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# COUPON BIGHT

## AQUATIC PRESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

COUPON EIGHT

AQUATIC PRESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

ADOPTED

JANUARY 22, 1992

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Executive Director

Florida Department of Natural Resources

This plan was prepared by the  
Bureau of Submerged Lands and Preserves  
Division of State Lands



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve is recognized as an exceptional water resource of the state. The submerged portions of the preserve encompasses 6,000 acres of seagrass meadows, hard bottom communities, mangrove wetlands and coral patch reefs that provide nursery and settlement habitat for a wide variety of marine species. In addition to marine areas, the Coupon Bight Buffer Project, under the Conservation and Recreational Lands program has added more than 100 acres of saltmarsh, pinelands, hammocks and beach/berm communities to resources of the preserve. Both the terrestrial and marine environments offer valuable habitat for more than 100 plant and animal species that are rare, threatened, endangered or species of special concern.

The marine resources of the preserve include expansive hardbottom communities which are dominated with varying combinations of sponges, soft corals, hard coral and algae. In the Atlantic portion of the preserve, hardbottom substrate supports modest patch reefs which are dominated by massive boulder corals. The corals are symbiotic hosts to dinoflagellate algae which live within the tissues of the coral polyp. The algae photosynthesize metabolic requirements from sunlight and nutrients derived in part from the coral host. The coral provides protection for the algae and in return receives a portion of its metabolic needs from the algae in the form of carbon and oxygen. The coral colonies offer vertical relief and shelter for a rich and varied assemblage of invertebrates and fishes.

The marine grassbeds in the preserve are prime feeding areas for many wading birds and a valuable nursery area for juvenile fish and invertebrates, including many of commercial interest. In addition to habitat, the grassbeds perform valuable functions by trapping suspended sediments from the water column and stabilizing bottom sediments. Sea grasses, like their terrestrial counterparts, and the symbiotic algae within the coral polyp depend upon sunlight for life functions. Excessive nutrients and/or sediments in the water column reduce available light and can stress benthic communities of the preserve.

The preserve is located on the southern shoreline of Big Pine Key, the fastest growing community in the middle and lower Florida Keys. The Newfound Harbor Keys are privately owned lands that lie within the boundary of the preserve. One island is commercially developed, while the others are primarily used for residential purposes. There are also several parcels of privately owned submerged lands within the preserve. Acquisition of both emergent and submerged lands are seen as critical to the continued health of the preserve.

The preserve lies 'downstream' of the urban and residential development on Big Pine Key. The island has shallow, subsurface fresh water lenses. The presence of these freshwater resources account for many of the unique and rare plant and animal species that occur here. Without them species such as the diminutive Key

deer could not survive. Diversion, destruction and contamination of these water resources has been cause for alarm among resource managers and researchers. Extensive areas have been ditched for drainage and mosquito control. The ditches not only drain freshwater but introduce marine waters into areas that may have formerly contained freshwater pools. Destruction of wetlands, both marine and freshwater are associated with development in the area. Clearing and filling for roads, buildings and residential use have altered water flows, habitat and natural recharge areas. Pollution in the form of stormwater run-off and septic leachate are primary concerns in both freshwater and marine areas of the preserve.

Activities within the preserve include boating, snorkeling, diving, commercial fishing, marine life collecting, charter sport fishing and recreational fishing for finfish and lobster. Impacts to resources as a result of these uses include propeller and grounding damage to grassbeds and corals, damage to patch reefs from careless or uninformed divers who stand on or touch corals, extended boat anchoring which shades grassbeds, fishing and marine life collecting which introduce gear and chemicals that impact target and non-target species. Secondary impacts are associated with suspension of sediments in the water column associated with boat operation in shallow waters, individual personalized watercraft, ultra-light aircraft and private planes which disrupt wildlife, and chemicals and wastes introduced into waters of the preserve as a result of boat operation and maintenance.

The main objective of the resource management program for the preserve is to protect natural resources for the benefit of future generations. On site management will be directed toward the maintenance of existing or essentially natural conditions and restoring damaged or degraded areas. Management activities include gathering data on resources and protection of existing conditions through review of proposed and existing projects, input into local government planning efforts, and cooperative efforts with the other agencies and organizations who have education, research, resource management and acquisition projects in the area.

To protect natural resources and allow traditional uses, the preserve has been divided into several management areas. The management area designation is based upon the existing shoreline use and the quality of the adjacent submerged resources. Adjacent lands are developed with commercial and residential uses. Wetlands and currently vacant lands include many sensitive natural and cultural resource features that may degenerate or be destroyed by development. Acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands adjacent to the preserve is an additional management strategy to protect the preserve's resources.

Most of these impacts could be prevented or minimized with improved channel marking, land acquisition, public education, restricted areas, and an enforcement presence. This management plan establishes goals and objectives to address these and other management issues.

The management plan also outlines the responsibilities of various agencies and their subdivisions as provided for through statutory direction and other applicable authorities. Management of certain aspects of the preserves resources can be enhanced through application of these programs. Whenever possible, existing programs and resources will be integrated into the management of the preserve. The statutory management authority for public and private uses of the preserve, as well as specific criteria for those uses are also provided. These uses are subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees or their designee. Approval is normally predicated upon demonstration that the proposed use is environmentally sound and in the public interest.

Management and protection of the aquatic preserve can be enhanced through research and education programs. Research is critical to determining the status of existing resources and to provide data for future reference and comparison. Environmental education programs will coordinate with and be complimentary to existing programs whenever possible.

Funding and staffing levels to initiate the identified goals and objectives for resource management, protection, education and research are the minimum practicable for the identified areas. Continual monitoring of the accomplishments of this management plan will provide a standard for evaluating whether present budgetary and staffing estimates are adequate to manage and protect the preserve's resources for future generations.

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Chapter 18-20, F.A.C.

Copies of the legal description of the Coupon Eight Aquatic Preserve, as well as copies of Chapter 253 and 258, F.S., and Chapter 18-21, F.A.C., may be obtained from:

Bureau of Submerged Lands and Preserves  
Department of Natural Resources  
3917 Commonwealth Blvd.  
Mail Station 125  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve is located in the lower half of the Florida Keys in Monroe County. The aquatic preserve includes approximately 6000 acres of submerged lands in Coupon Bight and the Atlantic Ocean in a narrow band parallel to the Newfound Harbor Keys south of Big Pine Key (Figure 1). There are currently 42 aquatic preserves throughout the state (Figure 2). Coupon Bight is one of three that are located in the Key's. (Lignumvitae Key Aquatic Preserve lies in the upper Keys and the Card Sound portion of Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve is located between north Key Largo and the Florida mainland.) Coupon Bight is unique within the state system because it encompasses living coral reef formations.

This management plan will also address several upland habitats contained within the Coupon Bight Buffer Project. To date, 99 acres of transitional wetlands and tropical hardwood hammock uplands have been purchased by the Conservation and Recreational Lands (CARL) Trust Fund. Purchase of these lands was deemed necessary because of their environmental sensitivity, proximity to the aquatic preserve and to protect several species of endangered and threatened plants and animals.

The role of the Aquatic Preserve Program is to manage and protect the natural resources within the boundaries of a preserve through staff programs and coordination with other state and federal resource management programs. An integrated management plan encompassing all the legislatively delegated resource management and protection laws is essential in preserving the resource values of the preserve. Local government will also be encouraged to incorporate this plan's policy directives into the local government comprehensive plan.

The rich mosaic of resource types within Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve and the Buffer area contribute to the biological diversity and productivity of marine systems and enhance man's enjoyment of the area. The aquatic preserve was designated by the Florida Legislature in 1969 to conserve and protect these values. This plan is intended to be used as the primary tool for management of the preserve to attain these goals. It is designed to be site-specific in addressing resource management issues relative to lands within the preserve.

The process of developing this management plan involved compiling an inventory of resource information, coordinating with other plans that have been developed for the area and state, and identifying resource and management issues related to present and future uses of the preserve and adjacent uplands. Various management areas will be identified or delineated. Supporting goals, objectives and policies were developed to be consistent with statutory authority and the overall

intent of the Aquatic Preserve Program for helping ensure that the resources of Coupon Eight Aquatic Preserve will remain for future generations to enjoy. As additional resource information becomes available or as laws are implemented or revised, changes may have to be made to the plan to reflect those events.

The Governor and Cabinet, sitting as the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund has been legislatively delegated statutory authority (Section 253.03, F.S.) to exercise proprietary control over state-owned lands and may assign management responsibilities for those lands to appropriate governmental agencies. Development and implementation of this management plan will be through the administrative support and the field staff of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of State Lands, Bureau of Submerged Lands and Preserves.

More specifically, this plan is divided into chapters according to their management application:

Chapter II cites the statutory authorities upon which this resource management program and plan are built.

Chapter III provides a description of the aquatic preserve and details the physical, biological and cultural components of the preserve. It also contains an overview of regional and local land use and associated impacts.

Chapter IV delineates the management areas within the preserve. These areas are defined by taking into account the quantity and the quality of the biological resources in conjunction with the use of the adjacent lands.

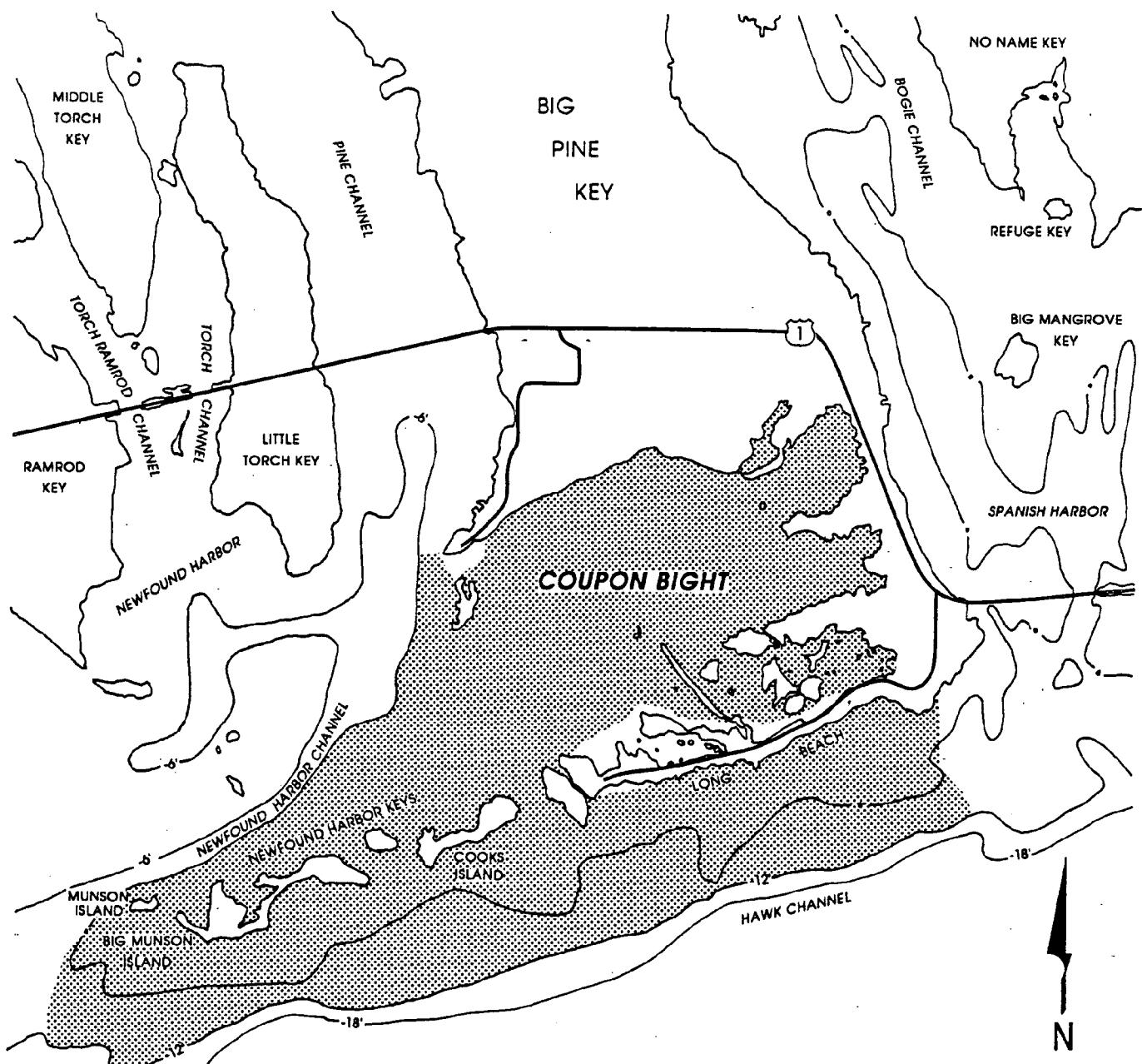
Chapter V presents specific needs and issues that are unique to the preserve that are not addressed through statute or code.

Chapter VI outlines the program's goals, objectives, and the tasks required to fulfill those needs within the preserve for resource management, resource protection, research, and environmental education.

Chapter VII identifies local, regional, state, and federal agencies, their authorities and programs, and how they relate and assist in protection and management of the preserve. It also identifies non-governmental organizations, interest groups, and individuals that have interests in or may assist in management objectives.

Chapter VIII projects future staffing and fiscal needs necessary for providing effective management and protection of the preserve, as well as supporting research and environmental education.

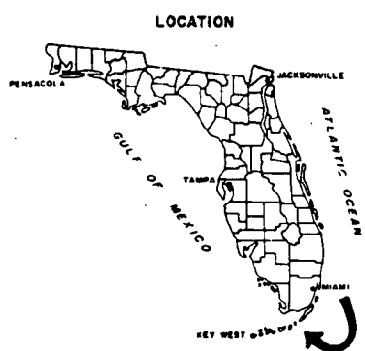
Chapter IX outlines a monitoring program for recording and reporting resource changes and establishes a tracking system for detailing the progress and accomplishments in resource management.



**FIGURE 1. Boundary Map**



Aquatic Preserve



0 .5 1  
1 Mile

Map Of  
**COUPON BIGHT AQUATIC PRESERVE**  
(AQUATIC PRESERVE NO. 25)

Monroe County, Florida

Created By  
STATE OF FLORIDA BOARD OF  
TRUSTEES OF THE INTERNAL IMPROVEMENT TRUST FUND

OCTOBER 21, 1969

Prepared By  
C.A. KNOX  
BUREAU OF HISTORICAL AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL LAND MANAGEMENT  
JANUARY, 1986



FIGURE 2. Florida Aquatic Preserves

## CHAPTER II

### **MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY**

#### **A. STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

The primary statutory authorities available to the staff for the management of aquatic preserves are found in Chapters 253 and 258, Florida Statute (F.S.). In particular, Sections 258.35-258.46 enacted in 1975 by the Florida Legislature represent the Florida Aquatic Preserves Act. These statutes set forth a standardized management criteria for all designated aquatic preserves and represent the primary laws governing the use of sovereignty submerged lands. These authorities also clearly establish the proprietary management role of the Governor and Cabinet in their capacity as the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund. All management responsibilities assigned to the Trustees may be fulfilled directly by the Governor and Cabinet or indirectly via staff through delegations of authority, management agreements, or other legal mechanisms. All references to the "Board" or the "Trustees" in this plan potentially include staff in addition to the Governor and Cabinet themselves.

Aquatic Preserve staff may be designated to review requests for use of state-owned lands and provide comments to the Board of Trustees, via the Division of State Lands and Department of Natural Resources administrative staff, relevant to the environmental impacts of a proposed use. The staff review is conducted within the confines of Section 258.42, F.S., and in conjunction with other governmental bodies, comments and recommendations are presented to the Board as an agenda item for their deliberations.

#### **B. ADMINISTRATIVE RULES GOVERNING AQUATIC PRESERVES**

Chapters 18-20 and 18-21, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), are two administrative rules directly applicable to the DNR's/Trustees' actions regarding uses of lands in aquatic preserves and other state-owned submerged lands.

##### **1. CHAPTER 18-20, F.A.C.**

Chapter 18-20, F.A.C., addresses the aquatic preserves and derives its authority from Sections 258.35, 258.36, 258.37 and 258.38, F.S., and is found in Appendix A. The intent of this rule is contained in Section 18-20.001, F.A.C., which states:

- "(1) All sovereignty lands within a preserve shall be managed primarily for the maintenance of essentially natural conditions, the propagation of

fish and wildlife, and public recreation, including hunting and fishing where deemed appropriate by the Board and the managing agency.

- (2) The aquatic preserves which are described in Section 258.392, F.S., and in 18-20.002, F.A.C., were established for the purpose for being preserved in an essentially natural or existing condition so that their aesthetic, biological and scientific values may endure for the enjoyment of future generations.
- (3) The preserves shall be administered and managed in accordance with the following goals:
  - (a) To preserve, protect, and enhance these exceptional areas of sovereignty submerged lands by reasonable regulation of human activity within the preserves through the development and implementation of a comprehensive management program;
  - (b) To protect and enhance the waters of the preserves so that the public may continue to enjoy the traditional recreational uses of those waters such as swimming, boating, and fishing;
  - (c) To coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies to aid in carrying out the intent of the Legislature in creating the preserves;
  - (d) To use applicable federal, state, and local management programs, which are compatible with the intent and provisions of the act and these rules, to assist in managing the preserves;
  - (e) To encourage the protection, enhancement or restoration of the biological, aesthetic, or scientific values of the preserves, including but not limited to the modification of existing man-made conditions toward their natural condition, and discourage activities which would degrade the aesthetic, biological, or scientific values, or the quality, or utility of a preserve, when reviewing applications, or when developing and implementing management plans for the preserve;
  - (f) To preserve, promote, and utilize indigenous life forms and habitats, including but not limited to: sponges, soft coral, hard corals, submerged grasses, mud flats, estuarine, aquatic and marine reptiles, game and non-game fish species, estuarine, aquatic and marine invertebrates, estuarine, aquatic and marine mammals, birds, shellfish and mollusks;

- (g) To acquire additional title interests in lands wherever such acquisitions would serve to protect and enhance the biological aesthetic, or scientific values of the preserves;
  - (h) To maintain those beneficial hydrologic and geologic functions, the benefits of which accrue to the public at large."
- (4) Nothing in these rules shall serve to eliminate or alter the requirements or authority of other governmental agencies, including counties and municipalities, to protect or enhance the preserves provided that such requirements or authority are not inconsistent with the act and this chapter.

## **2. CHAPTER 18-21, F.A.C.**

Chapter 18-21, F.A.C., controls activities conducted on state-owned submerged lands and is predicated upon the provisions of Sections 253.12 and 253.03, F.S. The stated intent of this administrative rules is:

- "(1) To aid in fulfilling the trust and fiduciary responsibilities of the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund for the administration, management and disposition of sovereignty lands;
- (2) To insure maximum benefit and use of sovereignty lands for all the citizens of Florida;
- (3) To manage, protect, and enhance sovereignty lands so that the public may continue to enjoy traditional uses including but not limited to, navigation,fishing, and swimming;
- (4) To manage and provide maximum protection for all sovereignty lands, especially those important to public drinking water supply, shellfish harvesting, public recreation, fish and wildlife propagation and management;
- (5) To insure that all public and private activities on sovereignty lands which generate revenues or exclude traditional public uses provide just compensation for such privileges; and
- (6) To aid in the implementation of the State Lands Management Plan."

Chapter 18-21.0041, F.A.C., provides more specific statements regarding multi-slip docking facilities in the Florida Keys Marina and Dock Siting Policies and Criteria. This section of the F.A.C. requires consistency and conformity with the "Principles for Guiding Development in the Florida Keys Area of Critical State Concern" designation (Chapters 27F-8, -9, -10, -11, -12, -13, and -15, F.A.C.). In summary, this rule is intended to protect endangered, threatened and species of special concern, the Florida Reef Tract, other corals, wetland and submerged vegetation, and benthic communities. Additionally, this rule requires that facilities be located in areas with adequate tidal flushing and adequate water depths to avoid dredging and other bottom disturbance. More specific criteria require a minimum depth of 4 feet and that depth be adequate in the mooring, turning and access channel areas, with greater depth requirements for those facilities intended for mooring of boats with drafts greater than 3 feet. Specific structure design criteria are also contained with Chapter 18-21, F.A.C.

### **C. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS AND PROGRAMS**

As mandated in 18-20.001, 3 (a), F.A.C., this plan, as well as plans for other aquatic preserves have and are being developed as funding is made available. Presently, 14 management plans have been approved by the Trustees, which cover 21 of the State's 42 aquatic preserves. Former plans were designed to be generic in nature, with policies and management guidance generally applicable to all aquatic preserves. However, this plan and all future plans will be more site-specific and contain policy guidance and directives applicable to an individual preserve. The former management plans were incorporated into rule in 1988. This and future plans will be similarly incorporated. As such, these plans carry the same authority as do Chapters 18-20 and 18-21, F.A.C.

The Conceptual State Lands Management Plan, adopted on March 17, 1981, and amended by the Trustees on July 7, 1981 and March 15, 1983, contain specific policies concerning spoil islands, submerged land leases, "Outstanding Native Florida Landscapes", unique natural features, seagrass beds, archaeological and historical resources, and endangered species. These policies provide management direction for the Aquatic Preserve Program.

The State Comprehensive Plan, established by Chapter 187, F.S., provides board policy guidance for the development of management plans for the statewide system of aquatic preserves. Therefore, the goals, objectives and policies set forth in this aquatic preserve management plan are designed to be consistent with the goals and policies of the State Comprehensive Plan pertaining to the water resources, coastal and marine resources and natural systems.

The Local Government Comprehensive Planning Act of 1975 (Section 163.3163, F.A.C.) (as amended by Chapter 85-55, Laws of Florida, to the Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act) requires that all counties in Florida have a Local Government Comprehensive Plan (LGCP) by 1990. Monroe County government is required to provide planning for various elements including: housing, physical facilities, land use, conservation, and coastal zone protection. This plan has been developed to be consistent with present conservation and coastal management elements of the local government plan and will endeavor to provide criteria and standards that will be used in local plan revision. Monroe County's LGCP was submitted in August of 1990. When the LGCP plan is determined to be in compliance by the Department of Community Affairs, applicable policy statements will be incorporated into this management plan.

#### **D. OTHER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES**

Other Department of Natural Resources management authorities applicable to aquatic preserves include management and protection of fisheries and marine mammals as well as beach and shore preservation programs outlined in Chapters 370 and 161, F.S., respectively. The Division of Beaches and Shores administers the Monroe County Beach Management Plan and has coastal construction regulatory authority pursuant to Section 161.041, F.S. Land acquisition programs conducted under the Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) authorities of Chapter 259, F.S., and the Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) program, authorized by Chapter 253, F.S., will enhance management and protection of the natural resources within the aquatic preserves.

Chapter 403, F.S., which is an important adjunct to Chapters 253 and 258, F.S., governs, in part, the State's regulatory programs affecting water quality and biological resources. The Department of Environmental Regulation (DER), through a permitting and certification process, administers this program. Section 253.77, F.S., as amended by the Warren S. Henderson Wetlands Protection Act of 1984, requires that any person requesting use of state-owned land to have approval of the proposed use from the Trustees before commencing the activity. An interagency agreement between DNR and DER provides an avenue for staff comments on the potential environmental impacts of projects in aquatic preserves through the DER permitting process. Additionally, the DER has designated through administrative rule, a series of waterbodies as Outstanding Florida Waters (OFWs). The DER has adopted stringent use criteria for these OFWs. The inclusion of all aquatic preserve waters within this classification greatly enhances the protective provisions of Chapter 258, F.S. As the designated "306" Coastal Zone Management Agency, the DER also provides a source of funding matched by federal monies for data collection and planning in various areas. Funding for this plan was provided, in part, from these sources.

The DER's administrative rules of primary significance to the aquatic preserve management program are based upon the authorities contained in Chapter 403, F.S. Chapter 17-3, F.A.C., addresses water quality standards and establishes the OFW category. Chapter 17-4, F.A.C., addresses permit requirements.

