



Our Natural Places

Management Brief

Alligator Lake Management Area

At A Glance...

- 55 acres in size
- Located near Safety Harbor, FL
- Supports flatwoods, hammocks, and freshwater marshes



Background

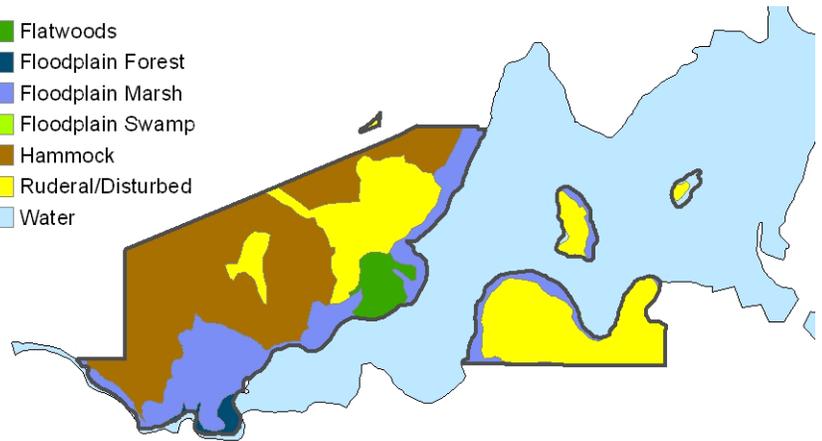
The Alligator Lake Management Area is located near the cities of Clearwater and Safety Harbor, adjacent to Old Tampa Bay. The area has experienced dramatic changes over the years, including the flooding of Alligator Creek to form Alligator Lake. With the addition of a weir near the mouth of the creek, this system changed from a tidally regulated bayou to a freshwater lake. The area to the north was historically used for

citrus farming. Residential and commercial development dominated the area since the 1970's, and dredge material from the lake was used as fill to support of the construction of condominiums to the south. Part of the property was acquired by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners in 1960, with additional parcels added in 1993. This natural area is managed by the Department of Parks & Conservation Resources.

Characteristics

Located within the Alligator Creek Drainage Basin, this management area is dominated hydrologically by a weir that controls flow and maintains the lake. A stormwater conveyance system also exists in the northern area, consisting of a sump and linear ditch. Soils consist of fine sands frequently flooded in low lying areas but rarely flooded in areas with deeper sands. The topography slopes gently toward the lake and elevation ranges from 5 to 12 feet above sea level. Upland natural communities include hammocks with live oak, laurel oak, American beautyberry, and a variety of ferns and vines as well as flatwoods with longleaf pine, slash pine, saw palmetto, and gallberry. Other portions consist of disturbed, ruderal areas dominated by exotic

- Flatwoods
- Floodplain Forest
- Floodplain Marsh
- Floodplain Swamp
- Hammock
- Ruderal/Disturbed
- Water



Dominant natural communities of the Alligator Lake Management Area.

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species such as Brazilian pepper, primrose-willow, air-potato, and climbing hempvine. Bird rookeries are located on the two islands and these support a variety of nesting species, including anhingas, herons, and egrets. Gopher tortoises are found in portions of the upland communities. A County-maintained house is located on-site, and the resident contributes to local management activities.



View within the Alligator Lake Management Area.

Management



Birds utilizing the area are censused regularly.

Since assuming management of this area, the county has focused its efforts extensively on controlling exotic species through the use of chemical and mechanical treatments. As with all small natural areas surrounded by development, exotics are an on-going challenge. It is hoped that, as exotic vegetation is thinned and removed, the re-introduction of fire to these naturally pyrogenic communities will be a viable management strategy. A major restoration project is planned for the Alligator Lake Management Area. In cooperation with the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Surface Water Improvement and Management program, the project will include the restoration and creation of freshwater wetlands and enhancement of associated upland communities. The project will result in improved habitat for wildlife, including nesting birds. The wetlands will improve the quality of water entering Alligator Lake and ultimately Old Tampa Bay by providing the opportunity for debris capture, sediment settling, and nutrient uptake.

Value

The Alligator Lake 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 birds feed, loaf, and nest within this management area. This area also makes important contributions to the region's hydrology by improving the quality of surface water before it enters Old Tampa Bay and by promoting the recharge of groundwater.



The Alligator Lake Management Area provides habitat to many native species.

For additional information:

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