

# Our Natural Places

Pinellas County

Management Brief

## East Lake Management Area

### At A Glance...

- 24 acres in size
- Located near East Lake, FL
- Supports mixed forested wetland communities



### Background

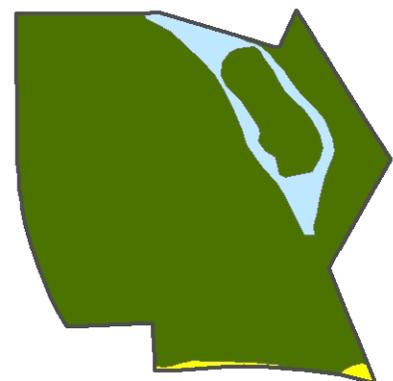
The East Lake Management Area is located in the East Lake area of unincorporated Pinellas County. The property was originally part of a large, continuous forested wetland system that spanned from Lake Tarpon to the main channel of Brooker Creek. Historic aerial photographs show that between 1957 and 1965 a ditch was excavated through this wetland system, likely to drain the area. Excavated fill still remains mounded along the

southern side of the ditch. In 1972 additional excavation occurred related to the Windmill Pointe subdivision. The management area is currently nestled within several subdivisions but remains connected to a large wetland system to the northwest that spans from Lake Tarpon to John Chesnut Sr. County Park. The property was acquired by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners in 1987. This area is managed by the Department of Parks & Conservation Resources.

### Characteristics

The hydrology of the East Lake Management Area is dominated by a large, excavated drainage area and ditch. The excavated area holds water and provides some value to wildlife such as herons and egrets. The majority of the property is forested wetland in relatively good condition. Due to the disturbances from the excavated area and the surrounding residential neighborhoods, the edges of the property have been invaded by numerous species of exotic plants. Soils are dominated by Anclote Fine Sand that corresponds with the forested wetlands found in this area. Mixed forested wetlands support diverse plants such as cypress, maple, elm, bay, cabbage palm, water oak, laurel oak, slash pine, wax myrtle, and various ferns. This area also

- Bottomland Forest
- Ruderal/Disturbed
- Water



*Dominant natural communities of the East Lake Management Area.*

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supports small pockets of hydric flatwoods dominated by slash pine with a relatively thin understory of palmetto. The site contains several rather grand specimens of slash pine with many exceeding 2 feet in diameter. Because the management area is still connected to a more extensive wetland system to the northwest, it also supports large mammals such as white-tailed deer.



*View within the East Lake Management Area.*

## Management



*Exotic species are periodically removed to maintain healthy natural areas.*

Since assuming management of this area, the county has focused its efforts primarily on reconnaissance and assessment of ecological conditions. The mound along the southern side of the ditch is mowed regularly as part of maintenance of the drainage in the area. The two access points to this berm are chained, locked, and posted with signs. A boundary survey will be conducted before perimeter fencing is installed and additional signs are posted to enhance protection of this property. Exotic nuisance vegetation control, along with trash removal, will be the main focus of future management efforts. Brazilian pepper, air-potato, creeping oxeye, Chinese tallowtree, American evergreen, and wild taro are among the exotic species found on the property. Maintenance of the ditch and sanitary sewer line that runs through the property will require coordination with other Pinellas County departments.

## Value

The East Lake Management Area has special significance to local residents and provides economic and environmental benefits to its neighbors. However, this natural area, similar to others within Pinellas County, provides valuable services to all residents and visitors to the region. By protecting native biodiversity, it supports countless organisms ranging from microbes to mammals. For example, white-tailed deer, great blue herons, woodpeckers, barred owls, and numerous other wildlife species have been found here. This natural area also makes important contributions to the region's hydrology by providing flood storage and improving the quality of surface water before it enters Lake Tarpon.



*The East Lake Management Area provides habitat to many native species.*

## For additional information:

Parks & Conservation Resources  
12520 Ulmerton Road  
Largo, FL 33774

Phone: (727) 582-2100  
Fax: (727) 582-2550  
Web: [www.pinellascounty.org/environment](http://www.pinellascounty.org/environment)