Other opportunities for environmental review and input into activities potentially affecting aquatic preserves are afforded by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The DCA is statutorily responsible for administering the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) and Area of Critical State Concern (ACSC) designation. The DRI program, authorized by Section 380.06, F.S., was established by the Legislature to provide a review and monitoring procedure for those development projects potentially affecting more than one county. The Governor and Cabinet designated the Florida Keys as an Area of Critical State Concern on April 15, 1975. A prime objective of the designation and regulations (or "Principles for Guiding Development" established for the Keys 1984) was to strengthen local land use management capabilities. DCA has been working with the local governments in a cooperative intergovernmental effort to meet this objective. DCA also has the authority to approve or amend the local comprehensive growth management plan and implement land use regulation within the ACSC.

The Department of State's Division of Historical Resources (DHR) is legislatively assigned to preserve and manage Florida's archaeological and historical resources. DHR holds title to the cultural resources located on state-owned lands, including state-owned submerged lands, pursuant to Chapter 267, F.S.

The Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS), under their public mandate, administers two programs directly affecting the aquatic preserve management program. The regulation of septic tanks is typically administered by the county health department. The arthropod (mosquito) control program is implemented through the local Mosquito Control District (MCD). Administration of these programs may potentially have significant impacts upon the aquatic preserve. Although there is no legislatively created vehicle, establishment of close working relationships between the aquatic preserve staff and HRS is a necessary element of the aquatic preserve management program.

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) administers permitting programs for the local potable water supply, stormwater discharges, and some dredge and fill activities. Stormwater discharges in the area of the aquatic preserve may potentially affect certain management objectives. Close coordination with SFWMD permitting review is indicated when a particular project could pose threats to the quality or quantity of water introduced into the preserve.

Additional agencies and organizations that have interests or regulatory authority within the aquatic preserve or the adjacent uplands are listed in Chapter VII (Management Implementation Network) of this plan.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESOURCE DESCRIPTION**

The geology, climate, and hydrology of the Florida Keys have combined to create a unique environment suitable for colonization by tropical plants and animals that are highly specialized and limited to a relatively small geographic area on this continent. Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve encompasses a variety of habitats or communities that support many of these species.

Detailed information on the resources (e.g., species lists, water quality data, archaeological and historical site information, life histories, supporting maps, cultural resource information, etc.) is listed in the following sections. The resource information presented in this chapter is intended to be generally descriptive of major management functions and resources in the area of the preserve.

#### **A. LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES**

Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve is located in the lower half of the Florida Keys archipelago. Lying south of the main land mass of Big Pine Key, the preserve is bounded on the north and east by the extension of that land area and on the south by the twelve foot depth contour in the Atlantic Ocean. The western boundary runs from the 12 foot Atlantic contour along the 6 foot depth contour of Newfound Harbour Channel in a northeasterly direction to the southwestern tip of Big Pine Key. The privately owned Newfound Harbor Keys lie between the interior waters of the Bight and the Atlantic portions of the preserve. Only state-owned submerged lands are included within the boundary. Total area is approximately 6000 acres.

Additionally, this management plan will address state-owned uplands acquired through the Conservation and Recreational Lands Coupon Bight Buffer project. Approximately 100 acres of mangrove/saltmarsh, pinelands and tropical hardwood hammock areas have been purchased to date. Acquisition is an ongoing process and newer purchases have not been thoroughly inventoried. Complete inventories and resource descriptions for the pinelands and hammocks will be developed at a future date. Interim management criteria, issues and objectives for these resources are presented in Chapters V and VI.

#### **B. GEOLOGY**

Both the ancient and modern geology of the Florida Keys is reflective of the biological communities and the marine environment that have shaped and continue to influence the configuration of these islands and adjacent marine areas. In

geological time, the area is still very young and the present time heralds further change as sea levels rise with the retreat of glacial ice fields.

The present geological formations began 100,000 years ago during the Pleistocene Era when sea level was approximately 25 feet above present level (Hoffmeister and Multer, 1964). Corals and other marine organisms assimilated calcium carbonate from marine waters and constructed reef formations very similar to the living reefs of today. As the plants and animals died, their skeletal remains became part of the fossilized patch reefs and sea floor that were exposed as sea level receded during the Wisconsin glaciation period. The glacial fields bound up large volumes of the earth's water and sea level dropped to approximately 325 feet below present levels. The exposed limestone was subjected to the erosive forces of wind, rain, and plants and began to take on its present appearance. During the recent Holocene period, sea level rose to its present level and is continuing a slow rise of about two inches every 100 years (Hoffmeister, 1974; Wanless, 1969). More recent calculations by Wanless (1989) estimate that sea level in Florida may be rising at 8-16 inches per 100 years.

The geological formations of the Keys may be further subdivided into two distinct physiographic and geologic regions. The Upper Keys (from Soldier Key to the eastern edge of Big Pine Key) are distinguished by the elongate dome and linear configurations that are the remains of the ancient coral reefs. Elevations may rise 15-18 feet above sea level near the center of the northern most islands. This porous aggregate of fossil skeletal remains is referred to as the "Key Largo Limestone". Many of the fossilized remains are recognizable as the progenitors of species that inhabit the reef today (Multer, 1977; Hoffmeister and Multer, 1964).

In the Lower Keys (Big Pine Key to Key West), the Key Largo Limestone is overlain by the Miami Limestone, or Miami oolite. The Miami Limestone was formed in a high energy, shallow water environment with low silt content and high levels of calcium carbonate. Spherical ooid films were cemented together in dense layers around a core material, usually a grain of sand (Multer, 1977).

The geological interface of these two formations is exposed near the Long Beach area at the eastern boundary of the preserve. Some areas have been obliterated by road building and other earth moving activities. Other areas have been exposed by the same activities and the construction of drainage ditches. The submerged portions of the interface within the Coupon Bight are difficult to distinguish, having been buried by layers of silt and detritus. Small ledges and outcroppings encountered while mapping biological community distribution in 1985 may be an indicator of the submerged portions of the interface. Observations by Howard et al., (1970) described the Key Largo limestone as underlying the southern one-third of the Bight.

Although the exposed portions of the interface are presently outside the boundary of the preserve, every effort should be made to encourage protection of this locally significant area of geological interest.

The Miami Limestone is not as porous as the Key Largo Limestone. Acid etched solution features form depressions that retain freshwater. These freshwater lenses influence the biological communities. They support a variety of plants and animals that are not found in the Upper Keys and are more closely akin to communities on the mainland. This is especially true on Big Pine Key and No Name Key where pinelands and cattail (*Typha*) marshes are common upland features.

## **C. PHYSIOGRAPHY**

Based upon biogeography and physical characteristics, the modern geologic environments of the preserve may be divided into four regions: emergent, lagoon, nearshore and patch reef. Each environment or region is significantly influenced by existing basement geology, as well as tidal circulation patterns and the biological communities that occur in each.

### **1. Emergent**

Emergent lands consist of aerial rock substrate with thin mantels of fine sediments and fragments of the parent rock. Beach/berms are typical on the east facing shorelines. The Newfound Harbor Keys and the Long Beach area exhibit pocket beaches and low berms perched upon the underlying rock.

On Big Pine Key the berm is typically low and narrow. Low areas landward of the berm are frequently flooded by tidal import and rain water run off. Salinas or salt ponds are common features where there are shallow depressions in the caprock. There is a subtle elevation gradient from the landward side of the berm towards the center of the island. The elevation progression is interrupted in several locations by natural and manmade features. A wide, shallow slough transects the south western third of the island. Elevated caprock and sediment deposits support hammock and pineland vegetation. Extensive areas have been ditched and excavated material deposited along ditch edges. Topographic alterations have influenced both natural sheet flow patterns and vegetation communities.

### **2. Lagoon**

Coupon Bight is a shallow semi-enclosed basin approximately 2.2 miles (3.5 kilometers) long and 1.6 miles (2.5 kilometers) wide and with an average 6 foot (1.8 meter) depth near the center. Tidal circulation in the shallow-water bay is restricted by the land mass of Big Pine Key on the north and east, to a lesser extent by the Newfound Harbor Keys on the south, and the bay mouth bank at the western

opening of the Bight. The deep sediments associated with the bay mouth bar are the result of hydrological transport and deposition from Newfound Harbor and Big Pine Channels. Turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*) is a major influence in stabilizing the bank and in trapping additional sediments.

The lagoon environment of the Bight is characterized by varying depths of sediments over bedrock. Exposed portions of the basement rock are colonized by sponges, small corals or algae. (This type of environment is referred to as hardbottom, hardgound or live bottom by various authors. For purposes of this management plan it will be referred to as hardbottom.) Areas of deeper sediments are colonized by marine grasses and algae. Areas of thinner sediments are dominated by algae, sponges or sparse colonies of grasses.

Major sediment constituents are fragments of calcareous algae, Foraminifers, rock and mollusk shells. Minor constituents of scleractinian corals, crustacean carapaces and echinoderm ossicles, and pellets are also present. The abundant coral skeletal fragments in the southern portion of the Bight are transported from the Atlantic nearshore to the south through the tidal passes between the New Found Harbor Keys. The sediment facies are generally reflective of the living biota that occur within the Bight today. There are 55 species of Foraminifera and approximately 94 species of mollusks represented within the Bight (Howard et al., 1970; Howard and Faulk, 1968).

### 3. Nearshore

The submerged substrate seaward of the Newfound Harbor Keys slopes gradually from the shoreline to the edge of Hawks Channel. As in the Bight, sediment depth over bedrock is a major factor in determining the distribution of community associations and individual organisms that shape the geophysical environment. The intertidal zone is typically a broad, shallow shelf of the exposed bedrock material with a thin veneer of sediment. The crenelate, solution pocked surface is the product of the soluble nature of limestone and the burrowing and boring organisms that inhabit the intertidal zone. Sponges, worms, crustaceans, mollusks, and echinoderms are major erosive agents in these areas. As it is being eroded, crustose and filamentous algae bind sediments and as they are alternately wetted and dried, form a karst-like layer over the underlying limestone in the intertidal zone (Ginsburg, 1953; Neuman, 1966; Robertson, 1963).

Subtidal areas are typically colonized by hardbottom communities where sediment is thin. Clear, shallow waters nearshore support impressive colonies of clubbed finger coral (*Porites*) and coraline algae near Cooks and Big Munson Islands. Their skeletal remains form a large proportion of the sediment in the passes between the Newfound Harbor Keys and may be deposited in the Bight during storm events and high tides. In deeper water, sponges, gorgonians, algae and small colonies of stony corals tend to dominate. This hardbottom community is the most common

association in the Atlantic portion of the preserve. As in the Bight, the basement rock is dotted with shallow, sediment filled depressions that support sea grass beds of varying dimensions and density.

#### 4. Patch Reef

Patch reefs develop on hardbottom substrate where other environmental factors are favorable. These three dimensional features are elevated, solid frameworks of living organisms (and their skeletal remains) that are actively building the geological record of the future. Major reef building organisms are the stony corals (Scleractinia) and coraline algae.

In the early stages of patch reef development, the fauna is dominated by pioneering species such as finger corals (Porites spp.), rose coral (Manicina areolata) and golfball coral (Favia fragum). These are smaller nonreef building species. The corals assimilate and redistribute calcium carbonate in the form of an exoskeleton. Over time, these corals live, die, erode, and recolonize the hardbottom, transforming it into a community dominated by coral and coral skeletal material. The larger reef building corals then have a foundation for colonization. The primary frame builders of this stage of the reef are the starlet corals (Siderastrea sp.), star corals (Montastraea sp.) and the brain corals (Diploria sp.). The more massive corals add vertical relief and numerous micro-habitats that offer sustenance to a vast array of other organisms (Japp, 1984).

Many other organisms are instrumental in the geological formation of the reef. Some are active bioerosive forces that bore or feed upon corals and fragment the exoskeleton. This sediment is thus redistributed on the reef where other physical and geochemical agents consolidate loose sediments and provide additional substrate for reef expansion (Ginsburg and Schroeder, 1973). Exported sediment is redistributed in other marine areas or washed ashore to form beaches and berm. This coarse carbonate "sand" or rubble is remarkably different from the quartzous silica of other shorelines in Florida. The fine grained silica sands of riverine systems make up only a small proportion of the beach sediments in the Keys.

The growth and distribution of patch reefs is governed by several other physical and biological factors. They are not arranged haphazardly but lie in areas that not only offer suitable substrate, but have access to the photic zone, warm water temperatures, nutrients from the waters of Florida Straits and protection from the excessive sediments, temperature and salinity fluctuations of Florida Bay (Hoffmeister and Multer, 1968). Given optimum local conditions a coral colony may grow as much as 190 inches (482.6 cm) in a thousand years (0.2 inches or .5 cm/year) (Shinn et al., 1977).

The amounts of calcium carbonate (CaCO<sub>3</sub>) associated with coral reefs is a good indicator of this community's importance as a geological agent. As much as 163

metric tons of CaCO<sub>3</sub> can be fixed by a moderate sized reef shelf in a single year (Stearn et al., 1977). Primary fixing agents are the stony corals and the crustose coraline algae. In warmer climates growth may be triple this annual rate (Adey, 1977). Thus, the patch reef is a significant engineer of both past and future geology in tropical waters.

#### **D. HYDROLOGY**

The present geological landforms and the hydrological regime interact to influence the distribution of biological communities and ongoing process of deposition and erosion that sculpture the appearance of the area. The islands of the Lower Keys are oriented on a perpendicular axis to the Upper Keys islands. The numerous north/south channels that separate the Lower keys allows the sediment laden waters of the Gulf of Mexico and Florida Bay to mix with the Atlantic Ocean. The longshore currents and eddies that circulate from the north-bound Gulf stream flow roughly parallel to the island shorelines in a southwesterly direction. Silt and sediments from the channels are transported by these currents. As current velocity diminishes, sediments fall to the bottom forming bars or filling in depressions in the bedrock.

The distribution of patch reefs within the preserve is affected by the proximity of the two channels east and west of the preserve boundaries and by the barrier created by the Newfound Harbor Keys. Turbid waters from Pine Channel are diverted to the southwest by Little Munson and Big Munson Islands and the bay mouth bar on the west side of Coupon Bight. Circulation of the waters from Coupon Bight is obstructed by bars that shoal the passes between the islands. The larger patch reefs lie in the "shadow" or sheltered area, seaward of Big Munson Island, in those areas where the island's land mass acts as a barrier to the turbid, cooler waters of Florida Bay and Coupon Bight.

Sediment laden waters from Spanish Harbor (Bogie) Channel are propelled along the shoreline of the Long Beach area at the eastern side of the preserve. Fewer patch reefs are located in that portion of the preserve as a result of the excessive sediments and fluctuating salinities and temperatures. For this same reason, the best developed beach strand also occurs in this area. Fine sediments are sorted and transported, then deposited on the shoreline in the Long Beach area.

Hydrological regime within Coupon Bight also plays a role in the distribution of biological communities in the lagoon. Water flow and circulation is governed almost entirely by the proximity to Big Pine Channel. Hydrological patterns affect the distribution of sediments and deposits reach maximum depth in the area of the bay-mouth bar at the edge of Big Pine Channel. The bar acts as a barrier to circulation and a catchment for additional deposits of sediments from the channel. The bay-mouth bar and the shoals between the Newfound Harbor Keys restrict tidal import

and export of vital nutrients and creates conditions of highly variable salinities and temperatures within the Bight. The more diverse biological communities occur in the northeastern corner of the lagoon where larger volumes of water from the channel are circulated. As the circulation pattern diminishes toward the eastern portions of the Bight, the biological communities are correspondingly less diverse with distance from the channel (Howard et al., 1970).

Wind plays a secondary role in the hydrological patterns in the lagoon. The shallow waters are easily agitated and fine sediments are easily suspended by wind-driven currents. Suspended sediments inhibit photosynthetic activity by reducing light penetration and thus may determine the variety and density of marine flora. Water near the center of the lagoon is frequently turbid and marine grass beds in deeper portions of the Bight are usually sparse even though sediment depths are adequate to support them (pers. obser.). Waters along most of the leeward shorelines of the New Found Harbor Keys are protected from wind/currents and tend to be relatively clear. Grass beds in these areas are generally lush and expansive.

Historically, Coupon Bight may have been open to additional circulation from Big Pine and Spanish Harbor Channels. The restricted baylet at the northeast corner of the Bight appears to have been open to circulation currents from Spanish Harbor Channel and was most probably obstructed during the construction of U.S. Highway 1 or during the railroad era. An existing mangrove creek was connected to Spanish Harbor channel at the southeast corner of the Bight. This creek has been interrupted by the construction of the Long Beach and U.S. Highway 1 roadways and a marina/campground at the channel's edge. A similar creek, or slough, exists near the center of the north shoreline and angles toward the northwest. It has been interrupted by a series of residential finger canals and roadways before it connects to Pine Channel.

Little researched information is available regarding the more recent events that have perpetuated or altered the hydrology of the Bight. The effects that these events have had upon the distribution and diversity of marine organisms is therefore purely speculative. The gradual rise (or retreat) of sea level is yet another factor that will determine the future configuration of emergent lands and hydrological regime in the area. Additional observation and research may reveal the patterns of biological succession that can be anticipated.

Tide cycles are semidiurnal, having two highs and two lows within each lunar period. Tidal flood enters the Bight via the channel north of the bay mouth bar and to a lesser extent through the passes between the Newfound Harbor Keys. Velocity gradually diminishes traveling eastward and is barely perceptible in the constricted baylets. Tidal ebb typically moves in the reverse direction (Howard et al., 1970). Tidal range is approximately 2 feet with higher and lower tides experienced during full and new moon phases. Low elevations of adjacent wetlands contributes to frequent flooding during these events.

## **E. WATER QUALITY**

The Florida Department of Environmental Regulation (DER) has designated waters of the preserve as Outstanding Florida Waters (OFW) (17-3.041, F.A.C.). As such, these waters are to be afforded the highest protection possible. To qualify for this designation, water quality must be maintained within the established standards. All activities that may potentially alter these standards are evaluated accordingly.

Water quality data is limited in the area of the preserve. DER maintains a monitoring station west of Newfound Harbor Channel, outside the preserve boundary. Data from this station is generally reflective of ambient conditions since 1982. A summary of conditions for both ambient and impacted stations was published in "Report to the Environmental Regulation Commission on the Proposed Designation of the Florida Keys as an Outstanding Florida Water" (DER, 1984). A short term study by Newfound Harbor Marine Institute (Unpublished, 1987) provides limited data on water quality.

Other water quality research centered on the effects of septic tank effluent on ground and surface waters in the Big Pine Key area. This study has determined that septic effluent increases contamination in ground waters during the dry (winter) season and that horizontal subsurface transport introduces these effluents to contiguous (marine) surface waters during the wet (summer) period. Nutrient loading of surface waters is also indicated with the use of aerobic treatment units with shallow injection wells. The non-saline wastewater effluent is buoyant and rises within the rock strata to mix with surface waters. Continued increases in land use density and use of on-site sewage disposal systems (OSDS) are predicted to increase nutrient contamination of marine waters. (Lapointe, 1989).

Recently published studies edited by Kenworthy and Haunert (1991) document the relationship between water transparency and seagrass survival. Photosynthetic efficiency is impaired by lowered light levels. Nutrients encourage micro and macro algal blooms which increases chlorophyll levels in the water column and stimulate epiphytic growth on leaves. Suspended sediments and "colored" water (from dissolved organic material, such as tannic acid) also reduce light levels.

Highly publicized reports on the decline of marine grass beds in the eastern portion of the Coupon Bight attribute the loss to water pollution from upland development (Estrin, 1988). However, Howard et al., (1970) described this area as having 'generally sparse' marine grasses and algae as early as 1967. Howard further points out that 'the primary factor in biotic distribution (in the Bight) is the type of substrate present.' Extreme temperatures and highly variable salinities would also tend to inhibit grasses in this area.

## **F. CLIMATE**

The nearly tropical climate is characterized by mild, dry winters and warm, humid summers. Prevailing trade winds from the east and southeast are occasionally interrupted by winter cold fronts that move over the area from the north or northwest in the winter and infrequent tropical storms and depressions in the summer months (Warzeski, 1976). The average rainfall at Key West is 39.8 inches per year with large peaks occurring in June and September (NOAA, 1965, 1979). Rainfall increases from Key West to the Upper Keys by about five inches per year. Summer thunderstorms and the occasional tropical storm provide the bulk of the rainfall, with minor amounts associated with the winter cold fronts.

Annual average air temperature (measured at Key West) is 77.5 degrees Fahrenheit (F). Seasonal mean highs of 84.7 degrees F occur in July and August. Mean lows of 69.0 degrees F occur during December and January (NOAA, 1965, 1979). Ambient temperatures are a direct influence of the Gulf Stream (Jordan, 1973). Neither frost nor freeze have been recorded for the area. As with most maritime climates, average humidity is typically high.

The tropical storms and hurricanes that visit this area deserve more than a casual mention. They tend to have major effects on the biology and natural features of a large area and on the activities of the human populations that visit and inhabit those areas. The long term benefits and deficits to the natural environment are poorly understood. Ball et al., (1967) and Craighead and Gilbert (1962) reported extensive biological and geological rearrangement and destruction of the coastal zone in South Florida and the Keys after the passage of Hurricane Donna in 1960. The greatest destruction or erosion of shorelines occurred where shoreline vegetation or shallow water marine grassbeds had been previously damaged or destroyed. Recovery of these areas was hindered by these alterations, as erosion often continued after the initial onslaught of the storm (Multer, 1977).

It is necessary to understand a hurricane's potential as a destructive agent and to be prepared for its occurrence. It is also necessary to plan development that will minimize destruction of natural communities. Although these natural communities may be severely damaged by hurricanes, the corals, grass beds and mangroves provide a natural buffer that can reduce the severity of impacts on coastal areas. They demonstrate a capacity to recover when functional integrity has not been undermined by manmade alterations to biological and geological features.

## **G. BIOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES**

This section will discuss some of the plant and animal associations within the preserve. Individual species are grouped in representative community types based upon dominance or absence of certain floral and faunal constituents. General

descriptions and species lists are intended to be reflective of the community being discussed under each subheading. The listing of a species in one community does not limit its occurrence to only that community. Each community association is presented separately, but in reality they display an infinite variety of mixed and interdependent associations. Major community associations in the preserve are mangrove/saltmarsh, coastal beach or berm, marine grassbeds, hardbottom and patch reefs. Figure 3 illustrates the submerged resources of the preserve.

Subtle differences in geology, topography, microclimate and other physical parameters may determine the initial dominance of a particular association in an area, or the particular area may be modified by the existing biota and thus evolve or succeed into an entirely different association. The natural components of the environment are never static and usually progress in an orderly sequence of change from one sere to the next. Each succeeding sere is generally more complex and diverse than the previous association. Those communities that have reached a climax or balanced condition are usually most productive in terms of biomass and species diversity.

Catastrophic events, such as hurricanes and man-made alteration of natural features disrupt orderly progression and may set back the sere to an earlier stage that is less productive. Many of the man-made disturbances will be discussed in the text. These changes not only inhibit or reverse succession but may replace entire associations with other less productive environments. The affected environment or community is not the only one to be diminished. All marine systems are interrelated and thus changes to one association will directly or indirectly affect a number of other related and interdependent associations. The importance of marine productivity has been expounded upon since ancient times yet only recently has modern man begun to appreciate the intricate and vital role that these communities play in the larger ecological profile of our region and our planet.

### **1. Mangrove/Saltmarsh**

Mangrove/saltmarsh communities contribute substantially to the health and productivity of marine systems in the preserve. Shoreline stabilization, storm protection, filtration and stabilization of sediments, nutrient cycling and habitat diversity are only a few of the many functions that this community performs. It is composed of two diverse groups of salt tolerant plants.

