed to validate, modify or refute each Plan element. Annually produce a full report of data with discussion.
20. Open the pass near the center of the island to increase hydrology and improve water quality and seagrass beds.
21. No boats near the island during the shorebird nesting season or limit the number of boats to 10 ft. apart and allow in designated areas only.
22. Access into the Preserve should be limited to permit or license. Individuals issued a permit or license will be responsible for their guests.
23. Restroom facilities should be available in the public use areas of the island.
24. Mooring buoys should be made available to limit impacts to the seagrasses in the Preserve.