

Matlacha Pass

# AQUATIC PRESERVE

*"This aquatic preserve is the essence of the southwest Florida estuary-teeming with life, exquisite in form and extremely sensitive to human caused impacts. It is one of our many jewels in southwest Florida and we have a duty to protect this valuable preserve!"*

*Bob Janes, Lee County Commissioner*



## Key Accomplishments

- A multi-agency agreement has been reached that identifies locations and dredge depths for boat navigation channels and seagrass protection. These channel designs provide public access while protecting priority seagrass areas.
- Staff have conducted annual monitoring at 5 sites within the aquatic preserve for seven years. This has indicated that seagrass beds have been negatively impacted by reduced light availability due to runoff from rapidly urbanizing coastal areas.
- Ongoing monthly testing continues to provide a scientific basis for understanding changes in water quality. Results will appear in the journal, Florida Scientist.



Quality assurance training for volunteers of the water quality monitoring program

## Project Spotlight

### Continuous Water Monitoring

In September 2005, two permanent monitoring stations, in north and south Matlacha Pass, were established and equipped with



Water quality probe attached to a piling

automated water quality data collection equipment. The two sites were selected to monitor the influences of Charlotte Harbor and the Caloosahatchee River on the overall water quality of this aquatic preserve. Seven different water quality parameters including water temperature, salinity, pH, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and depth, are collected every 15 minutes. To date, this continuous

monitoring has demonstrated differences in salinity and the tidal node at the two sites and complements information from two additional water quality monitoring programs in the region.

# Matlacha Pass

## Aquatic Preserve

### Location:

Lee County

### Acreage:

12,500 acres of sovereign submerged lands



### Local Contact:

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View beneath shoreline mangroves



Blue crab



Kayaking through a mangrove shrouded trail



Brown pelican



White ibis



Roseate spoonbill

### Aquatic Preserve Facts:

- Designated as Matlacha Pass Aquatic Preserve in 1972.
- Shaped in a sinuous channel that winds between oyster bars, mangrove islands and seagrass flats.
- The preserve is the tidal node between Charlotte Harbor to the north and the Caloosahatchee River and San Carlos Bay to the south, with dark tannin-stained waters.
- Home to 4 species of seagrasses, 3 species of mangroves, over 100 species of invertebrates, 200 species of fish and 150 species of shore and wading birds.
- Kayaking, birding and fishing are popular recreational activities compatible within the preserve.
- Several hiking and paddling trails provide access to the preserve. Commercial crabbing also occurs in the pass.
- Over 70% of commercially important fish and shellfish species rely on estuaries at some stage of their lives.



A publication funded in part by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Coastal Management Program, pursuant to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award No. NA04N0541300035. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the State of Florida, NOAA, or any of its sub-agencies.