The saltmarsh vegetation is represented by a large group of herbaceous and woody plants that lie landward of the fringing mangroves. Members of this plant community are often included in what is referred to as the "buttonwood" or "transition zone". It is distinguished by an open canopy of buttonwood (Conocarpus erectus) trees and low growing species that are tolerant of periodic tidal inundation and extreme fluctuations in salinity. Plants in this community may also be

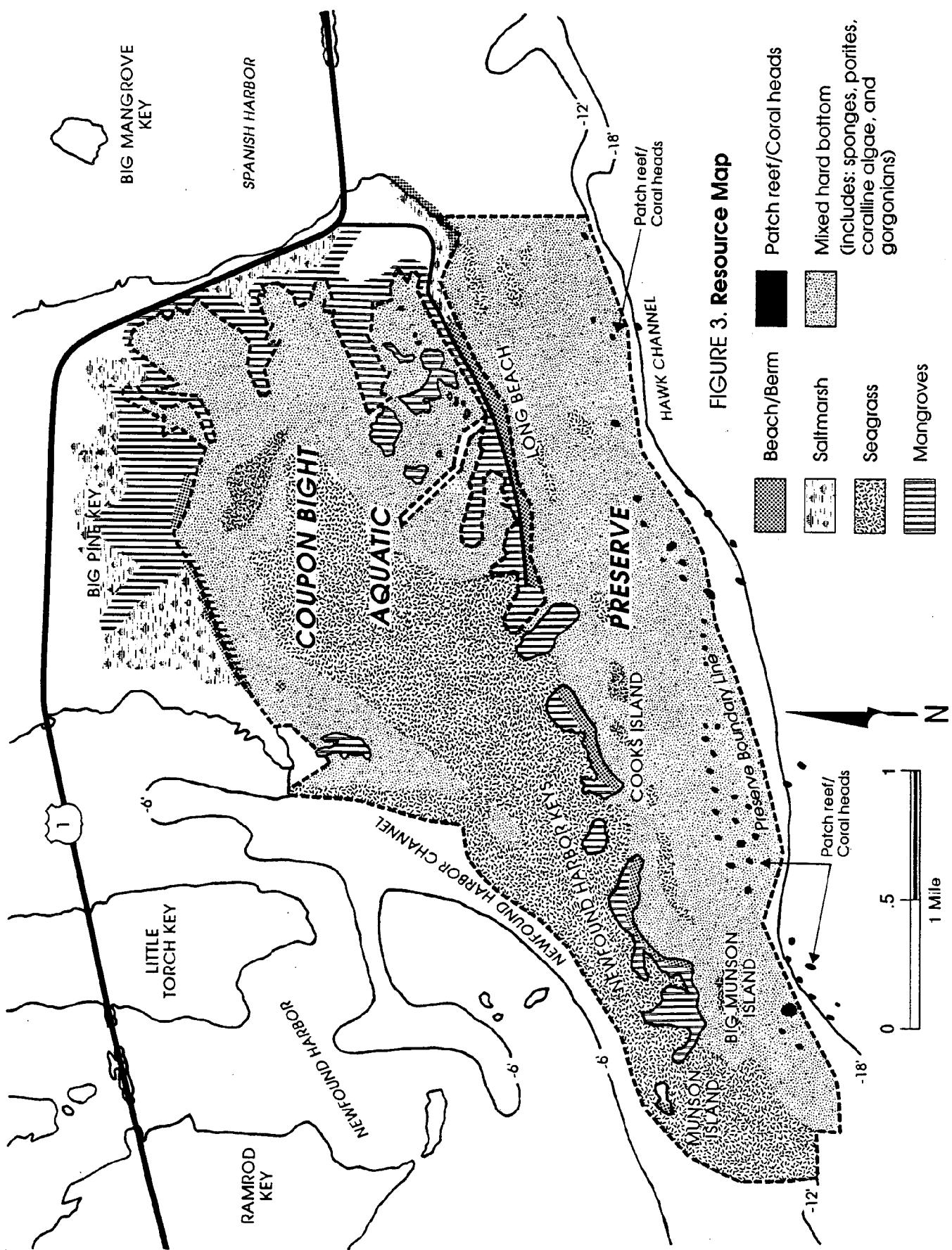


FIGURE 3. Resource Map

intermixed with mangroves and beach/berm communities and form a rich mosaic of vegetative types. A partial list of the mangrove/saltmarsh plants is presented in Table 1. Endangered and threatened species are noted.

Mangroves are a pan-tropical group, occurring on seventy-five percent of the world's tropical coastline (McGill, 1959). Of the 72 species recognized by Chapman (1976), only three species occur in Florida. Red mangrove (Rhizophora mangle) and white mangrove (Laguncularia racemosa) grow along low energy shorelines from the Florida Keys to near Cedar Key on the west coast (Rehm, 1976) and north to Ponce de Leon Inlet on the east coast (Teas, 1977). Black mangrove (Avicennia germinans) extends farther north on the east coast to near 30 degrees north latitude and along the Gulf coast to Louisiana and Texas (McMillan, 1971). These tropical trees are sensitive to fluctuating temperatures and prolonged periods of cold or frost (Davis, 1940). Prolonged temperatures below 66 degrees F may be lethal or cause stunted growth forms (Waisel, 1972). Accordingly, the largest mangrove forests (90% according to estimates by the Coastal Coordinating Council, 1974) are located in the more southern areas of the state, primarily in Lee, Collier, Dade, and Monroe Counties. Monroe County encompasses approximately 234,000 acres (95,000 ha.) of mangroves, the majority lying within the boundaries of Everglades National Park and the small islands in Florida Bay.

Of the six mangrove forest types described by Lugo and Snedaker (1974), only the fringing forest and the scrub (or dwarf mangrove) forest are well represented in the preserve. The fringing mangroves occur along the intertidal shoreline surrounding the emergent islands and are especially abundant on the leeward sides of these islands that are protected from prevailing easterly winds and waves. The scrub or "dwarf" mangrove forests occur in many of the constricted baylets on the eastern shoreline of Coupon Bight and within the impounded wetlands to the north of the Bight.

Local distribution of mangroves is affected by several physical parameters. Wave energy and substrate are probably most significant within the preserve. Fringing mangrove forests reach optimum development on low energy shorelines with fine sediments. Fine sediments deposited in shallow depressions in the caprock provide sufficient depth for propagules to become rooted. Other areas lack sufficient sediment depths or are buffeted by waves or swift currents that would bury seedlings or sweep them away. This type of environment is especially prevalent along the Atlantic shoreline of the Newfound Harbor Keys. Although all three mangrove species are present, the mangrove fringe is usually not wide and may only occupy the extreme seaward edge of the shoreline. Constant wave energy scours the rocky intertidal zone and longshore currents deposit coarse calcarious sand fragments that form a beach/berm along the more exposed shorelines. This shifting substrate offers few opportunities for mangrove propagules to become established and those that survive are continually threatened with being submerged by additional sand or swept away by storm waves.

**TABLE 1**  
**A PARTIAL LIST OF THE MANGROVE/SALTMARSH FLORA**

Beach orach	<u>Atriplex arenaria</u>
Black mangrove	<u>Avicinnia germinans</u>
Saltbush	<u>Baccharis</u> sp.
Saltwort	<u>Batis maritima</u>
Sea oxeye daisy	<u>Borrichia</u> spp.
Saffron plum	<u>Bumelia celestrina</u>
Gray nicker	<u>Caesalpinia crista</u>
Seven-year apple	<u>Casasia clusifolia</u>
Saltgrass	<u>Distichlis spicata</u>
Seagrape	<u>Coccoloba uvifera</u>
Buttonwood	<u>Conocarpus erectus</u>
Geiger	<u>Cordia sebestena</u> (E)
Clamshell orchid	<u>Encyclia cochleata</u> (T)
Butterfly orchid	<u>Encyclia tampensis</u> (T)
Seaside gentian	<u>Eustoma exaltatum</u>
Sedge	<u>Fimbristylis castanea</u>
Wild cotton	<u>Gossypium hirsutum</u> (E)
Seaside heliotrope	<u>Heliotropium curassavicum</u>
Seaside hibiscus	<u>Hibiscus tillaceus</u>
Manchineel	<u>Hippomane mancinella</u>
Keys spider lily	<u>Hymenocallis latifolia</u> (T)
White mangrove	<u>Languncularia racemosa</u>
Herbaceus sea lavender	<u>Limonium carolinianum</u>
Christmas berry	<u>Lycium carolinianum</u>
Sea lavender	<u>Mallotonia gnaphalodes</u> (E) = <u>Tournefortia gnaphalodes</u>
Wild dilly	<u>Manilkara bahamensis</u>
Gutta percha mayten	<u>Maytenus phillanthoides</u>
Poisonwood	<u>Metopium toxiferum</u>
Key grass	<u>Monanthochloe littoralis</u>
Prickly pear cactus	<u>Opuntia stricta</u> (T)
Knot grass	<u>Paspalum distichum</u>
Purslanes	<u>Portulaca</u> spp.
Red mangrove	<u>Rhizophora mangle</u>
Rouge berry	<u>Rivina humilis</u>
Glasswort	<u>Salicornia</u> spp.
Sea purslane	<u>Sesuvium portulacastrum</u>
Virginia dropweed	<u>Sporobolus virginicus</u>
Sea blight	<u>Suaeda linearis</u>
Bay cedar	<u>Suriana maritima</u> (E)

Mahoe  
Air plants

Thespesia populnea  
Tillandsia spp. (\*)

(\* All except T. usnroides are endangered (E), threatened (T), or commercially exploited (C).)

Recent loss of several white and black mangroves on the Atlantic side of the Long Beach area may be directly attributed to storm surge associated with minor hurricanes (Kate and Elaina) that passed near the Keys in 1985. Close examination of affected trees revealed that sediments were eroded and large portions of the root systems of these trees were exposed as a result. Leaves withered and died within four to six weeks after the storms and were still attached to the trees months after the event. In some cases only portions of the trees exhibited extreme signs of necrosis. Those individuals that suffered only partial excavation of the root systems showed signs of resprouting or retention of landward portions of the canopy one year after the storms. Survivability of these individuals is precarious, as they may be further stressed by desiccating forces (sun and wind) or toppled by winds.

Tidal regime in coastal areas also plays an important part in mangrove dominance of the shoreline. The advance and retreat of marine waters facilitates import of necessary nutrients into the community and exports organic carbons and other compounds to marine systems. Tides are also instrumental in dispersing the buoyant seeds and propagules.

Ambient marine salinities benefit mangroves in several ways. Competition from less tolerant terrestrial plants is minimized and soil salinities are moderated by daily flushing. Unlike their terrestrial counterparts mangroves have evolved mechanisms to exclude or excrete salt from plant tissues. The red mangrove can exclude salt at the root surface (Scholander, 1968). Black and white mangroves secrete salt through modified glands on the leaf or trunk and by storing salt in succulent leaves and fruit that fall from the tree. Most halophytic plants are believed to use these mechanisms or a combination of them to dispose of excess salt (Teas, 1979).

Excessive soil or water salinity, however, can stress mangroves. Salinities above 65 parts per thousand (ppt) can kill red mangroves (Cintorin et al., 1978). Salinities at or above 80 ppt may stunt white and black mangroves, especially in combination with high water temperatures (Lugo and Zucca, 1977). Impounded mangroves are frequently subjected to this type of stress. As normal tidal circulation is interrupted, water temperatures may exceed 100 degrees F and evaporation increases salinity to debilitating levels. Highly fluctuating temperatures and salinities combined with low sediment deposition, and low nutrient import create an extremely inhospitable environment. The result is a dwarfed or scrub mangrove forest (after Lugo and

Snedaker, 1974). All three species may be represented but are seldom more than 5 feet tall. They are often referred to (locally) as "spider" mangroves. Impoundment may be the result of natural topographic features (e.g., coastal berms) or caused by ditching and other manmade alterations to drainage patterns. Dwarfed mangroves occur over extensive areas of the wetlands adjoining the east and north shorelines of Coupon Bight.

Excessive temperatures and salinities (greater than 100 ppt) are also thought to be responsible for the relatively barren salt ponds or salinas that persist in many areas (Teas, 1979). Although these hypersaline areas may be inhospitable for most vascular plants, they perform other functions and should not necessarily be considered wasteland. They serve as valuable repositories for storm water runoff and sediments. These shallow water environments also support a broad range of algae that serve as a food source and provide cover for an equally diverse faunal community. Large numbers of larval fish species, gastropods, and crustaceans utilize this environment and are in turn valuable food reserves for many of the wading birds when other feeding areas may be flooded during high tides or inaccessible during periods of unfavorable winter weather (Sprunt, pers. com.)

The mangrove/saltmarsh association is a major component of the preserves resources, both in distribution and ecological value. This community is the most common interface between the upland and the marine environment. As such it contributes to the diversity and productivity of the larger ecological units. Major contributions from this community involve the complex and often poorly understood detrital food webs that are an integral part of tropical and temperate marine systems. Nutrients from both marine and terrestrial sources are assimilated and recycled in the vegetative tissues of the mangroves and everpresent root and mud algae. Primary productivity is difficult to partition because all levels of the community have not been thoroughly researched. It is, however, a widely accepted hypothesis that the organic carbons exported by mangrove systems are a major source of energy for many biologically and economically important species of invertebrates and fishes.

Carbon and other nutrients from terrestrial sources (Carter et al., 1973), rainfall (Lugo et al., 1980), and from marine sources are assimilated and recycled in the form of plant material that is fed upon by a host of arboreal, epiphytic, infaunal, and pelagic life forms. Energy pathways may originate from several different sources within the community. Sea grasses and benthic algae are trapped and broken down into particulate matter that is used by large numbers of consumers (Brook, 1975). Seneçsed mangrove leaves are attacked by fungi (Fell et al., 1975) and bacteria (Casagrande and Given, 1975) that colonize the leaf surface. As the leaf surface is fragmented, plant starches and proteins are broken down or converted to other compounds that are more easily consumed and assimilated by other microscopic life forms that break down the plant material to even smaller fragments. As more surface area is actually made available, the biotic community expands,

thus increasing the net available energy. As these smaller, protein rich particles are consumed, the resulting energy is passed on to higher order consumers (Odum, 1971; Odum and Heald, 1972; Odum and Heald, 1975; and Odum et al., 1982).

Epiphytic and benthic algae that live on and near the mangrove roots also contribute substantially to the energy transfer to higher trophic levels. Rehm (1974) recorded 74 species of red, brown, green and blue-green algae associated with mangrove areas. This abundant resource is actively grazed by numerous faunal species on site or may die to become part of the detrital food web. The net primary production of prop root epiphytes and mud algae may equal emergent leaf production in some areas (Lugo et al., 1975).

The contributions of plankton to local marine energy budgets are difficult to evaluate. This dynamic group is subject to abrupt changes in density depending upon season, currents and nutrient levels. Although quantitative research has not been done specifically for mangrove estuaries, the importance of planktonic food chains has been well documented for other regions and it may be assumed that there are large numbers of invertebrate grazers that benefit from this community component. The abundance of phytoplankton and zooplankton within the immediate area of mangroves would indicate that this energy source is important to many larval food webs (Odum, 1970). Table 2 contains a partial list of non-vascular plants and phytoplankton of the mangrove/saltmarsh association.

Faunal components of the mangrove/saltmarsh community are as diverse as the floral counterpart. This community provides food, cover, spawning, nesting and resting habitat for many species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrates. Many species are dependent upon this community during all or part of their life cycle. This interdependency may be critical for several endangered and threatened species that will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Animal life that graze directly upon arboreal leaf material include large numbers of insects including the olethrautid moth (Ecdytolopha sp.) and beetles (principally, Poecilips rhizophorae) (Onuf et al., 1977). Simberloff and Wilson (1969) list 200 species of insects that are associated with mangrove communities. The mangrove tree crab (Aratus pisonii) is also a primary consumer of mangrove leaves (Beever et al., 1979). Other invertebrate fauna of the emergent mangrove/saltmarsh include large numbers of gastropods. The snails (Littorina sp., Cerithidea sp. and Melampus sp.), isopods (Ligea spp.), and fiddler crabs (Uca spp.) are especially plentiful (Odum et al., 1982). These invertebrates are in turn a staple to many species of birds.

TABLE 2

## A PARTIAL LIST OF THE NON-VASCULAR MANGROVE/SALTMARSH FLORA

## FUNGI

Genera	Location	Reference
<i>Nigrospora</i>	Leaf	Fell, et al., 1975,
<i>Phyllostica</i>	"	1980
<i>Pestalotica</i>	"	"
<i>Phytophthora</i>	"	"
<i>Drechslera</i>	"	"
<i>Gloeosporium</i>	"	"
<i>Lulworthia</i>	"	"

## ALGAE

<i>Monostroma</i>	High water mark on red and black mangrove	Taylor, 1960
<i>Rhizoclonium</i>		
<i>Bostrychia</i>	Just below high water mark on red prop roots	"
<i>Catenella</i>		"
<i>Caloglossa</i>		"
<i>Acanthophorpha</i>	Submerged on red prop roots	Almodovar and Biebl 1962
<i>Caulerpa</i>	"	
<i>Hypnea</i>	"	
<i>Laurencia</i>	"	"
<i>Spyrida</i>	"	"
<i>Valonia</i>	"	"
<i>Wrangelia</i>	"	"
<i>Centroceras</i>	"	"
<i>Dasya</i>	"	Taylor, 1960
<i>Dictyota</i>	"	
<i>Halimeda</i>	"	"
<i>Murrayella</i>	"	"
<i>Polysiphonia</i>	"	"
<i>Wurdemanii</i>	"	"
<i>Boodleopsis</i>	Mud near roots	"
<i>Cladophoropsis</i>	"	"
<i>Enteromorpha</i>	"	"
<i>Vaucheria</i>	"	"

## PHYTOPLANKTON

Chaetocerus	Water column	Mattox,
Thalassothrix	"	1949
Nitzschia	"	Wood, 1965
Skeletonema	"	Walsh, 1965
Rhizosolenis	"	Bacon, 1970
Disploneis	Benthic	Wood, 1965
Mastogloia	sediments	"
Pluerosigma	"	"
Peridinium	Water column	Odum et al.,
Gymnodinium	"	1982

(From Odum et al., 1982)

The striking avifauna are often the most noticeable in the mangrove/saltmarsh association. Many species depend upon the community for feeding, nesting and resting sites. Large wading birds, such as the egrets, ibis, spoonbill, herons and the open-water piscivorous birds, such as the osprey and pelican are especially dependent upon mangrove areas. Others are only occasional or seasonal visitors. Odum et al., (1982) list 181 species that may be expected to use the mangrove community.

Other macrofauna that utilize the mangrove/saltmarsh include a number of terrestrial and aquatic reptiles, amphibians and mammals. Among the marine turtles, only the Atlantic loggerhead (Caretta caretta caretta) is relatively common in the preserve. This species may use mangroves as nursery areas (Odum et al., 1982). The Atlantic hawksbill (Eretmochelvs imbricata) and the Atlantic green turtle (Chelonia mydas) are known to feed upon mangrove roots and leaves (Ernst and Barbour, 1972; Carr and Goin, 1955) and may occasionally frequent mangrove areas in the preserve. The Atlantic ridley (Lepidochelys kempii) is an occasional visitor to shallow coastal areas of south Florida (Carr and Goin, 1955). Green turtles were once plentiful in the Keys and were an important commercial fishery until populations were nearly extirpated from overharvesting and egg collecting. Recent efforts to reintroduce this species may prove beneficial.

Other reptiles include several species of snakes and anoles, a turtle, a terrapin, and two crocodilians. Of the snakes, only one, the mangrove water snake (Nerodia fasciata compressicauda) is entirely dependent upon mangrove/saltmarsh areas. The others are transitory in habit and may utilize a variety of environments, as do the turtle and terrapin. The American alligator (Alligator mississippiensis) is primarily an inhabitant of freshwater areas but may venture into mangrove areas more frequently than past observations would indicate, especially during periods of

commonly associated with the mangrove fringed shorelines adjoining deeper waters, such as natural creeks, canals, barrow pits or basins. It is a rare visitor in the preserve.

Amphibians are generally not well represented due to the plausibility of freshwater areas that are usually necessary for reproduction. Those listed are suitably adapted to reproducing during the brief rainy period and may utilize brackish water pools for this purpose. The giant toad (Bufo marinus) and the Cuban treefrog (Hyla septentrionalis) are introduced species that have expanded their ranges considerably in the last several decades (King and Krakauer, 1966; King and Krakauer, 1968; and Krakauer, 1970).

The mammals of the mangrove/saltmarsh include a number of subspecies that are unique to the Lower Keys. Like the reptiles, they utilize a broad range of habitat types. All, except the silver rice rat (Oryzomys argentatus) and the Virginia opossum (Didelphis virginiana), are frequent visitors to the mangrove/saltmarsh areas. The rice rat may utilize saltmarsh areas that adjoin fresh or brackish marshes (Spitzer-Goodyear, pers. com.). The opossum is generally confined to small populations in close proximity to human habitations. Recent signs of range expansion in other areas of the Keys may also be duplicated on Big Pine Key, as urban populations expand. This marsupial and the raccoon are extremely versatile omnivores and are known to forage in mangrove/saltmarsh habitats (Layne, 1974).

The Key deer (Odocoileus virginianus clavium) is a frequent visitor to the preserve mangrove/saltmarsh. The deer use a variety of habitats and the mangrove fringe offers excellent cover for foraging and a corridor for movement between the Newfound Harbor Keys and Big Pine Key. Fresh water ponds located in the Cactus Hammock in the Long Beach area are readily accessible and deer sightings are common throughout the year.

The marine life of the mangrove/saltmarsh is by far the most diverse group of organisms in this association. Detritus and plankton are primary food sources for a large number of invertebrate fauna that attach themselves to prop roots, live in adjacent muds, or swim in the water. Courtney (1975), Tabb et al., (1962), and Odum and Heald (1972) reported extensive lists of invertebrates that are associated with mangroves.

The prop root complex is also important to many species of fish. Ample food and close proximity to cover that offers protection from predators is essential for large numbers of juvenile and adult fish. Many complete their life cycle within the mangrove community. Others are dependent upon mangroves during juvenile stages and migrate to grassbeds and/or coral reefs when mature. Still others are opportunistic vagabonds that utilize a variety of habitats and may be only seasonally or locally abundant. The proximity of other habitat types greatly increases the overlap of species from the other communities.

Many species of invertebrates and fishes that utilize the mangrove/saltmarsh are important to local recreational and commercial fisheries. Important species of local commercial fisheries include; pink shrimp (Penaeus duorarum), stone crab (Menippe mercenaria), spiny lobster (Panulirus argus), jacks (family Caranigadæ), grunts (family Pomadasyidae), grouper (D pinepelus spp.), seabass (family Serranidae), snapper (Lutjanus spp.), mullet (family Mugilidae), red drum (Sciaenops ocellata), ladyfish (Elops saurus), spotted sea trout (Cynoscion nebulosus), and menhaden (Brevoortia patronus).

These species represent a major portion of the annual seafood landings in Monroe County and are an integral part of the local economy. Finfish from the above groups represented an estimated \$5,541,086 of the landings value for the county in 1989. Shrimp, spiny lobster and stone crabs represented \$30,454,687. Total landings for all species represented approximately 38 million dollars to the local economy (FDNR, 1989). These figures reflect commercial dockside landing prices and do not include income derived from local support facilities (fuel, repair, dockage, tackle, etc.). Table 3 provides Monroe County commercial landing statistics data for finfish, crustaceans and sponges landed at local docks in 1989.

Many of the commercial species are also important to local recreational fisherman. Additionally, tarpon (Megalops atlantica), snook (Centropomus undecimalis), barracuda (Sphyraena barracuda) and bonefish (Albula vulpes) are avidly pursued by local enthusiasts, as well as thousands of annual visitors. Unfortunately, statistics are not currently available for recreational landings and income. Although the pounds landed would not approach the commercial statistics, conservative estimates would indicate that local income from hook and line enthusiasts is probably in excess of 50 million dollars a year. Once again, the total value of support services cannot be separated from local income statistics.

The statistics themselves do not and cannot reflect the many values of this important resource. They cannot, for example, assign a dollar figure to the aesthetic and ecological values associated with mangrove/saltmarsh habitats. Nor can they relate the cost or efficiency of the intricate transfer of energy from one organism to the other. They can, however, provide some rudimentary knowledge of the importance of this habitat to the many species that enrich our culinary pleasure and our local economy. They also reaffirm man's close association with and dependency on the vital marine food web that emanates from mangrove and saltmarsh estuaries.

Table 4 includes a partial list of the major invertebrate groups and the vertebrate fauna of the mangrove/saltmarsh association. For additional information on specific species, the reader is directed to the noted references. Odum et al., (1982) provide comprehensive lists of habitat types and diet preferences for fish and birds from published literature.

