

**Fort Pickens Aquatic Preserve
Management Plan Review**

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Land Conservation and Planning
March 9th, 2020



The following are comments and suggested revisions prepared by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) for the Fort Pickens Aquatic Preserve (FPAP) Management Plan submitted by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection – Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection (DEP-RCP) to the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) for consideration at the April 10, 2020 ARC meeting.

1. Overall, the FWC finds this management plan to be well-written, comprehensive, and effective in facilitating the management of fish and wildlife, and their associated habitats, found within the FPAP.
2. **Page 24: Listed Species:** The first paragraph describes species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The FWC recommends including the West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) in this list.

In addition to the Endangered Species Act, the Florida manatee and all species of marine turtles are provided protection in Florida pursuant to Chapter 379.2431, Florida Statutes.

3. **Page 25: Listed Species:** The FWC recommends the following revision in the third sentence of the last paragraph of this section: *The West Indian manatee requires warm-water habitat when water temperatures fall below 68° F for extended periods of time during the winter months. Manatees in northwest Florida will migrate to these warm-water areas (like Florida's springs and power plant outfalls) when coastal waters cool.*
4. **Page 39 and 42: Education and Outreach Management Program:** If information about manatees, marine turtles and submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) are not already present and available at park boat ramps or public facilities, the FWC recommends that staff consider providing this information.

For available information about manatee/SAV education signs and materials please check the FWC website at the following web address:

<https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/manatee/education-for-marinas/>.

Marine turtle outreach materials and information can be found at this link:

<https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/sea-turtle/>.

Please contact the Imperiled Species Management Section at ImperiledSpecies@myfwc.com if you have any questions.

5. **Page 34-35: Current State of Ecosystem Science at Fort Pickens Aquatic Preserve:** The plan currently states: “With continued monitoring, NWFLAP will be able to provide additional data to encourage land use best management practices, habitat conservation and recreational issues.”

To achieve this stated aim, the FWC recommends including a strategy for the provision of data relevant to land management, habitat conservation and recreation to the appropriate regional entities (e.g. Pensacola Estuary Program, NFWFMD and others).

6. **Page 38-39: Improving Information about Submerged Resources:** The FWC recommends that any inventories of submerged aquatic vegetation, emergent vegetation and other habitats (e.g. oysters) are shared with the statewide Seagrass, Coastal Habitat, and Oyster Integrated Monitoring and Monitoring programs (SIMM, CHIMMP and OIMMP, respectively). Inclusion of the FPAP data in statewide databases may aid larger scale efforts for conservation and restoration planning at the estuary, watershed and regional levels.
7. The FWC recommends the use of management guidelines in the FWC’s published Species Action Plans for the management of imperiled, rare, and locally important bird species listed on Pages 78. The FWC Species Action Plans provide beneficial resource guidelines for habitat management and monitoring of the respective species. For your reference, the FWC Species Action Plans can be accessed at this web address: <http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/imperiled/species-action-plans/>.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the FPAP Management Plan. Please direct any questions regarding this document to either:

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