

# 3 *State of Florida Parks and Preserves in Pinellas County*

## **STATE PARKS**

The following discussion describes the State of Florida owned and managed facilities located within Pinellas County. These facilities provide recreational opportunities that complement those offered by the County. They also provide valuable open space and environmental benefits. See **Figure 8** for the locations of State Park facilities.

### ***Anclote Key Preserve State Park***

Located three miles off the coast of Tarpon Springs, this park is accessible only by private boat. Visitors must bring water and supplies; there are no provisions on the island. The park is home to at least 43 species of birds, including the American oystercatcher, bald eagle, and piping plover. A picturesque 1887 lighthouse stands as a sentinel on the southern end of the island. Visitors can swim and sunbathe at the beach, then fire up a grill and enjoy a picnic. There is no charge for overnight stays in the primitive campground, but campers must check in by calling the park before arrival. Pinellas County's portion of the Park includes the southern reaches of Anclote Key and all of Three Rooker Bar.



*Source: Friends of Anclote Key State Park*

### ***Caladesi Island State Park***

One of the few completely natural islands along Florida's Gulf Coast, Caladesi's white sand shores were rated the Nation's #1 beach in 2008. The park is accessible only by private boat or ferry from Honeymoon Island State Park. Beach lovers can enjoy swimming, sunbathing, and beachcombing. Saltwater anglers can fish from their boats or throw a line out into the surf. Nature enthusiasts watch wildlife while hiking the three-mile nature trail through the island's interior or paddling a three-mile kayak trail through the mangroves and bay. Picnic tables and shelters are located near the beach; picnic pavilions can be reserved for a fee. The park has a marina with electric and water hookups for boaters. The park also has a snack bar and gift shop. Caladesi Island is located in the Gulf of Mexico, approximately one mile west of Dunedin.



### ***Honeymoon Island State Park***

The pioneers called it Hog Island, but it became Honeymoon Isle in 1939 when a New York developer built 50 palm-thatched bungalows for honeymooners. Today, visitors can drive across Dunedin Causeway to enjoy the Gulf beaches, mangrove swamps, and tidal flats. Nature lovers will find osprey nests, a wide variety of shorebirds, and one of the few remaining virgin slash pine forests in South Florida. The park boasts several nature trails and bird observation areas. Visitors can swim, fish, and snorkel in the warm waters of the Gulf or picnic while they enjoy the beautiful scenery. Shelling is particularly good here, as the Gulf currents deposit an incredible variety of seashells on the shore. Showers are available and the park's concession has a gift shop and snack bar. The park is located at the extreme west end of State Road 586.

### ***Skyway Fishing Pier State Park***

When the new Sunshine Skyway Bridge was built over Tampa Bay, connecting St. Petersburg with Sarasota, the old bridge was turned into the world's longest fishing pier. Anglers can park their cars or campers within a few feet of prime fishing spots. The bridge is lighted at night, so anglers can see to rig a line, bait the hook, and get a good look at their catch. The light also attracts many species of fish after sundown. Common catches include snook, tarpon, grouper, black sea bass, Spanish mackerel, king mackerel, cobia, sheepshead, red snapper, pompano, and many more. Snacks, drinks, bait, and fishing supplies are available. The pier is open 24 hours a day year-round. Pinellas County's portion is located north of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge off I-275.

## **STATE AQUATIC PRESERVES**

The waters and shallow submerged lands surrounding Pinellas County are designated Florida Aquatic Preserves. Aquatic preserves help protect coastlines, wildlife habitat, water-related recreational opportunities such as swimming, fishing, boating and paddling, and our archaeological and cultural heritage. There are two Aquatic Preserves protecting Pinellas County waters, as described below. The Preserves include nearshore habitats along sandy beaches and mangrove-dominated shorelines; submerged habitats including oyster bars, seagrass beds, coral communities and springfed caves; and State-managed islands, including those formed from dredge spoil material. Please see the *Natural Resources Conservation and Management Element* for more information regarding Aquatic Preserves. **Figure 8** highlights the locations of the State Aquatic Preserves.

### ***Boca Ciega Bay Aquatic Preserve***

Boca Ciega Bay Aquatic Preserve was established in 1969 and designated an Outstanding Florida Water in 1982. The Preserve covers Boca Ciega Bay along the southwest coastline of Pinellas County.

### ***Pinellas County Aquatic Preserve***

Pinellas County Aquatic Preserve was established in 1972 and designated an Outstanding Florida Water in 1979. It encompasses all of the sovereign submerged lands surrounding Pinellas County outside of the Boca Ciega Bay Aquatic Preserve.

**FIGURE 8**  
**FLORIDA STATE PARKS & AQUATIC PRESERVES**  
**IN PINELLAS COUNTY**