**TABLE 3**  
**MONROE COUNTY FISHERIES LANDINGS 1989**

Category	Pounds	Estimated Value (\$)*
Finfish	8,148,656	5,541,086
Stone crabs	1,617,860	8,202,550
Spiny lobster	5,535,309	16,827,339
Pink shrimp	2,885,531	5,424,798
Bait shrimp	45,051	148,129
Sponges	298,550	5,424,798

\* Values are estimated using the average price per pound paid statewide.  
(FDNR/MFIS, 1989)

**TABLE 4**  
**PARTIAL LIST OF THE MANGROVE/SALTMARSH FAUNA**

**INVERTEBRATES**

**Zooplankton**

This extensive group includes single-celled protozoans and the larvae and eggs of the invertebrates and fish listed below.

Jellyfish (Scyphozoa)  
 Unside-down jellyfish

Cassiopeia xamachana

Marine worms (Annelida)

Armandia agilis  
Cirratulus sp.  
Lumbrinerries maculata

Molluscs	
Blackhorn snail	<u>Batillaria minima</u>
Ladderhorn snail	<u>Cerithidea scalariformis</u>
Periwinkle	<u>Littorina</u> spp.
Saltmarsh snail	<u>Melampus coffeus</u>
Bleeding tooth	<u>Nerita</u> spp.
Predatory snail	<u>Pisania tincta</u>
Crustaceans (may comprise 70% of zooplankton)	
Barnacle	<u>Chthamalus stellatus</u>
Copepod	<u>Lithotrypa dorsalis</u>
Searoach	<u>Acartia</u> spp.
Wood borer	<u>Ligia</u> spp.
Pistol shrimp	<u>Sphaerom terebans</u>
Pink shrimp	<u>Alpheus</u> spp.
Shore shrimp	<u>Penaeus duorarum</u>
Cleaning shrimp	<u>Palaemonetes</u> spp.
Shrimp	<u>Periclimenes</u> spp.
Spiny Lobster	<u>Synalpheus fritzmuelleri</u>
Hermit crab	<u>Panulirus argus</u>
Hermit crab	<u>Pagurus</u> spp.
Blue crab	<u>Clibanarius</u> sp.
Crab	<u>Callinectes sapidus</u>
Shore crab	<u>Cyclograpsus</u> sp.
Mangrove tree crab	<u>Pachygrapsus</u> spp.
Marsh crab	<u>Aratus pisonni</u>
Fiddler crab	<u>Sesarma</u> sp.
Stone crab	<u>Uca</u> spp.
	<u>Menippe mercenaria</u>
Holothurians	
Sea cucumber	<u>Holothuria floridana</u>
(References: Odum et al., 1982) See Simberloff, 1976; Simberloff and Wilson, 1969 for comprehensive list of insects	
<b><u>VERTEBRATES</u></b>	
Fishes	
Nurse shark	<u>Ginglymostoma curratum</u>
Blacktip shark	<u>Carcharhinus limbatus</u> *
Lemon shark	<u>Negaprion brevirostris</u>
Bonnethead	<u>Sphyrna tiburo</u>

Smalltooth sawfish	<u>Pristis pectinata</u>
Guitarfish	<u>Rhinobatos letiginosus</u>
Lesser electric ray	<u>Narcine brasiliensis</u>
Southern stingray	<u>Dasyatis american</u>
Yellow ray	<u>Urolophus jamaicensis</u>
Spotted eagle ray	<u>Aetobatus narinari</u>
Ladyfish	<u>Elops saurus</u>
Tarpon	<u>Megalops atlantica</u>
Bonefish	<u>Albula vulpes</u>
Scaled sardine	<u>Harengula pensacolae</u>
Atlantic thread herring	<u>Opisthonema oglinum</u>
Bigeye anchovy	<u>Anchoa lamprotaenia</u>
Bay anchovy	<u>Anchoa mitchilli</u>
Inshore lizardfish	<u>Synodus foetens</u>
Sea catfish	<u>Aruis felis</u>
Gulf toadfish	<u>Opsanus beta</u>
Skilletfish	<u>Gobiesox strumosus</u>
Shortnose batfish	<u>Ogcocephalus nasutus</u>
Key brotula	<u>Ogilbia cayorum</u>
Halfbeak	<u>Hyporhamphus unifasciatus</u>
Redfin needle fish	<u>Strongylura notata</u>
Timucu	<u>Strongylura timucu</u>
Houndfish	<u>Tylosurus crocodulus</u>
Sheepshead minnow	<u>Cyprinodon variegatus</u>
Rainwater killifish	<u>Lucania parva</u>
Rivulus	<u>Rivulus marmoratus</u>
Mosquitofish	<u>Gambusia affinis</u>
Mangrove mosquitofish	<u>Bamvusia rhizophorae</u>
Sailfin molly	<u>Poecilia latipinna</u>
Reef silverside	<u>Allanetta harringtonensis</u>
Rough silverside	<u>Membras marinica</u>
Tidewater siverside	<u>Menidia beryllina</u>
Lined seahorse	<u>Hippocampus erectus</u>
Dwarf seahorse	<u>Hippocampus zosterae</u>
Pipefish	<u>Syngnathys spp.</u>
Snook	<u>Centropomus undecimalis</u>
Black seabass	<u>Centropristes striata</u>
Sand perch	<u>Diplectrum formosum</u>
Jewfish	<u>Epinephelus itajara</u>
Red grouper	<u>Epinephelus morio</u>
Nassua grouper	<u>Epinephelus Striatus</u>
Barred hamlet	<u>Hypolectrus puella</u>
Gag	<u>Mycteroperca microlepis</u>
Bronze cardinalfish	<u>Astrapogon alutus</u>
Conchfish	<u>Astrapogon stellatus</u>

Bluefish	<u>Pomatomus saltatrix</u>	*
Cobia	<u>Rachycentron canadum</u>	*
Whitefin sharksucker	<u>Echensis neucratoides</u>	
Blue runner	<u>Caranx cryos</u>	*
Jack crevalle	<u>Caranx hippos</u>	*
Bar jack	<u>Caranx ruber</u>	
Atlantic bumper	<u>Chloroscombrus chrysurus</u>	
Leatherjacket	<u>Oligoplites saurus</u>	
Florida pompano	<u>Trachinotus carolinus</u>	*
Permit	<u>Trachinotus falcatus</u>	*
Lookdown	<u>Selene vomer</u>	
Mutton snapper	<u>Lutjanus apodus</u>	*
Schoolmaster	<u>Lutjanus apodus</u>	*
Gray snapper	<u>Lutjanus griseus</u>	*
Dog snapper	<u>Lutjanus jocu</u>	
Lane snapper	<u>Lutjanus synagris</u>	*
Striped mojarra	<u>Dapterus plumieri</u>	
Mojarras	<u>Eucinostomus spp.</u>	
Grunts	<u>Haemulon spp.</u>	*
Pigfish	<u>Orthopristis chrysoptera</u>	
Sheepshead	<u>Archosargus probatocephalus</u>	
Sea bream	<u>Archosargus rhomboidalis</u>	
Grass porgy	<u>Calamus arctifrons</u>	
Saucereye porgy	<u>Calamus calamus</u>	*
Pinfish	<u>Lagodon rhomboides</u>	*
Blue croaker	<u>Bairdiella batabana</u>	
Silver perch	<u>Bairdiella chrysura</u>	
Spotted seatrout	<u>Cynoscion nebulosus</u>	*
Southern kingfish	<u>Menticirrhus americanus</u>	*
Gulf kingfish	<u>Menticirrhus littoralis</u>	*
Atlantic croaker	<u>Micropogon undulatus</u>	*
Black drum	<u>Pogonias cromis</u>	
Red drum	<u>Sciaenops ocellata</u>	*
High hat	<u>Equetus acuminatus</u>	
Atlantic spadefish	<u>Chaetodipterus faber</u>	
Sergeant major	<u>Abudefduf saxatillis</u>	
Slippery dick	<u>Halichoeres bivittatus</u>	
Parrotfishes	<u>Sparisoma spp.</u>	
Mullet	<u>Mugil spp.</u>	*
Great barracuda	<u>Sphyraena barracuda</u>	*
Mottled jawfish	<u>Opistognathus maxillosus</u>	
Bluethroat pikeblenny	<u>Chaenopsis ocellata</u>	
Marbled blenny	<u>Paraclinus marmoratus</u>	
Banded blenny	<u>Paraclinus fasciatus</u>	
Blackbelly blenny	<u>Stathmonotus hemphilli</u>	

Florida blenny	<u>Chasmodes saburrae</u>
Seaweed blenny	<u>Blennius marmoratus</u>
Spotted dragonet	<u>Callionymus pauciradiatus</u>
Gobys	<u>Gobionellus</u> spp.
	<u>Gobiosoma</u> spp.
	<u>Lophogogius</u> sp.
	<u>Microgobius</u> spp.
Spanish Mackerel	<u>Scomberomorus maculatus</u> *
King Mackerel	<u>Scomberomorus cavalla</u> *
Barfish	<u>Scorpaena brasiliensis</u>
Plumed scorpionfish	<u>Scorpaena grandicornis</u>
Searobins	<u>Prionotus</u> spp.
Eyed flounder	<u>Bothus ocellatus</u>
Spotted whiff	<u>Citharichthys macrops</u>
Fringed flounder	<u>Etropus crossotus</u>
Gulf flounder	<u>Paralichthys albigutta</u>
Southern flounder	<u>Paralichthys lethostigma</u>
Dusky flounder	<u>Syacium papillosum</u>
Lined sole	<u>Achirus lineatus</u>
Scrawled sole	<u>Trinectes inscriptus</u>
Hogchoker	<u>Trinectes maculatus</u>
Blackcheek tonguefish	<u>Syphurus plagiura</u>
Orange filefish	<u>Aluterus schoepfi</u>
Fringed filefish	<u>Monacanthus ciliatus</u>
Planehead filefish	<u>Monacanthus hispidus</u>
Gray triggerfish	<u>Balistes capriscus</u>
Queen triggerfish	<u>Balistes vetula</u>
Scrawled cowfish	<u>Lactophrys quadracornis</u>
Trunkfish	<u>Lactophrys triqueter</u>
Puffers	<u>Sphoeroides</u> spp.
Burrfish	<u>Chilomycterus</u> spp.

\* = Locally important species of commercial, sport and bait fisheries. (Modified from Odum et al., 1982)

#### Amphibians and Reptiles

American alligator	<u>Alligator mississippiensis</u>
American crocodile	<u>Crocodylus acutus</u>
Keys mud turtle	<u>Kinosternon baurii</u> <u>baurii</u>
Mangrove terrapin	<u>Malaclemys terrapin</u> <u>rhizophorarum</u>
Atlantic loggerhead	<u>Caretta caretta</u> <u>caretta</u>
Atlantic green turtle	<u>Chelonia mydas</u> <u>mydas</u>
Atlantic hawksbill	<u>Eretmochelys imbricata</u> <u>imbricata</u>

Atlantic ridley  
American anole  
Cuban anole  
Southern black racer  
Big Pine Key ringneck  
Eastern indigo snake  
Rat snake  
Mangrove water snake

Florida brown snake  
Florida ribbon snake  
Giant toad  
Southern toad  
Treefrog  
Cuban treefrog

Lepidochelys kempii  
Anolis carolinensis  
Anolis sagrei  
Columber constrictor haasti  
Diadophis punctatus acricus  
Drymarchon corais couperi  
Elaphe guttata guttata  
Nerodia fasciata  
compressicauda  
Storeria dekayi  
Thamnophis sauritus sackeni  
Bufo marinus  
Bufo terrestris  
Hyla squirella  
Hyla septentrionalis

(References: Carr and Goin, 1955; Duellman and Schwartz, 1958; Ernst and Barbour, 1972; Paulson, 1966)

## Birds

Great egret  
Snowy egret  
Cattle egret  
Great white heron  
Great blue heron  
Reddish egret  
Louisiana heron  
Little blue heron  
Green heron  
Black-crowned night heron  
Yellow-crowned night heron  
White ibis  
Roseate spoonbill  
Semiplamated plover  
Black-bellied plover  
Ruddy turnstone  
Spotted sandpiper  
Solitary sandpiper  
Greater yellowlegs  
Lesser yellowlegs  
Dunlin  
Least sandpiper  
Semipalmated sandpiper

Casmerodius albus  
Egretta thula  
Bubulcus ibis  
Ardea herodias occidentalis  
Ardea herodias  
Dichromana rufescens  
Hydranassa tricolor  
Florida caerulea  
Butorides striatus  
Nycticorax nycticorax  
Nyctanassa violacea  
Eudocimus albus  
Ajaia ajaja  
Charadrius semipalmatus  
Pluvialis squatarola  
Arenaria interpres  
Actitis macularia  
Tringa solitaria  
Tringa melanoleucas  
Tringa flavipes  
Calidris alpina  
Calidris minutilla  
Calidris pusilla

Western sandpiper	<u>Calidris mauri</u>
Short-billed dowitcher	<u>Limnodromus griseus</u>
Black-necked stilt	<u>Himantopus mexicanus</u>
Brown pelican	<u>Pelecanus occidentalis</u>
Double-crested cormorant	<u>Phalacrocorax auritus</u>
Mallard	<u>Anas platyrhynchos</u>
Blue-winged teal	<u>Anas crecca carolinensis</u>
Red-breasted merganser	<u>Mergus serrator</u>
Ring-billed gull	<u>Larus delawarensis</u>
Laughing gull	<u>Larus atricilla</u>
Least tern	<u>Sterna albifrons</u>
Royal tern	<u>Thalasseus maxima</u>
Belted kingfisher	<u>Megaceryle alcyon</u>
Magnificent frigatebird	<u>Fregata magnificens</u>
Red-shouldered hawk	<u>Buteo lineatus</u>
Osprey	<u>Pandion haliaetus</u>
American kestrel	<u>Falco sparverius</u>
White-crowned pigeon	<u>Columba leucocephala</u>
Mangrove cuckoo	<u>Coccyzus minor</u>
Red-bellied woodpecker	<u>Melanerpes carolinus</u>
Gray kingbird	<u>Tyrannus dominicensis</u>
Great crested flycatcher	<u>Myiarchus crinitus</u>
Eastern phoebe	<u>Sayornis phoebe</u>
Mockingbird	<u>Mimus polyglottos</u>
Catbird	<u>Dumetella carolinensis</u>
Brown thrasher	<u>Toxostoma rufum</u>
White-eyed vireo	<u>Vireo griseus</u>
Black-whiskered vireo	<u>Vireo altiloquus</u>
Red-eyed vireo	<u>Vireo olivaceus</u>
Black-and-white-warbler	<u>Mniotilla varia</u>
Yellow-throated warbler	<u>Dendroica dominica</u>
Yellow warbler	<u>Dendroica petechia</u>
Yellow-rumped warbler	<u>Dendroica coronata</u>
Prairie warbler	<u>Dendroica discolor</u>
Palm warbler	<u>Dendroica palmarum</u>
Yellowthroat	<u>Geothlypis trichas</u>
American redstart	<u>Setophaga ruticilla</u>
Northern parula	<u>Parula americana</u>
Red-winged blackbird	<u>Agelaius phoeniceus</u>
Boat-tailed grackle	<u>Quiscalus major</u>
Cardinal	<u>Cardinalis cardinalis</u>

(References: Robertson and Kushlan, 1974; Sprunt, 1954; Bent, 1932)

## Mammals

Virginia opossum	<u>Didelphis virginiana</u>	+
Keys marsh rabbit	<u>Sylvilagus palustris hefneri</u>	
Silver rice rat	<u>Oryzomys argentatus</u>	+
Key cotton rat	<u>Sigmodon hispidus exsputus</u>	
Black rat	<u>Rattus rattus</u>	
Raccoon	<u>Procyon lotor auspicaetus</u>	
Key deer	<u>Odocoileus virginianus clavium</u>	

(References: Layne, 1974; Humphrey and Barbour, 1979; Spitzer and Lazell, 1978; Lazell, 1984)

+ = Species not currently recorded in preserve but available habitat and proximity of known populations suggest presence.

## 2. Marine Grassbeds

Marine grassbeds are a major feature in the aquatic resources of the preserve. Seagrasses stabilize sediments, baffle wave energy, cycle nutrients, and provide substrate for a complex floral and faunal community. Abundant food and cover make this an important resource for invertebrates and a nursery area for many fish species. However, biological productivity is not limited to the area of distribution. Marine energy cycling is enhanced as detrital material and nursery species are dispersed to other areas. Species from geographically and physiologically isolated habitats, such as, the patch reef and the mangrove communities also forage in the seagrass community. Thus, marine grassbeds function as an interface between other communities and enrich the ecological diversity and productivity of all marine systems.

Dominant marine grasses in the preserve are turtle grass (Thalassia testudinum) and Cuban shoalweed (Halodule wrightii). Shoalweed is typically a pioneer species that colonizes disturbed sites and areas where water depth (too shallow or too deep) or substrate is less favorable for turtle grass. Turtle grass is a climax species (Phillips, 1960), and as such is usually considered to be the primary producer in this community. Turtle grass meadows are most expansive where sediments are deepest over the bedrock. Manatee grass (Syringodium filiforme) and several species of Halophila may also be present within the turtle grass beds.

Seagrasses are flowering plants that have evolved to a totally aquatic existence. They have adapted physiological and chemical mechanisms that facilitate photosynthesis, growth, maintenance and reproduction while completely submerged. Unlike their terrestrial counterparts seagrasses lack stomata on the leaf surfaces, thus gases are slowly diffused through the leaf tissue. Oxygen is

stored in interstitial cell spaces and passed to root structures and rhizomes when needed (Zieman and Wetzel, 1980). The release of gaseous bubbles from leaf surfaces is often the source of the faint popping sounds heard when grass flats are exposed at low tide. Stored gases also make the leaf blade buoyant, keeping it vertical to the substrate and allow a much larger surface area to be exposed to solar radiation.

Certain plant nutrients are derived from the sediments, while others are taken from the water column. Nitrogen fixation can occur in the rhizomes, on the leaf surface and in some cases may be transferred between the leaf surface and epiphytes on the leaf (Harlin, 1971). Nitrogen and carbons are also derived from the particulate organic matter from dead plant material, and animal excretion. This highly efficient use of relatively limited nutrients and sunlight are the basis for a level of productivity often compared to the coral reefs and mangroves.

The study of seagrass reproduction has evolved primarily as a means to restore or mitigate those areas that have been adversely impacted by man's activities or natural disturbances. Marine grasses may reproduce both sexually and vegetatively. Vegetative reproduction originates from the root or rhizome of the plant. Vegetative starts (plug or turion) are usually preferred for transplanting as they become established more quickly and survive longer. However, relative cost of this type of restoration may be prohibitive for large areas. Cost ranged from \$27,000 to 86,500/ha to revegetate one area in the Upper Keys (Lewis et al., 1981). This technique has also caused much controversy, as many scientists and environmentalists have questioned the possibly negative impacts to donor (source) areas. Donor areas are slow to recolonize and large scale removal may cause a more serious disturbance than it is intended to remedy.

Sexual reproduction in marine grasses is less clearly understood. Orpurt and Boral (1964) observed flowering turtle grass in the Keys during April and fruiting until September. Seed production and seedling survival, however, may vary considerably from year to year. Lewis (1980) while monitoring a revegetation project near Craig Key, reported a "prodigious" seed crop in the intertidal area of Lower Matecumbe Key during 1979. Previous observations by Moffler (from Lewis, 1980) indicated little fruiting occurred in 1975 and Phillips reported large numbers of seedlings in the same area in 1960. Periods of high seed production certainly offer the opportunity to harvest and propagate seedlings for revegetation of disturbed areas but cost may again be prohibitive. Thorhaug and Austin (1976) reported costs of \$42,000-\$280,000/ha (depending on desired plant cover) for collection, propagation, planting and overhead for restoration efforts. Survival rates for transplanted seedlings are also very low, less than 30% (Zieman, 1982).

Marine grassbed distribution is influenced by physical and chemical factors similar to those described for mangroves. Temperatures and salinities are usually well within the tolerance limits of the species listed. Optimum temperatures (68-86

degrees F) and salinities (24 ppt to 35 ppt) for turtle grass (Phillips, 1960), occur throughout the aquatic preserve waters with the exception of the constricted baylets on the eastern portion of Coupon Bight. These shallow waters are often subjected to extreme fluctuations of salinity during extended periods of drought and during the rainy season. They are also subject to more abrupt temperature changes than normally observed in deeper waters and therefore are usually devoid of grasses.

The three most important parameters determining grassbed distribution in the preserve are light intensity, current velocity, and sediment depth. Like their emergent counterparts, marine plants must have access to sunlight to carry on the photosynthetic process. Unlike terrestrial plants, the water column lies between the source and recipient. Water depth and clarity affect the amount of sunlight that reaches the leaf surface. In this area water depth is less important than water clarity. Shading from docks and turbidity in the water column inhibit photic zone access. High turbidity and water velocity in and near channels inhibit sea grass colonization. Access channel and prop dredging are also sources of excessive turbidity. These impacts are usually localized and not normally of a duration or intensity to cause extensive light reduction but have other, more severe, consequences.

Variations in temperature, salinity, turbidity, and sediment deposition are closely related to current patterns in the preserve. Tidal currents and topographic relief influence the rate of accretion (or erosion) of sediment deposits. Sediment depth and stability are instrumental in the establishment and distribution of marine grassbeds. Areas with low current velocities and adequate sediment depths are more readily colonized. This often accounts for the "patchy" distribution of lush turtle grass in the preserve. Turtle grass requires sediment depths from 3 inches (Scoffin, 1970) to 20 inches (Zieman, 1972) for optimum growth. These conditions are exemplified in the sheltered waters leeward of the Newfound Harbor Keys, on the eastern half of the bay-mouth bank in Coupon Bight, and in the natural depressions in the sea floor. In profile, these colonized depressions often appear as "domes". As the plants entrap additional sediments, the depression fills and appears elevated as more sediments are added. Areas with thin sediments may be more readily colonized by the less selective shoalweed or species from the hardbottom community.

In addition to the previously noted marine grasses, several species of algae are also commonly found in this community. Benthic algae include Halimeda, Penicillus, Caulerpa, Rhipocephalus, and Udotea species. These calcareous algae are instrumental in producing organic carbons and calcium carbonate that are incorporated into the sediments (Zieman, 1982). Benthic algae are also early colonizers of fine sediments and their rhizoid holdfasts may stabilize these sediments so that seagrasses may become established on otherwise unoccupied areas (Williams, 1981). Drift algae, primarily Laurencia, is also a common component of the grassbeds.

Seagrass leaves provide substrate for a wide range of epiphytic algae. Some 66 species have been recorded to utilize seagrasses for attachment (Ballantine and Humm, 1975). While access to the photic zone is enhanced by this arrangement, the encrusting of the leaf surface may effectively reduce photosynthesis in the host plant (Sand-Jensen, 1977). The overall loss of photosynthetic production may be off-set by the increased habitat for marine fauna and a corresponding increase in animal and plant protein.

The faunal constituents of the marine grassbeds range from the microscopic zooplankton that drift with the currents, epiphytic biota that live upon the grasses and the pelagic invertebrates, fishes and mammals that utilize these areas. Trophic structure presents ample food for a variety of specialized feeders. Herbivores that feed directly upon the algae or seagrasses include a wide variety of invertebrates. Most notable are the crabs, queen conch, and sea urchins. Vertebrate herbivores include the green, loggerhead, and hawksbill turtles, and a wide variety of fishes. Zieman (1982) lists 63 species that utilize seagrass in their diet. Many of these species also consume varying amounts of detritus and epifauna as they forage.

Detrital feeders make up a large percentage of the grassbed fauna and may well represent the primary pathway of energy transfer to higher tropic levels (Zieman, 1982). This group is composed of many small organisms that feed upon the decomposing plant and animal material in the vicinity of the grassbeds. Corals, sponges, tube worms and shrimp filter detritus and plankton from the water column. Others glean material from the sediments and leaf surfaces. Exported detritus becomes available to an even wider range of consumers in more remote areas. Carr and Adams (1973) found detrital feeders to be a major food source for at least one feeding stage in 15 of 21 juvenile marine fishes studied. Commercially important detrital feeders include the pink shrimp (Penaeua duorarum), spiny lobster (Panulirus argus), and mullet (Mugil curema).

Higher order consumers include the myriads of fishes usually associated with grassbeds, as well as many that are more commonly associated with coral reefs and mangrove areas. Some spend early development stages in the shelter of the sea grasses and move to other habitats when mature. Still others, by alternating periods of diurnal and nocturnal activity, may utilize grassbeds for foraging at night and seek shelter in mangroves or coral reefs during the day. This partitioning of time and resources serves to eliminate competition between similar species and affords a much greater number of niches in the ecological structure of the community. Fishes of recreational and commercial interest include most of those from the annotated list for the mangrove/saltmarsh in Table 4.

Marine grassbeds are heavily utilized by several bird species. The abundant marine fauna of this community are the staple food for most of these birds (Kushlan, 1978). Heron, egrets, and spoonbills exploit fish, crustaceans and other marine organisms

in shallow water grassbeds and upon exposed grass flats during low tides. Open water piscivorous birds include the cormorant, osprey, pelican, and gulls.

Mammals that utilize marine grassbeds include the manatee and the bottle-nosed dolphin. The manatee, although not formerly recorded as a resident species in the preserve, may well frequent the area on occasion and is well known for its predilection for aquatic plant life. It is assumed that the abundant seagrasses would provide a welcome repast for this nomad. Bottle-nosed dolphin are occasional visitors of the aquatic preserve and undoubtedly take quantities of schooling fish as opportunity permits. Consult Table 5 for a list of animal species commonly associated with the marine grassbed community.

Major impacts to the marine grassbed community in Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve are associated with human activities. Direct removal of grassbeds by prop scouring and channel dredging are most noticeable. Although the single prop scar may be comparatively insignificant, the cumulative impact from repeated scarring, which is evident on the bay-mouth bank in Coupon Bight, is of concern. Zieman (1976) estimated recovery for these areas may take from 2-5 years and the natural recovery process may be further inhibited by rechanneling and increased erosion.

Dredging (and the spoiling of material) permanently eliminates grassbeds in most cases. Almost continual turbulence from prop wash and erosion of channels inhibits re-colonization efforts. More stringent regulations on dredging "access-channels" have generally been effective in reducing this type of activity. However, intentional "prop dredging" (using boat propeller wash to cut a channel) has been observed and will most probably continue to be a sporadic activity.

The cumulative effect of docking facilities must also be considered. Docks interrupt light penetration and "shade out" vegetation. As with prop scaring, the individual site may be insignificant but is compounded when the total area influenced (by all facilities) is tabulated. The loss in primary productivity must then be multiplied by the "dock life" to comprehend the possible net loss in biological productivity over several years or decades.

The effects of septic effluent and upland run-off in marine communities is often difficult to detect given the highly variable physical and chemical parameters of both the effluent and the community being studied. But recent technological improvements and additional research (and monitoring) have scientifically validated the general assumption that all nearshore environments are subjected to measurable amounts of pollution from these sources when in close proximity to poorly planned development. As previously noted in the water quality section of this chapter, excessive nutrients encourage algal blooms that reduce light in the water column and encourage epiphytic growth on seagrass blades. Sediments and suspended solids intercept available light. Lowered light levels inhibit photosynthesis

and plant vitality declines. Available energy is directed to maintenance of tissues. As a result, primary productivity is halted, reproduction is limited or nonexistent and the community as a whole degenerates (Kenworthy and Haunert, 1991).

Additional research is needed to evaluate impacts from reduced light levels attributed to sedimentation and nutrients, prop dredging and scouring, and dock shading. Further research and experimentation are to be encouraged in hopes of discovering more successful and cost efficient methods of replanting and encouraging expansion of marine grassbeds. However, the preferable alternative to costly and often futile restoration is to protect this dynamic and productive resource from further damage. To achieve that goal, preservation and protection of marine grassbed communities shall be a priority in the designation of management areas and the management procedure and policies in Chapters IV and V of this plan.

TABLE 5  
A PARTIAL LIST OF MARINE GRASSBED FAUNA

INVERTEBRATES

Corals

Golffball coral

Favia fragum

Rose coral

Manicina areolata

Finger corals

Porites spp.

Starlet corals

Siderastrea spp.

Sponges

Variable sponge

Anthosigmella varians

Chichen liver sponge

Chondrilla nucula

Boring sponges

Chondrosia collectrix

Vase sponges

Cliona spp.

Loggerhead sponge

Ircinia fasciculata

Fire sponge

Ircinia campana

Spheciopspongia vesparium

Tedania ignis

Anemones

Pale anemone

Aiptasia pallida

Ringed anemone

Bartholomea annulata

Giant anemone

Condylactis gigantea

Sun anemone

Stoichactis helianthus

Annelids	<u>Ammatrypane fimbriata</u>
Lugworm	<u>Arenicola cristata</u>
Green bristle worm	<u>Eurythoe</u> sp. <u>Hermodice caruculata</u>
	<u>Eunice longicerrata</u>
Tube worm	<u>Lysidice</u> sp.
Sipunculoidea family	<u>Nereis</u> sp. <u>Phascolion</u> sp. <u>Onuphis magna</u>
	<u>Terebellides stroemi</u>
Molluscs	
Gastropods	
Sea slug	<u>Aplysia dactylomela</u> <u>Astrea</u> sp. <u>Bittium varium</u> <u>Caecum</u> sp. <u>Cardita floridana</u> <u>Cerithium</u> sp. <u>Crepidula</u> sp. <u>Cymatum</u> sp. <u>Fasiolaria tulipa</u> <u>Mitrella lunata</u> <u>Modulus modulus</u> <u>Pluroploca gigantea</u> <u>Rissoina</u> sp. <u>Strombus gigas</u> <u>Tequila</u> sp. <u>Tridachia</u> sp. <u>Vasum</u> sp.
Cerith	
Slipper	
Tulip	
Horse conch	
Queen conch	
Caribbean vase	
Pelecypods	
Cockle	<u>Americardia</u> sp.
Ark	<u>Anadara</u> sp.
Venus	<u>Antigona</u> sp. <u>Atrina</u> sp. <u>Cardita floridana</u>
Barred venus	<u>Chione cancellata</u>
Tiger lucine	<u>Codakia orbicularis</u>
Cockle	<u>Laevicardium laevigatum</u>
Lucine	<u>Lucina pennsylvanica</u>
Radiant tellin	<u>Tellina radiata</u>

Cephalopods	
Briar's octopus	<u>Octopus briareus</u>
Amphipods	
	<u>Cymadus compta</u>
	<u>Gammarus mucronatus</u>
	<u>Melita nitida</u>
	<u>Grandidierella</u> sp.
Crustaceans	
Shrimp and lobster	
Snapping shrimp	<u>Alpheus normanni</u>
Shore shrimp	<u>Hippolyte pleuracantha</u>
Spiny lobster	<u>Latreutus foforum</u>
Pink shrimp	<u>Palaemonetes</u> spp.
Cleaning shrimp	<u>Penulirus argus</u>
	<u>Penaeus duorarum</u>
	<u>Periclimenes</u> spp.
	<u>Thor floridanus</u>
	<u>Tozeuma</u> sp.
Crabs	
Box crab	<u>Calappa</u> sp.
Blue crab	<u>Callinectus</u> sp.
Striped hermit crab	<u>Clibanarius</u> sp.
Bar-eyed hermit crab	<u>Dardanus</u> sp.
Spider crab	<u>Glyptoxanthus</u> sp.
Decorator crab	<u>Libinia</u> sp.
Spider crab	<u>Macrocoeloma</u> sp.
Spider crabs	<u>Microphrys</u> sp.
Hermit crabs	<u>Mithrax</u> spp.
Giant hermit crab	<u>Pagurus</u> spp.
Pitho crab	<u>Petrochirus</u> sp.
	<u>Pilumnus</u> sp.
	<u>Pithos</u> sp.
Mantis shrimp	
False squilla	<u>Pseudosquilla</u> sp.
Echinoderms	
Starfish	
Thorny starfishes	<u>Echinaster</u> spp.
Cushion starfish	<u>Oreaster reticulata</u>

Sea urchins	
Long-spined sea urchin	<u>Diadema antillarium</u>
Varigated urchin	<u>Echinometria</u> sp.
Sea biscuit	<u>Lytechinus variegatus</u>
Holothurians	<u>Tripneustes ventricosus</u>
Sea cucumber	<u>Actinopyga agassizi</u>
Florida sea cucumber	<u>Holothura floridana</u>

(From Bock, 1971 and Zieman, 1982) \* = Species of commercial interest

### Fishes

Nurse shark	<u>Ginglymostoma curratum</u>
Lemon shark	<u>Negeprion brevirostris</u>
Bonnethead	<u>Sphyrna tiburo</u>
Smalltooth sawfish	<u>Pristis pectinata</u>
Southern stingray	<u>Dasyatis americana</u>
Ladyfish	<u>Elops saurus</u>
Tarpon	<u>Megalops atlantica</u>
Bonefish	<u>Albula vulpes</u>
Scaled sardine	<u>Harengula pensacolae</u>
Atlantic thread herring	<u>Opisthonema oglinum</u>
Anchovies	<u>Anchoa</u> spp.
Inshore lizardfish	<u>Synodus foetens</u>
Sea catfish	<u>Arius felis</u>
Gulf toadfish	<u>Opsanus beta</u>
Skilletfish	<u>Gobiesox strumosus</u>
Hardhead halfbeak	<u>Chridorus atherinoides</u>
Needlefishe	<u>Hyporhamphus unfasciatus</u>
Goldspotted killifish	<u>Flordichthys carpio</u>
Rainwater killifish	<u>Lucania parva</u>
Sheepshead minnow	<u>Cyprinodon variegatus</u>
Rivulus	<u>Rivulus marmoratus</u>
Sailfin molly	<u>Poecilia latipinna</u>
Reef silverside	<u>Allanetta harringtonensis</u>
Hardhead silverside	<u>Atherinomorus stipes</u>
Dwarf seahorses	<u>Hippocampus zosterae</u>
Dusky pipefish	<u>Syngnathus floridae</u>
Fringed pipefish	<u>Micrognathus crinitigerus</u>

Snook	<u>Centropomus undecimalis</u>	*
Gag	<u>Mycteroperca microlepis</u>	
Jewfish	<u>Epinephelus itajara</u>	
Cobia	<u>Rachycentron canadum</u>	*
Jacks	<u>Caranx</u> spp.	*
Permit	<u>Trachinotus falcatus</u>	*
Florida pompano	<u>Trachinotus carolinus</u>	*
Leatherjacket	<u>Oligoplites zaurus</u>	
Lookdown	<u>Selene vomer</u>	*
Snappers	<u>Lutjanus</u> spp.	
Silver blenny	<u>Eucinostomus gula</u>	*
Grunts	<u>Haemulon</u> spp.	*
Pigfish	<u>Orthopristis chrysoptera</u>	
Porgies	<u>Archosargus</u> spp.	*
Pinfish	<u>Lagodon rhomboides</u>	*
Red drum	<u>Sciaenops ocellata</u>	*
Silver perch	<u>Bairdiella chrysura</u>	
Spotted seatrout	<u>Cynoscion nebulosus</u>	*
Southern kingfish	<u>Menticirrhus americanus</u>	*
Atlantic spadefish	<u>Chaetodipterus faber</u>	
Sergeant major	<u>Abudefduf saxatilis</u>	
Slippery dick	<u>Halichoeres bivittatus</u>	
Hogfish	<u>Lachnolaimus maximus</u>	
Parrotfishes	<u>Scarus</u> spp.	
	<u>Sparisoma</u> spp.	*
Mullet	<u>Mugil</u> spp.	
Barracuda	<u>Sphyraena barracuda</u>	
Blennies	<u>Paraclinus</u> spp.	
	<u>Chaenopsis</u> spp.	
Dragonet	<u>Blennius</u> sp.	
Gobies	<u>Callionymus parciradiatus</u>	
	<u>Bathygobius</u> sp.	
Scorpionfishes	<u>Gobiosoma</u> spp.	
Searobin	<u>Microgobius</u> spp.	
Lined sole	<u>Scorpaena</u> spp.	
Tonguefish	<u>Prionotus</u> spp.	
Filefish	<u>Achirus lineatus</u>	
Cowfish	<u>Syphurus plagiatus</u>	
Trunkfish	<u>Monocanthus ciliatus</u>	
Southern puffer	<u>Lactophrys quadricornis</u>	
Burfish	<u>Lactophrys trigonus</u>	
	<u>Sphoeroides nephelus</u>	
	<u>Chilomycterus schoepfi</u>	

(Adapted from Zieman, 1982)

\* = Important sport, commercial and bait species

Reptiles

Green sea turtle  
Loggerhead sea turtle  
American crocodile

Chelonia mydas  
Caretta caretta caretta  
Crocodylus acutus

Birds

Roseate spoonbill  
Great blue heron  
Great white heron  
Great egret  
Little blue heron  
Reddish egret  
Louisiana heron  
Bald eagle  
Red-breasted merganser  
Osprey  
Brown pelican  
Double-crested cormorant

Ajaia ajaja  
Ardea herodias  
Ardea herodias occidentalis  
Casmerodius albus  
Egretta caerulea  
Egretta rufescens  
Hydranassa tricolor  
Haliaeetus leucocephalus  
Mergis serrator  
Pandion haliaetus  
Pelecanus occidentalis  
Phalacrocorax auritus

Mammals

Bottle-nosed dolphin  
Manatee

Tursiops truncatus  
Trichechus manatus latirostris

(From Kushlan, 1976, 1978)

### 3. Beach/Berm

The beach and berm community of the preserve exhibits several major differences when compared to other coastal areas of Florida. Classic strand beach and dune formation is a dynamic process of deposition and erosion of fine-grained silica sands that are transported by riverine systems and littoral drift along much of the Florida coastline. Beaches generally tend to have a broad sloping profile with one or several dune lines landward of the beach face. Width of the beach and height and arrangement of dunes are typically reflective of the wave energy and direction exerted upon the shoreline. Substantial changes in topography are usually evident from season to season as winter storms erode the beach and gentler wave action deposits sands during summer. Prevailing winds are also instrumental in transporting and depositing sand that adds to or subtracts from the dune formations (Bascom, 1964).

Substrate and depositional environment are quite different along the shorelines of the preserve. Topography of the sea floor and the island themselves are typically outcroppings of limestone rock. The intertidal zone is often a broad rock ledge that parallels the shoreline. Nearshore patch reefs and the gradually sloping bottom tend to dissipate wave energy and those wave crests reaching shore are reduced to gentle eddies throughout most of the year. This low energy environment is not conducive to expansive beach development, as much of the suspended sediments are dropped well off-shore. Finer sediments and organic materials that are washed near shore are deposited in shallow depressions in the caprock and often support colonies of mangroves or marine grassbeds.

Also noticeably lacking are the fine-grained sands so typical of classic beach and dune strands. Major component material of the beach and berm areas in the preserve are the fragmented remains of corals, cast-off shells, and calcareous algae. The larger, angular fragments are sorted by wave action and deposited on the beach crest or berm during storm events. The relative size and weight of the fragments inhibits extensive dune formation because they are less subject to erosion or deposition by winds. The berm areas are almost solely the result of storm events that have repeatedly deposited these fragments in parallel ridges along the shoreline. These ridges are more accurately referred to as coastal berms. The height and width of many of the berms are testimony to the frequency and severity of some of those storms. Although the geophysical nature of the dune and berm are different, they perform much the same function in the natural environment. They dissipate wave energy during storms and act as a barrier to protect communities that lie landward of the beach.

The most extensive beach development is along the Atlantic shoreline of the Newfound Harbor Keys and Long Beach. The beach face is relatively narrow along most of the shoreline but reaches optimum development on the Long Beach, Cooks, and Big Munson Island shorelines. Lower energy shorelines are colonized by mangroves. Berm development is much more common and varies in width and height dependent upon the exposure of the shoreline. The southerly shorelines of the Newfound Harbor Keys have well developed berms that are in excess of 50 feet wide and 2 to 4 feet in height over much of their length. The berm gradually becomes lower and terminates in mangroves on the leeward shoreline. The comparatively low profile would be breached during a moderate storm surge. The berm constitutes the only available "uplands" on these islands and has been developed for residential use on Long Beach and Cooks Island.

Lower, narrower berms are located along the northern shoreline of Coupon Bight. Prevailing winds and currents are instrumental in forming these coastal ridges that barely extend above the tide line. They are frequently inundated and are usually colonized by mangroves and saltmarsh vegetation.

Plant communities of the beach and berms are influenced by the proximity to tidal influence. Plants near the beach face and low berms are subjected to intense sun and wind, high salinity tidal wash, and a shifting substrate. Physiological adaptations to prevent moisture loss from salt, sun, and winds are evident in the succulent, shortened leaves of sea purslane (Sesuvium portulacastrum), saltwort (Batis maritima), and glasswort (Salicornia sp.). Other plant species possess thickened or involute leaves, surface hairs, or spines that slow moisture loss and inhibit grazing. Low, vertically spreading growth habits offer optimum leaf surface for photosynthesis and a low profile to damaging winds. Extensive horizontal and vertical root systems of the grasses (Distichlis sp., Spartina sp., and Panicum sp.) intercept available moisture and nutrients in this arid environment to stabilize and enrich the soil for additional plant colonizers. Black and white mangroves are also frequently encountered in this zone.

Portions of the berm above the reach of normal tides support a variety of herbaceous and woody plants including black mangrove and many of the saltmarsh species. Highest portions of the berm are vegetated with coastal plants, as well as many from the tropical hardwood hammock community. Many of the plant species of this community are rare, endangered, threatened or species of special concern because of development pressure on this resource. (See section on Endangered and Threatened Species.) Plants of the beach and berm community are listed on Table 6.

**TABLE 6**  
**A PARTIAL LIST OF THE BEACH/BERM FLORA**

Chaff flower	<u>Alternanthera maritima</u>
Beach orach	<u>Artiplex arenaria</u>
Saltmarsh aster	<u>Aster tenuifolius</u>
Black mangrove	<u>Avicennia germinans</u>
Saltbush	<u>Baccharis</u> sp.
Saltwort	<u>Batis maritima</u>
Sea oxeye daisy	<u>Borrichia</u> sp.
Saffron plum	<u>Bumelia celestrina</u>
Gumbo limbo	<u>Bursera simaruba</u>
Gray nicker	<u>Caesalpinia crista</u>
Jamaica caper	<u>Capparis cynophyllopora</u>
Limber caper	<u>Capparis flexuosa</u>
Goatweed	<u>Capraria biflora</u>
Seven-year apple	<u>Casasia clusifolia</u>
Sandspur	<u>Cenchrus incertus</u>
Barbed-wire cactus	<u>Cerus pentagonus</u>

Marine ivy	<u>Cissus trifolata</u>
Spurges	<u>Chamaesyce</u> spp.
Snowberry	<u>Chioccoca alba</u>
Pigeon plum	<u>Coccoloba diversifolia</u>
Sea grape	<u>Coccoloba uvifera</u>
Silver thatch palm	<u>Coccothrinax argentata</u>
Buttonwood	<u>Conocarpus erecta</u>
Geiger	<u>Cordia sebestena</u>
White stopper	<u>Eugenia axillaris</u>
Spanish stopper	<u>Eugenia foetida</u>
Blue mistflower	<u>Eupatorium incarnatum</u>
Garber's spurge	<u>Euphorbia garberi</u>
Seaside gentian	<u>Eustoma exaltatum</u>
Wild cotton	<u>Gossypium hirsutum</u>
Blolly	<u>Guapira discolor</u>
Seaside hibiscus	<u>Hibiscus tiliaceus</u>
Seaside heliotrope	<u>Heliotropium carassavicum</u>
Wild hibiscus	<u>Hibiscus pilosus</u>
Manchineel	<u>Hippomane mancinella</u>
Keys spider lily	<u>Hymenocallis latifolia</u>
Railroad vine	<u>Ipomoea pes-caprae</u>
Joewood	<u>Jacquinia keyensis</u>
Bahama morning glory	<u>Jaguemontia pentantha</u>
Black ironwood	<u>Krugiodendron ferrum</u>
White mangrove	<u>Languncularia racemosa</u>
Wild sage	<u>Lantana involucrata</u>
Beach bamboo	<u>Lasiacis divaricata</u>
Herbaceus sea lavender	<u>Limonium carolinianum</u>
Christmasberry	<u>Lycium carolinianum</u>
Wild dilly	<u>Manilkara bahamensis</u>
Gutta-percha mayten	<u>Maytenus phyllanthoides</u>
Poisonwood	<u>Metopium toxiferum</u>
Key grass	<u>Monanthochloe littoralis</u>
Prickly pear cactus	<u>Opuntia stricta</u>
Corkystemmed passionflower	<u>Passiflora suberosa</u>
Joint grass	<u>Paspalum vaginatum</u>
Beach carpet	<u>Philoxyerus vermicularis</u>
Blackbead	<u>Pithecellobium keyense</u>
Cat's claw	<u>Pithecellobium unguis-cati</u>
Purslane	<u>Portulaca oleracea</u>
Indigoberry	<u>Randia aculeata</u>
Darling plum	<u>Reynosia septentrionalis</u>
Rougeberry	<u>Rivinia humilis</u>
Glassworts	<u>Salicornia</u> spp.

Scaevola	<u>Scaevola plumieri</u>
Sea purslane	(= <u>Mallotonia graphalodes</u> )
Teaweed	<u>Sesuvium portulacastrum</u>
Bahama nightshade	<u>Sida rhombifolia</u>
Pride-of-Big-Pine	<u>Solanum bahamense</u>
Sea blight	<u>Strumphia maritima</u>
Bay cedar	<u>Suaeda linearis</u>
Mahoe	<u>Suriana maritima</u>
Keys thatch palm	<u>Thespesia populnea</u>
Spanish moss	<u>Thrinax morrisii</u>
Pearlberry	<u>Tillandsia usenoides</u>
Hog plum	<u>Vallesia antillana</u>
Wild lime	<u>Ximenia americana</u>
	<u>Zanthoxylum fagra</u>

(Source: Author's botanical field notes.)

The plant communities of the beach/berm area play a major role in stabilizing the shoreline and offering a first line defense to waves and winds during storms (Sensabaugh, 1975). They dissipate wave energies and protect upland plant communities and property from the adverse effects of winds and salt spray. Alteration of the berm or the plant communities may subject the shoreline to erosion and will subject less tolerant plant species to the desiccating influence of wind and salt spray. Removal of the plant community may also prepare the soil for invasive exotic plants that offer little value in stabilizing shorelines or as wildlife habitat (Mazzotti et al., 1981).

Exotic plant intrusion is fairly localized with Australian pine (Casuarina equisetifolia) and Brazilian pepper (Schinus terbinthifolius) occurring on disturbed sites. Latherleaf (Colubrina asiatica), an invasive, exotic vine, has also become well established. Disturbance from land clearing or tropical storms may aid the proliferation of these undesirable plants.

Animal life of the beach and berm community represents a wide array of arboreal, terrestrial, and aquatic fauna. Infauna of the sand/shell beach include numerous species of invertebrates. Marine worms, crabs, snails and clams are periodically inundated by tides that provide detritus and plankton from the sea. These creatures are in turn fed upon by a host of wading and probing birds. Numerous insects and crabs also forage the grass wrack along the shoreline.

The avifauna is a mixture of seasonal and resident species of various habits. The wading and shore birds include many of those associated with the mangrove/saltmarsh community. Passerine species include the many migrant visitors, as well as the vireos, flycatchers, warblers, cardinal, and grackles that are year round residents. The white-crowned pigeon (a threatened species) is also a frequent visitor to the beach and berm community where it feeds upon the fruit of poisonwood, snowberry, and other native plants. Aerial searching birds would include the red-shouldered hawk, kestrel, night hawk, and others that are opportunistic and make use of any suitable area.

Reptiles include the American and Cuban anoles, and several threatened subspecies of snakes and possibly the Keys mud turtle. The American crocodile is also potentially a visitor of the berm areas within the Bight. These areas would offer loafing beaches for the shy crocodile as they are well away from human habitation. Those berms with vegetative cover and marl soils are also potential nesting sites for the crocodile.

The Atlantic loggerhead turtle is a confirmed visitor to the Atlantic beach and berm areas. This threatened species is known to nest here and efforts to collect data on the number of nests and hatching success is now underway. Hopefully future data and observation may also establish the presence/absence of other endangered sea turtles, including the Atlantic green turtle, which historically may have nested here. The introduced Australian pine has the potential to be a direct threat to turtle nests. Moisture-seeking roots invade nest cavities and enmesh the turtle eggs. Upon hatching, the newborn turtles may not be able to extricate themselves from the root "net" and may perish inside the nest. The relative lack of pristine beaches in the Keys requires that the remaining areas be left in a natural condition and free of exotic plants so that the sea turtles may continue to nest here.

Mammals of the beach and berm community include several species of herbivorous rodents and the marsh rabbit (Silvilagus palustris hefneri) that feed upon leaves, fruit, and seeds and seek out nest sites in the dense foliage (Lazell, 1984). The silver rice rat (Oryzomys argentatus), an endangered species, has not been positively confirmed for this area but studies indicate that proximity of suitable habitat to the beach and berm may make this area attractive to the species for occasional foraging (Spitzer-Goodyear, per. comm.).

The nocturnal ramblings of the raccoon and opossum also include foraging on the beaches and berms. The possibility of an easily obtained meal usually awaits in the seagrass wrack on the shoreline where fruit, crustaceans, molluscs, and other tidbits need only be uncovered. The largest native mammal of the lower Keys is also primarily nocturnal or crepuscular in habit. The tiny Key deer (also an endangered species) forages over a wide range of habitat types. The mangrove areas in the preserve are heavily utilized by the deer and recent observations indicate that the berm areas are also a favored area for bedding and foraging. The

berm in the Long Beach area also serves as a dry corridor between the Newfound Harbor Keys and mainland portion of Big Pine Key. Numerous deer trails and signs of foraging are evident over much of the berm throughout the year (pers. obser.).

A partial list of beach and berm fauna is provided in Table 7.

**TABLE 7**  
**A PARTIAL LIST OF THE BEACH/BERM FAUNA**

**INVERTEBRATES**

Snails	<u>Batillaria</u> sp. <u>Littorina</u> sp. <u>Nerita</u> sp. <u>Nereis</u> sp. <u>Lumbrineris</u> sp.
Marine Worms	
Land crab	<u>Cardisoma guauhumi</u>
Hermit crab	<u>Coenobita clypeatus</u>
Mole crab	<u>Emerita Talpoida</u>
Ghost crab	<u>Ocypode quadrata</u>
Clam	<u>Anomalocardia</u> sp.
Numerous insects	

**VERTEBRATES**

**Reptiles and Amphibians**

Florida Keys mole skink	<u>Eumeces e. egregius</u>
Five-lined skink	<u>Eumeces inexpectatus</u>
Ashy gecko	<u>Sphaerodactylus cinereus</u>
Reef gecko	<u>Sphaerodactylus n. notatus</u>
American anole	<u>Anolis carolinensis</u>
Cuban anole	<u>Anolos sagrei stejnegeri</u>
Mangrove water snake	<u>Natrix fasciata compressicauda</u>
Rough green snake	<u>Opheodrys aestivus</u>
Eastern indigo snake	<u>Drymarchon corals couperi</u>
Red rat snake	<u>Elaphe guttata guttata</u>
Keys mud turtle	<u>Kinosternon b. bauri</u>
Atlantic loggerhead turtle	<u>Carretta carretta carretta</u>
American crocodile	<u>Crocodylus acutus</u>

Green tree frog  
Squirrel tree frog  
Cuban tree frog  
Southern toad  
Giant toad  
Narrow-mouthed toad

Hyla cinerea  
Hyla squirella  
Hyla septentrionalis  
Bufo terrestris  
Bufo marinus  
Gastrophryne carolinensis

## Birds

Great blue heron  
Great white heron  
Little blue heron  
Great egret  
Turkey vulture  
Red-shouldered hawk  
American kestrel  
Semipalmated plover  
Piping plover  
Wilson's plover  
Black-bellied plover  
Ruddy turnstone  
Willet  
Least sandpiper  
Dowitchers  
Semipalmated sandpiper  
Sanderling  
Herring gull  
Ring-billed gull  
Laughing gull  
Foster's tern  
Least tern  
Royal tern  
Sandwich tern  
Black skimmer  
White-crowned pigeon  
Ground dove  
Mangrove cuckoo  
Belted kingfisher  
Gray kingbird  
Brown thrasher  
Blue-gray gnatcatcher  
Black-whiskered vireo  
Yellow-rumped warbler  
Prairie warbler  
Palm warbler

Ardea herodias  
Ardea herodias occidentalis  
Egretta caerulea  
Casmerodius albus  
Cathartes aura  
Buteo lineatus  
Falco sparverius  
Charadrius semipalmatus  
Charadrius melanotos  
Charadrius wilsonia  
Pluvialis squatarola  
Arenaria interpres  
Catoptrophorus semipalmatus  
Calidris minutilla  
Limnodromus sp.  
Calidris pusilla  
Calidris alba  
Larus argentatus  
Larus delawarensis  
Larus atricilla  
Sterna fosteri  
Sterna albifrons  
Sterna maxima  
Sterna sandvicensis  
Rynchops niger  
Columba leucocephala  
Columbina passerina  
Coccyzus minor  
Megacyrle alcyon  
Tyrannus dominicensis  
Toxostoma rufum  
Piloptila caerulea  
Vireo altiloquus  
Dendroica coronata  
Dendroica discolor  
Dendroica palmarum

Common yellowthroat	<u>Geothlypis trichas</u>
House sparrow	<u>Passer domesticus</u>
Red-winged blackbird	<u>Agelaius phoeniceus</u>
Common gackle	<u>Quiscalus quiscula</u>
Cardinal	<u>Cardinalis cardinalis</u>
Mammals	
Opposum	<u>Didelphis marsupialis</u>
Raccoon	<u>Procyon lotor</u>
Marsh rabbit	<u>Sylvilagus palustris hefneri</u>
Hispid cotton rat	<u>Sigmodon hispidus</u>
Key deer	<u>Odocoileus virginianus clavium</u>

(From: Schomer and Drew, 1982; Lazell, 1984; and field observations.)

#### 4. Coral Patch Reef

There are reef-like buildups as far north as Georgia on the Atlantic coast, but three dimensional, living, coral reefs are restricted to the tropical waters of the Florida Keys in North America.

Narrow tolerances in such factors as substrate, light, temperature and sediment limit distribution within the broader geographic zone, as well as within a local area. Corals develop best where bare limestone sea floor is in close proximity to the Gulf Stream that provides nutrients and stable temperatures. The bare limestone provides a point of attachment for the early colonizers. As the pioneers die, their skeletal remains furnish new ground for additional colonization. This process of building up and tearing down keeps the community in a constant state of change and imparts a distinctive character to the geological profile of the area.

The Florida Reef Tract parallels the Florida Keys island chain and reaches optimum development in the deeper waters, seaward of Hawk's Channel and landward of the Straits of Florida. The Florida Keys archipelago lies between the large lagoonal system of Florida Bay and the oceanic waters of the Atlantic and Gulf Stream. The configuration of the island chain significantly influences the configuration of the reefs (Ginsburg and Shinn, 1964). The reef tract is actually a narrow band of disjunct reefs with many horizontal gaps in the linear configuration. The gaps or breaks in the reef correspond with the creeks, cuts or passes between the islands of the Keys that act much like river deltas. These tidal passes facilitate mixing of the waters of Florida Bay with oceanic currents.

Florida Bay is a shallow receiving basin for run-off from the mainland. Water temperatures and salinities are extremely variable and suspended sediments are fine and easily transported. Outgoing tides carry these waters out to the reef tract. Where tidal channels cross the Keys and the line of the reef, there is a gap in the reef because reef building corals cannot tolerate the excessive sediments and fluctuating temperatures and salinities.

Japp (1984) divides the reefs into four types, based upon physical habitats and community structure patterns. The seaward most community is the bank reef. This community receives the most beneficial nutrients, displays the most diverse associations, and exhibits the most highly developed super-structure. Many of the massive, reef building corals in this community do not occur in the other community types. They thrive in the deep, clear waters and can withstand the wave surge that constantly washes the seaward edge of the formation. The seaward spur and groove configuration and the abundance of elkhorn corals (Acropora palmata) are distinctive (Shinn, 1963; Shinn et al., 1981). Looe Key Reef is a good example of the bank reef formation and exhibits well developed spur and groove formations.

The transitional reef is, as the name implies, between development from patch reef to bank reef. This community has fauna from both the bank reef and the patch reef or may also resemble well developed hardground in some areas. The transitional reef often exhibits a tendency to spur and groove formation and may in time or under more favorable conditions (higher sea level) develop into the more diverse bank reef. This type of formation also occurs on artificial substrate, such as sunken ships or other debris used to construct artificial reefs (Japp, 1984).

Patch reefs are smaller, isolated versions of the bank reef. These domed or horseshoe-shaped mounds usually lie landward of the main reef and seaward of Hawk's Channel in the area commonly referred to as the "reef flat" (Marszelak, 1982). This community assumes many variations in size, dominant species, and degree of diversity. Patch reef development in nearshore waters (landward of Hawk's Channel) is known to occur in only a few locations in the Keys.

The patch reefs in the preserve are in depths from 6 to 12 feet (2 to 4 meters) scattered along a more or less parallel axis to the Newfound Harbor Keys. The two largest are located within .6 mile (1 km.) of Big Munson Island shoreline near the western boundary of the preserve. A large cluster of smaller patches is located due south of Cooks and Hopkins Islands. Other, even smaller, more isolated patches may consist of only one or two large coral heads (colonies) surrounded by gorgonians and sponges. Most are typically ringed by sand and rubble halos that are created by the foraging activities of fish and sea urchins. These unique patch reefs lie in the "shadow" of the Newfound Harbor Keys and are thus protected from the sediments and variable temperatures and salinities of Big Pine Channel and Coupon Bight.

Species diversity and density generally increase in proportion to the size of the patch reef. Larger patches provide more niches for invertebrates and fishes. Large heads of star coral (Montastrea annularis, M. cavernosa) starlet corals (Siderastrea spp.) and to a lesser extent, the brain coral (Diploria labyrinthiformis) provide crevices and vertical relief that may rise to within a few inches of the surface. Encrusting corals, algae, soft corals and sponges colonize interstitial spaces.

The presence of a large coral head inside Coupon Bight is a unique occurrence. This colony is approximately 2 feet high and 3-4 feet wide. The deep cleft near the center divides it almost in half. Several fish species and a few small gorgonians and sponges (and in one observation, a small loggerhead sea turtle) make up the entire community. If the existence of the nearshore patch reef community on the Atlantic can be described as marginal (Japp, 1984), this small community may well be described as extraordinary. The lagoon environment is subjected to extreme variations in temperature, salinity and turbidity that presumably would inhibit large, hard coral formation, yet this colony survives and has expanded under the most adverse conditions. The origin of this colony is a subject of much speculation.

The fourth type of coral community is the live bottom or hardground (referred to in this plan as hardbottom). This association is dominated by scattered colonies of corals, gorgonians, sponges, and algae that colonize exposed portions of the limestone bedrock or reef rubble. Hardbottom communities are extremely diverse in distribution and numbers of organisms within a given area. They may contain reef-building species but other environmental conditions (substrate, water depth, sediment loads, currents, etc.) do not favor more extensive patch reef development at the present time. As environmental or biological conditions change, portions of the hardbottom could evolve to patch reefs or be displaced by marine grassbeds. Grassbeds are frequently dispersed throughout this community on substrates with deeper sediments. (Although generally included in the coral reef communities, the hardground community is a major component of the preserve's resources and is discussed in a separate section of this chapter.)

The major structural and biological foundations of the patch reef community are the colonial corals that separate calcium carbonate from sea water and construct a stony skeleton. Corals are members of the phylum Cnidaria which includes such organisms as jellyfish, sea anemones, and hydrozoans. Two classes of Cnidaria are principal colonial forms associated with or responsible for producing reefs, the Hydrozoa and the Anthozoa. The Hydrozoa are represented by the fire corals or stinging corals. The Anthozoa contain two subclasses, the Octocorallia, the soft corals (e.g. whipcorals, sea feathers and sea fans) and the Zoantharia. Within the Zoantharia subclass is the order Scleractinia, containing the true stony corals (brain coral, star coral, etc.) (Barnes, 1974). The characteristics common to each subclass are the capability to secrete a calcareous skeleton and functional autotrophy (self-production).

The Scleractinia are the reef builders. Although many colonies are only several inches in diameter, larger forms may reach dimensions of up to 8 feet, often referred to as coral 'heads'. The living coral tissue inhabits only the external surface of the head. The individual polyp secretes a cup or calice that provides shape and protection for the individual. As the colony grows, the calices of members of the same species join and the colony assumes a distinctive configuration and coloring. Thus the particular species is often easily identifiable by the visual appearance of the colony as a whole. Some appear relatively smooth and spherical, such as the starlet coral (Siderastrea siderea), and others may be grooved, such as the brain coral (Diploria labyrinthiformis), or still others may form finger-like projections, such as the finger corals (Porites spp.).

Over many generations, stony corals have laid down massive limestone skeletons and sediments that add relief to the sea floor and may rise to within a few feet or even inches of the water's surface. Major reef building species of the patch reef community within the preserve are star coral (Montastraea annularis), cavernous star coral (M. cavernosa), starlet coral and the brain corals. Table 8 provides a partial list of faunal species of the patch reefs.

Coral tissues are host to dinoflagellate zooxanthellae (microscopic algae) that live symbiotically within each coral polyp. Zooxanthellae, like other plants are capable of producing their own food. Using solar energy, they build protein, carbohydrates and other complex compounds from carbon dioxide, nitrates, and phosphates obtained from the surrounding sea water and the host. The algae provide self-sustaining nourishment and contribute to the oxygen requirements of the coral host. The corals capture plankton and other mobile fauna with their tentacles and their metabolic waste products provide some of the basic structural compounds for the algae in return. If environmental influences (heat, cold, disease, pollution, etc.) are adverse, the coral polyps may expel the zooxanthellae and the coral colony will die. This symbiotic relationship is only one of many that occur in the patch reef community.

Other fauna include the "soft" corals or gorgonians. The sea whips (Pseudopterogorgia acerosa), sea fingers (Briareum asbestinum), and sea fans (Gorgonia flabellum) are only a few that colonize reef rubble and are a major element of the hardbottom area that often adjoins the patch reef community. Each of these individual colonies supports a characteristic flora and fauna of their own. Grazing often eliminates these (and other) species closest to the reef and creates the "halo" of bare rubble and coarse sediment that encircles a patch reef. The sediment and reef rubble is eventually cemented by physical and biological agents and becomes suitable substrate for reef expansion (Ogden et al., 1973).

Infaunal organisms that inhabit the patch reef include boring and burrowing sponges (Cliona sp.), gephyrid worms, urchins (Centrechinus and Echinometra spp.), and numerous bivalves, barnacles and crabs. The corals provide some of

these organisms with substrate for attachment and access to nutrients. Several species of invertebrates and fishes feed directly upon coral polyps and are a major component of the biologically erosive forces that tear down the reef as it is being built. Still others, such as the encrusting corals, play important roles in consolidating reef rubble and sediments for colonization by other organisms.

The macrofauna of the reef are more colorful and diverse than in any other marine environment. The coral formations provide protection and shelter for small shrimp, crabs, fish, and several species of lobster, including (Panulirus argus), the spiny lobster of commercial interest. The larger predators of the reef include the often spectacularly colored schools of fishes that prey upon invertebrates and smaller individuals of their own kind. The most frequently observed larger predators on the reef include the barracuda (Sphyraena barracuda) and moray eel (Gymnothorax spp.). The nurse shark (Ginglymostoma cirratum), primarily a scavenger, is a common shark of the shallow water patch reefs and is seldom a threat to man, unless stepped upon or harassed.

Many of the larger predators are important species for local fisheries. The groupers (Epinephelus spp. and Mycteroperca spp.), snappers (Lutjanus spp. and Ocyurus chrysurus), grunts (Haemulon spp.) and jacks (Caranx spp.) account for a large percentage of the commercial finfish landings in the county. Spiny lobster is also a prime target and the harvest averages 4-5 million pounds a year (NMFS, 1981, 1985, 1986). Ballyhoo (Hemiramphus brasiliensis), a small omnivorous species, is also an economically important bait fish that inhabits coral reef areas.

Trophic levels and dependency upon other communities may be highly specialized. Zooplankton is an important energy source for larval stages of most of the reef species and a primary food source for several adult species. The adult anchovies, herrings, silversides, cardinalfish, chromis, and others are schooling species that feed upon zooplankton. Other fish species of the coral reefs depend upon marine grassbeds for feeding during juvenile life stages. The grassbeds also provide cover for the fry and fingerlings. As they become larger and can no longer hide in the grass, they seek refuge and feed from the relative safety of the reef. Conversely, many adults of a species utilize the reef for temporary refuge and feed almost exclusively in the grassbeds. The nocturnal foraging of the grunts and snappers is a good example of this type of energy partitioning. These fish rest on the reef during the day and feed in the grassbeds at night. These species and others facilitate the dispersal of energy from one community to another in the form of standing biomass and imported nutrients in feces that are dropped over the patch reef (Zieman, 1982).

The productivity of coral reefs has been compared to that of tropical rain forests and considered by some to be the most productive ecosystem on earth (Sournia, 1977). Although qualitative research for south Florida reefs has not been extensive enough to be conclusive, some interesting comparisons seem to reinforce this

supposition. The annual overall productivity of a small reef in the Pacific was estimated to be 846 grams dry weight per square meter (g dry wt/m<sup>2</sup>) with a net gain of 2 g Carbon/m<sup>2</sup> per day (Odum and Odum, 1955). In comparison, red mangrove leaf biomass averages between 700 and 800 g/m<sup>2</sup> (Odum and Heald, 1975) and leaf biomass of turtle grass on Florida's east coast may average 125-800 g dry wt/m<sup>2</sup> (Zieman 1975; from Japp, 1984)

The primary productivity of each of these different environments is further enhanced when in close proximity to each other. The transfer of nutrients between organisms is often quicker and with less opportunity for loss of energy in the transfer from one level to another. The snapper may rest during the day and forage the grassbeds in relative safety during the night. The grouper and moray need not expend large amounts of energy to pursue and capture prey. They lie in wait in safety and concealment for the unwary meal. Many of the reef species need not ambulate at all. They need only to extend their tentacles to capture sustenance. Thus, the net effect of coral reef ecology is to provide a highly diverse and efficient energy resource within a relatively compact area.

Plants of the patch reef are almost exclusively represented by the coraline algae. Small mounds of coral rubble or bare skeleton provide attachment for Hamimeda, Rhizocephalus, Udotia and Caulerpa species. A large group of filamentous and boring algae are also present but less conspicuous than the fleshier, upright forms (Humm and Wicks, 1980). Densely consolidated substrate, grazing, and competition with sedentary faunal organisms generally limits the abundance of floral species.

These small patch reefs are subject to stress from several sources. Extreme or extended drops in atmospheric temperatures during winter cold fronts quickly cools shallow waters and as surf temperature falls, some die-off of corals and other species is usually evident. Inversely, warming of nearshore waters is evident during late summer and early fall. Coupled with low tides and calm waters, upper portions of coral heads may be severely stressed. Sediments from adjacent areas may also blanket the reefs during heavy storm activity. Heavy sediment loads can literally smother the coral community.

Environmental changes that favor proliferation of one species of organism may well signify the doom of others. Phytoplankton blooms (red tides) may cause heavy fish mortality. Black band disease and coral 'bleaching' are now prevalent phenomena in the Keys' reef and investigative studies have only begun to determine the causes and possible remedies for these maladies. The patch reefs in Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve are existing in marginal conditions and excessive pressures from human activities may be the deciding factor in their survival.

## Cultural and Historic Significance of Coral Reefs

Modern technology has placed this once mysterious world within the reach of a population that can experience first hand it's profound beauty and biological richness. However, these same conveniences have placed additional stress on an extremely sensitive ecosystem that exists at the northern most limits of it's range. The activities of man are potentially the most destructive to the reefs. Many have been destroyed and others are precariously balanced between survival and extinction. Overuse, overharvesting, carelessness and ignorance of the physical and biological requirements of the system are the major causes of decline of the reefs in many areas. Both direct and external impacts are of imminent concern to those who manage for and benefit from this bountiful resource. Hopefully, through education and protective measures this rare and sensitive resource may be preserved for the enjoyment and enrichment of many generations to come.

The coral reef communities of the Florida Keys are truly a unique resource for several reasons. They have played a very important part in the biological, geological, historic and cultural makeup of this small geographic area and they represent the Keys' most valuable economic and natural resources. Culturally, this intricate assemblage of invertebrates and fishes represents many things to many people. It has been a dreaded navigational hazard to mariners, and object of artistic and scientific interest and a bountiful provider of sustenance to many cultures, both ancient and modern.

The early native Indians and Bahamian fisherman exploited the abundant fish and turtles and salvaged the cargos of unfortunate sailing ships that were dashed upon the treacherous reefs. The somewhat sketchy but colorful exploits of the pirates who plundered the treasure laden ships of the Spanish fleets were also to become an indelible page in the Keys' history. Later, the descendants of these enterprising sailors and the immigrants from the Bahamas and Cuba were to become permanent colonizers of this chain of islands. The ever present threat to navigation, the tropical growing climate and the rich bounty of the sea were the mainstay of a culture devoted to ship salvage ("wreckers"), citrus and pineapple plantations, and the sponge, turtle and fishing industries. (Carter, 1976) (Eyster, 1987)

The 1900's brought many changes to both the culture and their utilization of the areas natural resources. A chain of lighthouses on the reef edge guided vessels on a safer course. Blight and more productive ports in Cuba soon usurped the agricultural markets and declining numbers of turtles and sponging grounds eliminated those industries as sources of subsistence. Motorized vessels and improved fishing methods were to become the basis for an ever expanding fishery. Flagler's railroad and a developing tourist industry on the mainland soon lured hundreds and then thousands to the tranquil splendor of the Keys. The railroad was eventually replaced with a roadway and bridges after the Labor Day Hurricane of 1935. The Overseas Highway would accommodate ever increasing numbers of

tourists and fisherman. Coupled with the tropical climate and year round abundance, both the commercial and sport fisheries flourished (Martin, 1949; Dean, 1982).

In the last half of this century, improved snorkel and scuba equipment has added an even more exciting dimension to the local tourist industry. A short, comfortable boat ride will deposit visitors in the clear, warm waters to observe the natural wonders of the reef first hand. The awe inspiring formations and animated fish are even accessible to many others who are less adventuresome and may prefer the experience of observing from the comfort of one of the many glass-bottomed boats that make several daily trips to the reef tract. Commercial dive operations, tour boats, and other tourist accommodations cater to several million visitors a year. The dive industry contributes substantially to the local economy and employs a substantial number of the local and seasonal residents. Whether it be snorkeling, photography, diving, fishing or academic study, the visitor is almost always assured of a most unique and rewarding experience.

The Keys have been recognized as a major sport fishing destination for nearly a century. Income from the sport (recreational) fishery is a major contributor to the local economy, including guide services, charter boats, bait, fuel, food, ice and taxidermy services that are procured from local businesses. This income is generally lumped with the tourist industry data and it is therefore difficult to assign a dollar amount to these services. The most recent estimates by the National Marine Fisheries Service suggests that a minimum of 146 million dollars was spent on sports fishing in 1986-87 (NMFS, 1988).

The commercial fishery is probably the third most important industry in the county. Commercial harvest of lobster and finfish alone represented nearly \$13,000,000 to Monroe County in 1989 (FDNR, 1989). Boat yards, fuel, ice, transportation and processing facilities are accessory industries that employ additional workers who are indirectly dependent upon the fishery.

Commercial tropical fish collecting and sponging are currently expanding industries. There are approximately 60 firms in south Florida that are involved in the aquarium marine life industry and it is predicted to expand by 10-15% each year (Young, 1989; Wheaton, 1989). Harvest and income from commercial sponging fluctuates drastically. From 1962 to 1979 landings were reduced by almost half (40,000 pounds to 21,000 pounds, respectively) (Stevely et al., 1978). In 1984 approximately 23,017 pounds of sponges were landed with an estimated value of \$228,844 (NMFS, 1984). In 1989 there were 298,550 pounds of sponges landed in Monroe County. The estimated value for that year was \$ 5,424,798 (FDNR, 1989).

'Live rocks' (or reef rock, mat rock, etc.) are fragments of limestone with the living organisms attached. These 'mini environments' support algae, soft and hard corals, as well as, many of the epifaunal and infaunal species associated with the

coral reef and hardbottom communities. One firm in Monroe County estimated that their annual export of 'live rock' was 80,000 pounds per year (Young, 1989). Live rock harvesting is currently banned in state waters but is still conducted in federal waters outside protected areas.

### Impacts Associated with Resource Use

The financial interests of both the fisheries and tourist industries are inextricably linked to the presence and products of the reef tract. Yet many residents, scientists, fisherman, divers, and environmentalists have expressed concern for the past and present pressures and stresses exerted upon this unique environment. Some reefs have been reduced to mounds of inanimate rubble by the activities of treasure salvors and negligent or accidental vessel grounding. Still others have been impoverished by coral and tropical fish collecting, overuse, over fishing, and the indiscriminate destruction of corals by careless or uniformed divers and snorkelers who stand on, touch or break coral formations that have taken decades to form.

Careless boat operation in shallow water and damages from misplaced boat anchors are a major concern in many of the more popular areas (Davis, 1977). Pleasure boat registrations for Dade County doubled in the period between 1964 and 1978. Registrations for Monroe County quadrupled during the same time period and that pattern is likely to continue as the regional population increases (Mathis et al., 1979). Currently (1989-1990), Monroe County has registered 19,053 boats and Dade County has registered 49,360 boats (FDNR, 1990). Many of those registered in Dade County are used in the Keys. New arrivals or part-time residents may be first time boat owners and most are ill equipped for navigation in the shallow waters and around the barely submerged reefs. Without major efforts to educate the boating public, improved navigational aids, and additional mooring buoys, damage from boat groundings and anchoring in the coral will undoubtedly increase in proportion to the number of boats utilizing an area.

Fishing methods and equipment also impact reefs. Lobster trap placement and retrieval methods account for considerable damage to corals. Traps may be placed on corals or so near the patch reefs that buoy lines are entangled and chaff coral heads with wave movement. Wave surge from tropical storms and hurricanes transports traps and they are often dragged into coral formations when placed in close proximity to the seaward side of the reefs. This type of damage was typical in the preserve after the passage of a minor storm (Kate) in November, 1985. Mechanized trap pullers are also a problem. Traps being retrieved may be dragged along the bottom and corals may be broken and large heads completely overturned. This type of damage is unfortunately, quite common. Chuffed, broken, or overturned colonies are subject to disease, predation and displacement by other organisms.

Hook and line fishing impacts include terminal tackle (hooks, wire leader and lead weights) and monofilament line that become entangled in hard and soft corals. Chaffing damage is similar to that caused by trap lines. This method of fishing is limited in selectivity and undersized or unwanted fish are subjected to varying amounts of trauma before release. Discarded or lost fishing nets are also found entangled in the reefs, mangroves and on beaches. Monofilament and nets also present often lethal hazards to marine turtles, mammals and wading birds.

Spearfishing is more selective than hook and line or net fishing. The target species are typically the large predators such as the snappers and groupers. The reduction of large predators typically encourages population peaks of smaller prey species. Increased numbers of one size class and reduction of another, whether temporary or permanent, skews natural balances between organisms in the compact patch reef community. Larger predators (other than barracuda) are conspicuously absent on the larger reefs in the preserve.

The use of chemicals for fishing has often had catastrophic results on local coral populations. Chemicals may only temporarily interrupt local fauna or leave more permanent voids when employed on a regular basis, as was customary with sodium hypochlorite and other chemicals in the Indo-Pacific regions. The use of these chemicals may result in a high mortality of sessile invertebrates or cause the coral polyp to expel the symbiotic zooxanthellae (Johannes, 1975). Quinaldine may induce similar reactions if used improperly. This chemical is employed by local tropical marine life collectors. The state does require a special activities license for its use.

Although state law (F.S. 370.110) prohibits the taking of hard corals (Millepora spp. and the Scleractinia) and a few species of sea fans (Gorgonia ventalina and G. flabellum) from State waters, many of the octocorals (gorgonians), tropical fish, molluscs, crustaceans, anemones, and other invertebrates are less stringently regulated. Daily commercial and recreational (non-commercial) bag limits have been established for butterflyfishes and angelfishes. Gorgonians (other than those noted above) are subject to unlimited commercial harvest until federal waters are closed. Recreational collectors may harvest up to 20 individual tropical fishes and invertebrates, with no more than 5 angelfishes, nor more than 6 gorgonian colonies, and one gallon of any species of marine plants. Commercial bag limits for angelfish allow 75 per person or 150 per boat, whichever is less. Commercial harvest is limited to 75 butterflyfish (Chapter 46-42, F.S.).

There are no commercial limits specified for the remaining fish and invertebrates. Unspecified numbers of gorgonians, other invertebrates and tropical fish may be harvested with a restricted species endorsement on the state's salt water products license. Although permits are required for these activities, monitoring and regulating collectors is difficult, if not impossible, given the broad geographic extent of the State's marine waters. Intensive collecting of a single species may eliminate that

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\$ 6 245 00 Coupon Bight aquatic preserve management plan 'b adopted January  
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State Lands. %  
\$ 7 260 [Tallahassee] : 'b Dept. of Natural Resources, 'c [1992]. %  
\$ 8 300 198 p. : 'b maps ; 'c 28 cm. %  
\$ 9 504 Includes bibliographical references (175-188). %  
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\$ 12 650 0 Aquatic resources 'z Florida 'z Coupon Bight. %  
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species from a small patch reef. The ecological repercussions are problematic but each organism fills a particular biological niche and mass alteration of community structure would affect other organisms that interact with the target species (e.g. predator/prey, parasitic, symbiotic, and mutualistic relationships).

The more obvious disturbances are not the only threat to underwater resources. As thousands of new residents and tourists come to south Florida and the Keys, so does new construction of homes, resorts, roads, marinas, and facilities for disposal of the tons of solid and liquid wastes of an expanding population. Upland run-off contains heavy metals, petroleum, pesticides and other chemicals that pollute nearshore waters and are dispersed to the reef either by waves and currents or through the food chain. Heavy metal (mercury, zinc, lead, and cobalt) concentrations in sediments and corals have been reported off southeast Florida by Manker (1975). Evidence from studies on the effects of petroleum hydrocarbons (PHCs) has determined that these substances are detrimental to corals and that massive or chronic concentrations would also be harmful to other organisms (Japp, 1984). Long term, low level concentrations of PHCs have been correlated to low reproductive success in corals (Loya and Rinckevich, 1980). Other chemicals may be quickly diluted and dispersed, therefore more difficult to detect and the long-term effects more difficult to predict.

Septic effluent is also transported well away from the point of origin and this customary method of sewage disposal has caused much controversy and concern for the health of the reefs. The porous limestones of the Keys do not retain the effluent long enough for adequate decomposition to occur (Bight et al., 1981). Tidal activity, currents, and wind easily transport seepage from surface water drainage and contaminated sediments to nearshore and offshore areas. Likewise, the deep and shallow well injection of inadequately treated sewage has proliferated without sufficient knowledge of the particular geological features of the injection site (Lapointe, 1989). Deep strata test boring has been primarily limited to the mainland of Florida and little testing has been done in the Keys. Information on the vertical and lateral movement of injected materials and the final disposition of these substances and their mutant byproducts is speculative without further research.

Liveaboard vessels and other boats contribute additional sources of sewage effluent and chemicals. Most pleasure boats do not have marine toilets or holding tanks. Anchorages and open water areas attract more seasonal and permanent live aboard boaters each year. In the absence of enforceable ordinances, holding facilities and sewage pumpout stations, most of the waste is pumped or dumped overboard. Chemicals associated with boat operation and maintenance include bottom paints, cleaners, sewage treatment chemicals, carbon monoxide, and hydrocarbons.

The geologic strata, tidal regime, currents, thermal stratification, chemistry and marine flora and fauna all interact with human occupation of the coastal zone. The

ultimate effect upon the biological resources are at best poorly understood and long-term research and monitoring will reveal the foresight or folly of present activities, trends and attitudes towards the protection and conservation of the coral reefs and the productivity of all marine systems. The true value of this unique resource cannot be fully appreciated by its many benefactors without some knowledge of the delicate balances and natural processes and relationships that exist within this community association. Neither can the long term survival of the reefs, as we know them, be guaranteed without adequate research to determine the point at which the system can realistically recover from natural catastrophe and the cumulative impacts of man.

TABLE 8  
A PARTIAL LIST OF THE PATCH REEF FAUNA

VERTEBRATES

Mammals

Atlantic bottle-nosed dolphin	<u>Tursiops truncatus</u>
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Reptiles

Atlantic ridley turtle	<u>Lepidochelys kempi</u>
Atlantic hawksbill turtle	<u>Eretmochelys imbricata</u>
Loggerhead turtle	<u>Caretta caretta caretta</u>
Green turtle	<u>Chelonia mydas</u>

Fishes

Ocean surgeon	<u>Acanthurus bahianus</u>
Doctorfish	<u>Achirurgus sp.</u>
Blue tang	<u>Achirurgus coeruleus</u>
Barred cardinalfish	<u>Apogon binotatus</u>
Flamefish	<u>Apogon maculatus</u>
Belted cardinalfish	<u>Apogon townsendi</u>
Trumpetfish	<u>Aulostomus maculatus</u>
Orangespotted filefish	<u>Cantherhines pullus</u>
Slender filefish	<u>Monacanthus tuckeri</u>

Bar jack	<u>Caranx ruber</u>
Queen angelfish	<u>Holacanthus ciliaris</u>
Gray angelfish	<u>Pomacanthus arcuatus</u>
Roughhead blenny	<u>Acanthemblemaria aspera</u>
Wrasse blenny	<u>Hemiemblemaria simulus</u>
Neon goby	<u>Gobiosoma oceanops</u>
Bridled goby	<u>Coryphopterus glaucofraenum</u>
Masked goby	<u>Coryphopterus personatus</u>
Goldspot goby	<u>Gnatholepis thompsoni</u>
Hovering goby	<u>Ioglossus helena</u>
Herrings	<u>Clupeidae</u>
Bermuda chub	<u>Kyphosus sectatrix</u>
Spanish hogfish	<u>Bodianus rufus</u>
Slippery dick	<u>Halichoeres bivittatus</u>
Yellowhead wrasse	<u>Halichoeres granoti</u>
Hogfish	<u>Lachnolaimus maximus</u>
Clown wrasse	<u>Halichoeres maculipinna</u>
Puddingwife	<u>Halichoeres radiatus</u>
Bluehead wrasse	<u>Thalassoma bifasciatum</u>
Schoolmaster snapper	<u>Lutjanus apodus</u>
Mutton snapper	<u>Lutjanus analis</u>
Gray snapper	<u>Lutjanus griseus</u>
Yellowtail snapper	<u>Ocyurus chrysurus</u>
Spotted goatfish	<u>Pseudupeneus maculatus</u>
Glassy sweeper	<u>Pempheris schombureki</u>
Sergeant major	<u>Abudefduf saxatilis</u>
Yellowtail damselfish	<u>Microspathodon chrysurus</u>
Dusky damselfish	<u>Pomacentrus fuscus</u>
Beaugregory	<u>Pomacentrus leucostictus</u>
Bicolor damselfish	<u>Pomacentrus parititus</u>
Threespot damselfish	<u>Pomacentrus planifrons</u>
Cocoa damselfish	<u>Pomacentrus variabilis</u>
Porkfish	<u>Anisotremus virginicus</u>
Tomtate	<u>Haemulon aurolineatum</u>
Caesar grunt	<u>Haemulon carbonarium</u>
Smallmouth grunt	<u>Haemulon Chrysargyreum</u>
French grunt	<u>Haemulon flavolineatum</u>
Spanish grunt	<u>Haemulon macrostomum</u>
White grunt	<u>Haemulon plumieri</u>
Bluestriped grunt	<u>Haemulon sciurus</u>
Midnight parrotfish	<u>Scarus coeruleus</u>
Blue parrotfish	<u>Scarus croicensis</u>
Striped parrotfish	<u>Scarus guacamaia</u>
Rainbow parrotfish	<u>Scarus vetula</u>
Queen parrotfish	

Redband parrotfish	<u>Sparisoma aurofrenatum</u>
Redtail parrotfish	<u>Sparisoma chrysopterum</u>
Redfin parrotfish	<u>Sparisoma rubripinne</u>
Bucktooth parrotfish	<u>Sparisoma radians</u>
Spotlight parrotfish	<u>Sparisoma viride</u>
Cubbyu	<u>Equetus umbrosus</u>
Reef croaker	<u>Odontoscion dentex</u>
Barred hamlet	<u>Hypoplectrus puella</u>
Butter hamlet	<u>Hypoplectrus unicolor</u>
Graysby	<u>Epinephelus cruentatus</u>
Red grouper	<u>Epinephelus morio</u>
Nassau grouper	<u>Epinephelus atraeus</u>
Black grouper	<u>Mycteroperca bonaci</u>
Harlequin bass	<u>Serranus tigrinus</u>
Sucereye porgy	<u>Calamus calamus</u>
Jolthead porgy	<u>Calamus bajonado</u>
Great barracuda	<u>Sphyraena barracuda</u>
Sharpnose puffer	<u>Canthigaster rostrata</u>

## INVERTEBRATES

Porifera (Sponges)  
 Variable sponge  
 Tube spong  
 Chickenliver sponge

Anthosigmella varians  
Callisymporia vaginalis  
Chondrilla nucula  
Chondrosia collectrix  
Cinachyra cavernosa

Boring sponge  
 Heavenly sponge  
 Finger sponges  
 Vase sponges

Cliona spp.

Geodia gibberosa

Haliclona spp.

Ircinia spp.

Neopetrosia longlevi

Spheciophongis vesparia

Spongia graminea

Tedania ignis

Tethya sp.

Verongia longissima

Loggerhead sponge  
 Fire sponge  
 Candle sponge

## Cnidaria

Hydrozoa  
 Encrusting stinging coral

Millepora alcicornis

Scyphozoa  
 Moon Jelly fish

Aurelia aurita

Stinging jellyfish  
Comb jellyfish  
Portugeuse man-of-war  
  
By the wind sailor

Dactylometra quinguecirra  
Mnemiopsis spp.  
Physalia physalis  
Sertularia inflata  
Velella velella

Anthozoa  
Octocorallia (soft corals)  
Corky seafingers  
Eunicea  
  
Venus seafan  
Common seafan  
Sea rods

Briareum asbestinum  
Eunicea knighti  
Eunicea succinea  
Gorgia flabellum  
Gorgia ventalina  
Plexaura flexuosa  
Plexaurella dichotomata  
Plexaurella fusifera  
Plexaurella nutans  
Pseudoplexaura flagellosa  
Pseudoplexaura porosa  
Pseudopterogorgia acerosa  
Pseudopterogorgia americana  
Pterogorgia anceps

Purple sea plume  
Slimy sea plume  
Angular sea whip

Hexacorallia  
Actiniarians (Sea anemones)

Bartholomea annulata  
Bundosoma cavernata  
Condylactis gigantea

Madreporarians (Stony corals)  
Sheet (lettuce) coral  
Ivory tube coral  
Knobby brain coral  
Grooved brain coral  
Smooth brain coral  
Flower coral  
Golfball coral  
Rose coral  
Mountainous star coral  
Cavernous star coral  
Large flower coral  
Ivory bush coral  
Mustardhill coral  
Finger coral

Agaricia spp.  
Cladocora arbuscula  
Diploria clivosa  
Diploria labyrinthiformis  
Diploria strigosa  
Eusmilia spp.  
Favia fragum  
Manicina areolata  
Montastraea annularis  
Montastraea cavernosa  
Mussa angulosa  
Oculina diffusa  
Porites asterooides  
Porites furcata

Clubbed finger coral	<u>Porites porites</u>
Rough starlet coral	<u>Siderastrea radians</u>
Smooth starlet coral	<u>Siderastrea siderea</u>
Annelids	
Tube worm	<u>Arabella</u> sp.
Green bristle worm	<u>Cistenides</u> sp.
Banded feather dusters	<u>Eunice</u> spp. <u>Hermodice carunculata</u> <u>Loimia</u> sp. <u>Sabellidae</u> spp.
Molluscs	
Cerith	<u>Adoria</u> sp.
White ark	<u>Cerithium</u> spp.
Chiton	<u>Barbatia</u> sp.
Scallop	<u>Chiton</u> sp.
Triton	<u>Chlamys</u> spp.
Cowrie	<u>Cymatium</u> spp.
Spiny lima	<u>Cypraea</u> spp.
Burrowing mussel	<u>Lima lima</u>
Miter shell	<u>Lithophaga</u> spp.
Tulip mussel	<u>Mitra</u> spp.
Murex	<u>Modiolus americanus</u>
Joubin's octopus	<u>Murex</u> spp.
Octopus	<u>Octopus joubini</u>
Pectin	<u>Octopus vulgaris</u>
Pearl oyster	<u>Pectin</u> sp.
Pin shell	<u>Pinctada radiata</u>
Reef squid	<u>Pinna carneae</u>
Slender chiton	<u>Sepioteuthis sepioidea</u>
Queen conch	<u>Stenoplax floridana</u>
Fighting conch	<u>Strombus gigas</u>
Hawk wing	<u>Strombus pugilis</u>
Speckled tellin	<u>Strobos raninus</u>
	<u>Tellina listeri</u>
Arthropods	
Barnacles	<u>Balanus</u> spp.
Snapping shrimp	<u>Lepas</u> spp.
Cleaning shrimp	<u>Alpheus</u> spp. <u>Lysmata intermedia</u>

Spiny lobster	<u>Panulirus argus</u>
Pink shrimp	<u>Penaeus</u> sp.
Pederson's cleaning shrimp	<u>Periclimenes pedersoni</u>
Slipper lobster	<u>Scyllarides nodifer</u>
Squilla	<u>Squilla</u> sp.
Banded coral shrimp	<u>Stenopus hispidus</u>
Snapping shrimp	<u>Synalpheus</u> spp.
Star-eyed hermit crab	<u>Dardanus venosus</u>
Sponge crab	<u>Dromidia</u> sp.
Blue crab	<u>Callinectes sapidus</u>
Stone crab	<u>Menippe mercenaria</u>
Spider crab	<u>Mithrax</u> sp.
Hermit crabs	<u>Paguristes</u> spp.
Hermit crabs	<u>Pagurus</u> spp.
Swimming crabs	<u>Portunus</u> spp.
Decorator crab	<u>Stenocionops furcata</u>
Arrow crab	<u>Stenorhynchus seticornis</u>

#### Echinoderms

Agassiz's sea cucumber	<u>Actinopyga agassizi</u>
Furry sea cucumber	<u>Astichopus multifidus</u>
Basket starfish	<u>Astrophyton muricatum</u>
Sea star	<u>Astropecten</u> spp.
Sea biscuit	<u>Clypeaster rosaceus</u>
Long-spined sea urchin	<u>Diadema antillarum</u>
Boring urchins	<u>Echinometra</u> spp.
Slate-pencil urchin	<u>Eucidaris tribuloides</u>
Sea cucumber	<u>Holothuria floridana</u>
Brittle star	<u>Ophiocoma echinata</u>
Bahama starfish	<u>Ophioderma</u> sp.
	<u>Oreaster reticulatus</u>

#### Chordata (Tunicates)

<u>Ascidia</u> sp.
<u>Didemnum amethysteum</u>
<u>Styela</u> sp.
<u>Symplema</u> sp.

(Opersko, 1973; Opresko, et. al., 1976; Schmall and Tilmant, 1980; Kissling IN Multer, 1977; Voss, 1976; Jaap, 1984; Voss, 1982 and Kaplan, 1982)

## 5. Hardbottom

This community association is referred to as live bottom (Jaap, 1984) or hard bottom (Voss, 1982; Marzalak et al., 1977; and others). It is generally included as a subcategory of the coral reef habitats, as described by these authors, but will be treated as a separate community association within this plan and in the resource maps, as it is a major constituent of the aquatic preserve's resources. Large portions of the Atlantic sea floor and smaller portions of the lagoon bottom are representative of this community association. Marine grassbeds, sand, and mud bars are usually intermixed with the hard bottom, occupying shallow depressions in the limestone. Distribution of macrofauna is generally scattered in random patterns and is never as compact or diverse as are grassbeds or coral reefs. Never the less, this community association supports a diverse invertebrate and vertebrate fauna and is a valuable nursery area for many sport and commercial fish species (Jaap, 1984).

The flora and fauna of this association are highly variable and contain many species of the patch reef association but are not three dimensional reef building communities. Species composition is usually dominated by algae and invertebrate species such as soft corals, sponges, and small stony corals. The algal species are well represented by the calcareous greens, Acetabularia, Batophora, Halimeda, and Udotea spp. These species are instrumental in binding sediments and the formation of calcareous sands that are the byproducts of their skeletal remains. They are also a food source for herbivorous fish and invertebrates. The brown Sargassum is also common and supports a relatively complex microcommunity within its delicate leaves and nodules.

The soft corals (octocorals or gorgonians) are often visually dominant. The most common species are the sea whips (Pterogorgia spp.), sea fan Gorgonia ventalina, sea rods (Plexaura spp.), and the sea plumes (Pseudopterogorgia spp.). Stony corals found in the live bottom communities include clubbed finger coral (Porites porites), porous coral (P. asterooides), starlet coral (Siderastrea radians), rose coral (Manicina areolata), lobed star coral (Solenastrea hyades), and smooth star coral (S. bournoni). These species vary from a few inches to a foot in height. Colonies of clubbed finger corals may cover several square meters in the clear, shallow waters near shore and their skeletal remains are a large constituent of the "sand" beach and the bars between the Newfound Harbor Keys.

The sponges are also well represented in the hardbottom community. Dominance of this group in areas of the lagoon prompted Lineback (1968) to refer to those areas as the "sandy bottom-sponge community". The most prevalent species are the chicken liver sponge (Chondrilla nucula), vase sponge (Ircinia campana), cake sponge (I. etherea), stinking sponge (I. felix), the little blue heavenly sponge (Dysidea etherea), the large loggerhead sponge (Spheciospongia vesparia), and the tube sponges (Aplysina cauliformis and Callispongia spp.). Both sponges and

octocorals are host or prey to a wide variety of organisms that live on or in their framework. Both groups glean sustenance from the surrounding water and in doing so act as filtering mechanisms to remove minute particles and nutrients from the water.

Motile fauna of the hardbottom include many invertebrates and fishes of both the patch reef and seagrass communities. This area provides microhabitats for many juvenile fishes as well as infaunal organisms that tunnel the shallow sediments. Marine turtles are also quite frequently observed feeding or resting in these areas. The hawksbill turtle is especially fond of sponges which may comprise as much as 95 percent of its diet (Weiss, 1988).

Marked zonation of the hardbottom communities is evident between the open ocean and lagoon environments. The Atlantic bottom community exhibits large beds of porites corals near the shorelines of Big Munson and Cooks Island and along the western end of Long Beach. Gorgonians and sargassum are abundant in deeper water. Within the Bight, sponges are more prevalent and hard corals and gorgonians are less common, except near the channel opening on the west. Howard, et al. (1970) suggests that distribution and abundance of species is predicated by tidal flow and depth of sediments. The reader is referred to previous sections on coral reefs and marine grassbeds for additional information and species lists.

#### **H. DESIGNATED SPECIES**

The many resource types within the preserve support a rich and varied population of plants and animals. Previous sections have enumerated the many material and aesthetic values accrued to man in conserving and protecting these resources. This section will discuss the often critical importance of these resources to other species of plants and animals that are endangered or threatened with extinction throughout part or all of their geographic range. In most cases, their endangerment is the direct result of man's exploitation of the natural resources of an area. Excessive harvesting, collecting, land clearing, construction, dredging, treasure salvage, ditching, the use of pesticides, and the introduction of exotic plants and animals have contributed to the decline of many of these species and will continue to stress recovery capabilities for most of them.

It shall be a major objective of this plan's management policy to identify, map, and protect the endangered and threatened species habitat within the preserve boundary and provide input in decisions that would affect known habitat of these species on adjacent lands and in marine areas. To the maximum extent possible (where biologically and economically feasible), disturbed habitats will be restored to benefit endangered and threatened species. Educational programs for the general public, organizations, and governmental agencies shall be prepared and

disseminated in hopes of informing and enlisting support for the conservation and protection of vital habitats.

The small islands in and adjacent to the preserve are host to a large number of endangered and threatened plant species. Most are tropical species of West Indies origin and one is endemic to the lower Keys. A preponderance of the listed species occur within the mangrove/saltmarsh and beach/berm communities. The numbers and degree of endangerment may well reflect the stress imposed by development in these areas. Equally devastating pressure is exerted by plant collectors and poachers whose primary objectives are the epiphytic orchids (Encyclia spp.), air plants (Tillandsia spp.), cacti (Cereus spp., Opuntia spp.), and palms (Thrinax and Coccothrinax spp.). Entire areas may be stripped of these plants. Displacement by exotic (introduced) plants is also a problem where soils have been disturbed.

The often maligned manchineel (Hippomane mancinella), a threatened species, has been totally eliminated from much of its former range in the upper Keys and in many areas of the lower Keys. The often exaggerated toxic properties of this once abundant tree were reason enough to exclude it from inhabited areas. Several large specimens still survive in the more remote wetland areas of Big Pine Key. Other less threatening or less conspicuous plants include the endangered geiger tree (Cordia sebestena), wild cotton (Gossypium hirsutum), sea lavender (Mallotonia gnaphalodes) and bay cedar (Suriana maritima). Garber's spurge (Chamaesyce garberi syn. Euphorbia garberi) is presently classified as endangered on the state list and its occurrence is limited to four known locations, one of which is near the preserve boundary on the north.

A second large group of endangered and threatened plants are found in the pineland communities of the lower Keys. One endangered species, the Big Pine Partridge Pea (Cassia keyensis), is endemic to the lower Keys pinelands. Other endangered and threatened plants from this community include the ferns (Acrostichum spp., Anemia sp., Pteris sp., Ophioglossum sp., and Vittaria sp.), and the silver palm (Coccothrinax argentata). Plant poaching, filling of freshwater wetlands, and land clearing are primary threats in these areas. Exclusion of fire in the "fire dependent" community may also be deleterious to many of the understory plant species. As more development occurs within a pineland, fire is excluded to protect property. The result is often negative for the community as a whole and may eliminate endangered and threatened species as the community succeeds to a hardwood sere (Gunderson et al., 1983).

Endangered and threatened hardwood hammock species, or small colonies of these species are generally dispersed randomly throughout a hammock. This 'clumping' is often overlooked by those who clear land for development. The generally small building lots are usually cleared of all vegetation to provide a buiding

site and yard area. This practice may eliminate an individual or an entire colony of an already limited species.

Table 9 provides a partial species list of plants considered to be endangered or threatened by 1) Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the official State list (Preservation of Native Flora of Florida Act, Florida Statutes, Section 581.185, 1978); 2) Rare (R), endangered (E), threatened (T), and species of special concern (SSC) from the Florida Committee on Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals (FCREPA) list; and 3) Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida series (P.C.H. Pritchard, ed.). One cactus on the list, (*Cereus robinii*) is currently designated as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and 16 plants from the list are under review for federal listing.

The plant communities within and adjacent to the preserve are host to an equally diverse number of endangered and threatened animals. These areas provide food, cover, and nesting habitat for a broad range of resident animals and are equally important to several transitory species. Table 10 lists all species that could be expected to utilize various habitats within the preserve.

The endangered Key deer (*Odocoileus virginianus clavium*) is known to utilize many habitat types during daily or seasonal movements but is limited to only a few of the lower Keys islands, Big Pine having the largest population. They are excellent swimmers and are known to traverse open water between islands (Silvy, 1975). Klimstra et al., (1980) estimated mid-1970's population to have been approximately 350-400 animals. The Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge estimates current populations to be 250-300 animals (Holle, 1987). The deer travel over great distances to procure water and forage and disperse over a wider range during rut and fawning seasons. Loss of habitat and high annual mortalities from road kills, fence entanglement, free roaming dogs and drowning are major impediments to the deer's survival. Most of these factors are directly the result of human occupation of the area and will most probably be compounded as more of Big Pine Key is developed. Conservation and management of this species cannot be accomplished without close coordination and cooperation with local government planning and other resource management plans.

The crepuscular or nocturnal Key Vaca raccoon (*Procyon lotor auspicatus*), a threatened, endemic subspecies, is also an excellent swimmer and utilizes a broad range of habitats for foraging. Other than road kills, this species has few confrontations with man and may in fact benefit from man's occupation of an area. Cultivated fruit and garbage are perfectly acceptable in their diet.

Originally recorded from the island of Key Vaca (Marathon) where urban development has displaced much of its former habitat, the raccoon has expanded its range to other islands near Big Pine Key. The Key Vaca raccoon is not currently documented for the preserve area but close proximity to known habitat (No Name

Key) and the raccoon's amphibious skills would indicate the extremely high probability of eventually encountering this nomad (Lazel, 1984).

The endemic and endangered Silver rice rat (Oryzmoys arentatus) utilizes freshwater and marine wetland areas for foraging, cover, and nesting (Spitzer and Lazell, 1978). A common saltmarsh plant (Batix maritima) is a known food plant and an indicator of preferred habitat when in close proximity to freshwater (Spitzer, 1983). The rice rat has not been formerly recorded within the preserve. However, the area has not been extensively trapped to confirm presence/absence and available habitat would justify further population studies for this rodent (Spitzer-Goodyear, pers. com.)

Other species that are dependent upon freshwater wetlands and upland habitats include several species of reptiles. The threatened Big Pine Key ringneck snake (Diadophis punctatus taeniata) and Florida brown snake (Storeria dekayi victa) are endemics that are especially dependent upon freshwater wetlands within the adjacent hammocks and pinelands (Paulson, 1968 and Weaver, 1978a). A threatened subspecies, the Florida ribbon snake (Thamnophis sauritus sackeni) and the threatened Eastern indigo (Drymarchon corais couperi) utilize a variety of habitats including mangroves and saltmarsh areas (Weaver, 1978 (a)). The Red rat snake (Elaphe guttata guttata) is listed as a species of special concern in the lower Keys. Loss of suitable habitat is probably the single most important influence on their survival. Public education may be beneficial in erasing the age old prejudice towards snakes in general. All of these snakes are non-poisonous and all are beneficial to man, in that they feed upon insects and rodents that are considered vermin. Yet most of them are systematically eliminated from the environs of man out of fear or ignorance and the introduction of domestic pets.

The Key mud turtle (Kinosternon bauri bauri) and the American alligator (Alligator mississippiensis) utilize fresh and brackish wetlands for feeding, resting and raising their young. The endangered mud turtle is an elusive creature that is often difficult to find even in its known habitat. Bottoms of ponds and solution holes are often carpeted with thick layers of mud and leaf litter that offer excellent cover for this small turtle (Weaver, 1978 (b)). During periods of drought the turtle may burrow into crevices or tunnel under rocks to conserve body moisture and await the rains that replenish the pond (Dunson, 1981). The Alligator, once threatened with extinction has been successfully bred and reared in captivity. The success of alligator farming has reduced the pressure on wild populations and the state now considers the wild alligator as a species of special concern.

The American crocodile (Crocodylus acutus) is an infrequent visitor in Coupon Bight. Reported sightings are usually a case of mistaken identity (Alligator) but several reports (one with photographs) are reliable. The proximity of several other individuals on Bahia Honda Key and sporadic reports of an individual near Key West would seem to indicate that certain crocodiles are nomadic and may cover

great distances and frequent certain areas on a regular basis. The crocodile usually shuns areas of human occupation and boat traffic (Moler, per. com.) and may well find the shallow water bays and channels of the Bight a welcome haven from these disturbances.

Although no amphibian species are presently listed, it is anticipated that future research and study of local freshwater areas may reveal morphologically or physiologically unique species. The introduction of exotic species, such as the Giant marine toad (Bufo marinus) and the Cuban treefrog (Hyla septentrionalis) may possibly pose a threat to the smaller native species but the alteration of wetland environments is a much greater threat (Krakauer, 1970).

The avifauna of the area represents the largest group of listed species. All except two species on Table 10 are dependent upon wetlands for their survival. The Little blue heron (Egretta caerulea), Snowy egret (Egretta thula), Reddish egret (Egretta rufescens), Tricolored (or Louisiana) heron (Egretta tricolor), and the Roseate spoonbill (Ajaia ajaja) are currently listed as species of special concern. These colonial nesters were easy prey for the plume hunters of the early part of the century. Entire rookeries were annihilated as plume hunters killed the adult birds in breeding plumage and left chicks to die or fed them to their hogs. As the demand for plumes declined, the real estate boom began in south Florida. Thousands of acres of wetlands were drained for agriculture and residential development. Depleted breeding stocks and ever vanishing habitat brought these species and others to the brink of extinction. Loss of habitat, water management practices on the mainland, and the introduction of pesticides into the food web may still imperil the survival of many.

The Roseate tern (Sterna dougallii) and Least ern (Sterna antillarum) are known to nest in the area and both are now listed as threatened species. The roseate population consists of approximately 250-300 nesting pairs and they nest almost exclusively in the lower Keys (Robertson, 1978). Both terns favor unvegetated beaches, berms and spoil islands for nesting. Unfortunately, spoil islands and beaches are usually prime targets for development or other alteration. Development activities and ground nesting are seldom compatible. The decision to remove dredge spoil to restore historic water flow must also be weighed against the possible disruption of nesting habitat.

The Southeastern snowy plover (Charadrius alexandrinus tenuirostris) is a summer visitor to our beaches and shallow-water wetlands but does not nest here (Wofenden, 1978). This threatened species has suffered decimation in many of the Caribbean countries. Excessive hunting pressures and destruction of habitat are instrumental in population declines (Arendt et al., 1979; Wiley, 1979).

The White-crowned pigeon, threatened species, is also hunted for sport and food in many of the Caribbean countries. Excessive hunting pressures, egg collecting

and removal of tropical hardwood forests have seriously depleted resident populations in at least two countries. Cooperative agreements, closed seasons and complete protection in several areas have slowed the decline of this species. Resident populations in the Keys are protected from hunting but efforts must continue to stem the loss of tropical hardwood trees that the pigeon depends on for food. Poisonwood (Metopium toxiferum) is a favored food during the fruiting period. As the name implies, this tree has certain toxic properties that irritate sensitive human skin (and may cause more severe complications for hypersensitive persons) and it is frequently eradicated from human environs. Other less objectionable hammock trees and shrubs, such as, Pigeon plum (Coccoloba diversifolia), Snowberry (Chiococca alba), stoppers (Eugenia spp.), Wild coffee (Psychotria nervosa) and wild figs (Ficus spp.) are also staple foods. However, few of these plant species are given explicit protection under local landclearing ordinances. The pigeon feeds in the hammocks and nests in the more remote mangroves. It is shy and sensitive to human habitation or disturbance in both areas (Robertson and Kushlan, 1978; Sprunt, per. com.).

The endangered Peregrin falcon (Falco peregrinus) is a winter visitor to the Keys. Pesticides in the food chain were instrumental in the decline of this raptor. Elimination of certain insecticides and reintroduction of the peregrin are proving successful in reestablishing this species in the former range. Perched upon utility wires or hovering over open areas, it can overtake and capture other birds in midflight. It may be encountered in variety of habitats from September to May (Snyder, 1978).

Open-water piscivorous birds include the endangered Bald eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus) and the threatened Eastern brown pelican (Pelecanus occidentalis carolinensis). The eagle population has suffered a 50% decline over the last 30 years. Florida populations have dropped from 1,000 to less than 350 breeding pairs. Currently, only 2-4 pairs are thought to nest between Key Vaca and the Marquesas (Robertson, 1978). Eagles do not presently nest in the preserve but suitable feeding habitat may attract an occassional visitor.

The Eastern brown pelican has suffered a similar fate on a national level. A massive die-off in Texas and Louisiana during the 1960's prompted the federal government to list the pelican as an endangered species until 1984. It appears that local populations have remained fairly stable and the pelican has been deleted from the endangered category and it is now considered to be a species of special concern in Florida. There are 19 breeding colonies of brown pelicans in the Keys. This represents 38% of the Florida population (Schreiber, 1978). The pelican prefers more remote mangrove areas for nesting and will often join other colonial species.

The Osprey (Pandion haliaetus), which is not currently listed, may well reach threatened status if present populations continue to decline. The locally limiting

factors are thought to be availability of suitable nesting habitat and adequate food during the nesting season. The osprey is tolerant of human occupation but like the eagle, prefers large, dead trees that rise above the surrounding canopy for nesting. Hurricanes and landclearing have removed many of these suitable trees and the osprey has opted for nesting on utility poles and elevated platforms. The possible addition of artificial nesting platforms is being investigated as a means to encourage more osprey nesting. Continued protection of mangrove rookeries and the mangrove/detritus food chain are vital for the eagle, pelican, osprey and the many wading birds that depend upon fish and marine invertebrates for food.

Qualitative information on marine fishes and invertebrates are conspicuously absent from the literature. Of those listed, only the Common snook (Centropomus undecimalis) has been extensively studied. This species is a prized sport and food fish and much controversy currently rages regarding the reasons for it's decline and the appropriate measures for ensuring a return to former abundance. Pesticides spraying (EPA, 1981), habitat destruction and overharvesting are the primary concerns. Egg and larval stages of most marine species are adversely affected by insecticides. Removal of larger fish, through uncontrolled commercial or sport fishing, depletes brood stock. The effects of both were quickly evident. Destruction of mangroves and marine grassbeds are additional stresses that have negatively affected the snook statewide.

Discontinued spraying for mosquitos over aquatic preserves and federal refuges may have already contributed to higher hatch success for snook. The long term data will undoubtedly prove this policy beneficial. Closing certain areas to commercial net boats and imposing closed seasons and strict size limits for both commercial and sport fisheries may also reverse the previous trend. Current reports from professional guides and sportfisherman indicate that this is the case and that more fish are being taken in the Keys. Those over or under the size and over the bag limits should be returned to the water, uninjured.

The threatened Key silverside (Menidia conchorum) is an endemic of shallow open bays in the Big Pine Key and Cudjoe Key area. It was formerly reported near Key West but this population is thought to have been extirpated. This small (adults up to 2 inches long) fish is primarily a marine species but will tolerate freshwater (Gilbert, 1978). This and other listed fish species are adversely affected by modification or loss of habitat. Alteration of mangroves and marine grassbeds eliminates habitat and often creates turbidity that smothers eggs and clogs gills. Preservation of these and other species requires that disturbances in marine wetlands be kept to a minimum and that these areas be protected from upland drainage that introduces silt and pollution into nearshore habitats.

The marine turtles have suffered depredation similar to that described for the wading birds. The Atlantic green turtle (Chelonia mydas mydas) was once a mainstay to Keys fisherman. Shortly after the turn of the century, most of these

turtles had been eliminated from local waters. Overharvesting and egg collecting in other parts of the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico have continued to stress survival for all marine turtles. With the exception of the Atlantic loggerhead (Caretta caretta) and the Hawksbill (Eretmochelys imbricata imbricata), those listed would be considered as rare or occasional visitors to the preserve area. The endangered hawksbill may be observed occasionally in coral reef and hardbottom areas and the threatened loggerhead is a frequent visitor to the preserve.

Loss or modification of suitable nesting beaches and nest predation are major concerns in the local management of loggerhead turtles. Present efforts to locate and document turtle nesting sites within the preserve are proving successful. Nests that are not threatened by tidal inundation, vehicular traffic, poaching, or predation are left to their fate. Those nests that are in danger of being destroyed are relocated to an in-ground hatchery at Sombrero Beach by properly permitted individuals. Upon hatching, the turtles are released at or near their point of origin. The local Save-a-Turtle program and similar programs throughout the state have been highly successful in returning large numbers of hatchlings to the sea, in hopes that the survivors may return to our beaches in the future. The cooperation and vigilance of local citizens has contributed significantly to this effort.

The endangered West Indian manatee (Trichechus manatus latirostris) is an occasional visitor to the preserve area. Individual animals or small groups are often reported to appear in residential boat basins and canals during the winter months and occasionally during summer. Cool water temperatures farther north may prompt this migration out of the usual winter range. Well meant offerings of food and fresh water will often entice the manatee to linger in these areas for longer periods. This practice should be strongly discouraged, as it increases the manatee's exposure to danger from boats. Although there are no designated "manatee areas", boaters should be cautious and reduce speed when manatees are in an area. Heavy penalties are imposed for harassing or negligently injuring or killing this highly endangered species.

Invertebrates that warrant special status include several terrestrial and marine species. The four insects listed are currently under review for federal listing. Marine invertebrates of special interest include several species of corals. These species (as well as those from the deep-water reefs) have been subjected to collecting and habitat destruction in many areas of the Keys. The corals are the structural components of the reef and as such are vital to its survival. The labrynthines of the reef offer food and cover to a large variety of interesting and biologically significant species. The corals themselves are subject to many forms of disease and injury or necrosis from a variety of external forces but man's influence may be most instrumental in the decline or damage to corals in some areas.

The concern for an individual endangered species may prompt a concerted effort for preservation and has proved successful in a limited number of cases. The Peregrin falcon and the Alligator are such examples. Other efforts have proved only marginally successful. The Florida manatee has benefitted from designated sanctuaries and captive breeding efforts but the steady growth of recreational power boats still imperils this slow moving siren throughout much of it's limited range. The most recent population estimate indicates that there may be less than 1,500 individuals statewide.

Other wildlife species have not faired so well. The Florida panther and the Key deer are thought to have once lived side by side in the Keys. The panther has been extirpated from the islands and much of Florida. The deer now numbers less than 300 individuals and many are skeptical about its continued survival in the path of development. Much the same skepticism exists regarding the endemic species discussed, as well as the American crocodile and the Bald eagle. The onslaught of human populations and development leave little hope for many of these animals. Designated refuges and preserves, stringent laws and a "conservation ethic" are possibly all that separate them from extinction. Designated animal species of the preserve area are presented in Table 10 .

**TABLE 9**

**FLORAL SPECIES OF THE COUPON BIGHT AQUATIC PRESERVE AREA  
THAT ARE CLASSIFIED AS ENDANGERED, THREATENED  
OR COMMERCIALLY EXPLOITED**

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
		FDA USFWS
<u>Acacia choriophylla</u>	Tamarindillo	E
<u>Acrostichum aurem</u>	Golden leather fern	E
<u>Acrostichmu danaeifolium</u>	Giant leather fern	T
<u>Anemia adiantifolia</u>	Pine fern	T
<u>Argythamnia blodgettii</u>	Blodgett's wild mercury	UR
<u>Aristida floridana</u>	Florida three-awned grass	E UR
<u>Campyleneurum phyllitidua</u>	Strap fern	T
<u>Cassia keyensis</u>	Big Pine partridge pea	E UR
<u>Catesbea parviflora</u>	Small-flowered lilythorn	E
<u>Cereus gracilis</u>	Prickly apple cactus	E UR
<u>Cereus pentagonus</u>	Dillroe cactus	T
<u>Cereus robinii</u>	Tree cactus	E E
<u>Chamaesyce garberi</u> (= <u>Euphorbia garberi</u> )	Garber's spurge	E T

<u><i>Chrysophyllum olivaefforme</i></u>	Satinleaf	E	
<u><i>Clusea rosea</i></u>	Balsam apple	E	
<u><i>Coccothrinax argentata</i></u>	Silver palm	C	
<u><i>Cocos nucifera</i></u>	Coconut palm	T	
<u><i>Cordia sebestena</i></u>	Geiger tree	E	
<u><i>Cupania glabra</i></u>	Cupania	E	
<u><i>Encyclia boothiana</i></u>	Dollar orchid	E	UR
<u><i>Encyclia cochleata</i></u>	Clamshell orchid	T	
<u><i>Encyclia tampensis</i></u>	Butterfly orchid	T	
<u><i>Ernodia littoralis</i></u>	Beach creeper	T	
<u><i>Euphorbia porteriana</i></u> var. <u><i>keyensis</i></u>	Keys hairy-podded spurge		UR
<u><i>Gossypium hirsutum</i></u>	Wild cotton	E	
<u><i>Hippoman mancinella</i></u>	Manchineel	T	
<u><i>Hymenocallis latifolia</i></u>	Spider lily	T	UR
<u><i>Jacquinia keyensis</i></u>	Joewood	T	
<u><i>Limonium carolinianum</i></u> var. <u><i>angustatum</i></u>	Narrow-leaved sea lavender		UR
<u><i>Linum arenicola</i></u>	Sand flax	E	UR
<u><i>Mallotonia gnaphalodes</i></u> (= <u><i>Tournefortia gnaphalodes</i></u> )	Sea lavender	E	
<u><i>Melanthera parvifolia</i></u>	Small-leaved melanthera		UR
<u><i>Ophioglossum palmatum</i></u>	Hand fern	E	UR
<u><i>Opuntia compressa</i></u>	Prickly pear cactus	T	
<u><i>Opuntia cubensis</i></u>	Prickly pear cactus	T	
<u><i>Opuntia spinosissima</i></u>	Semaphore cactus	T	UR
<u><i>Opuntia stricta</i></u>	Prickly pear cactus	T	
<u><i>Ppuntia tricantha</i></u>	Three-spined prickly pear		UR
<u><i>Phyllanthus pentaphyllus</i></u>	Florida five-petaled leaf flower		UR
<u><i>Salvia blodgettii</i></u>	Blodgett's sage		UR
<u><i>Scaevola plumieri</i></u>	Scaevola or Inkberry	T	
<u><i>Strumpfia maritima</i></u>	Pride-of-Big-Pine	E	
<u><i>Suriana maritima</i></u>	Bay cedar	E	
<u><i>Swietenia mahogani</i></u>	West Indian mahogany	T	
<u><i>Thrinax floridana</i></u>	Florida thatch palm	C	
<u><i>Thrinax microcarpa</i></u>	Brittle thatch palm	C	
<u><i>Tillandsia balbisiana</i></u>	Reflexed wild pine	T	
<u><i>Tillandsia circinata</i></u> (= <i>T. paucifolia</i> )	Twisted air plant	T	
<u><i>Tillandsia fasciculata</i></u>	Wild pine or Air plant	C	
<u><i>Tillandsia flexuosa</i></u>	Banded wild pine	T	
<u><i>Tillandsia setacea</i></u>	Needle-leaved air plant	T	
<u><i>Tillandsia utriculata</i></u>	Giant air plant	C	

<u>Tillandsia valenzuelana</u>	Soft-leaved wild pine	T	
<u>Tragia saxicola</u>	Florida Keys noseburn		UR
<u>Vanilla barbellata</u>	Wormvine orchid	E	
<u>Vittaria lineata</u>	Shoestring fern	T	

Note:

FDA = Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (list published in Preservation of Native Flora of Florida Act, Section 581.185-187, Florida Statutes).

E = Endangered

T = Threatened

C = Commercially Exploited

USFWS = United States Fish and Wildlife Service (list published in List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants, 50 DFR 17.11-12).

E = Endangered

UR = Under review for federal listing

TABLE 10

**FAUNAL SPECIES OF THE COUPON BIGHT AQUATIC PRESERVE AREA THAT ARE CLASSIFIED AS ENDANGERED, THREATENED, OR OF SPECIAL CONCERN**

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
		FGFWFC USFWS
<b><u>INVERTEBRATES</u></b>		
<u>Diploria clivosa</u>	Knobby brain coral	*
<u>Diploria labyrinthiformis</u>	Grooved brain coral	*
<u>Diploria strigosa</u>	Smooth brain coral	*
<u>Montastrea annularis</u>	Small star coral	*
<u>Montastrea cavernosa</u>	Large star coral	*
<u>Siderastrea siderea</u>	Starlet coral	*
<u>Ataenius superficialis</u>	Big Pine Key Ataenius beetle	UR
<u>Belocephalus micanopy</u>	Big Pine Key Conehead katydid	UR
<u>Belocephalus sleighti</u>	Keys short-winged conehead katydid	UR
<u>Cycloptilum irregularis</u>	Keys scaly cricket	UR

## FISH

<u>Centropomus undecimalis</u>	Common snook	SSC
<u>Menidia conchorum</u>	Key silverside	T
<u>Rivulus marmoratus</u>	Rivulus	SSC
<u>Starksia starcki</u>	Key Blenny	SSC

## REPTILES

<u>Alligator mississippiensis</u>	American alligator	SSC
<u>Caretta caretta caretta</u>	Atlantic loggerhead turtle	T E
<u>Chelonia mydas mydas</u>	Atlantic green turtle	E E
<u>Crocodylus acutus</u>	American crocodile	E E
<u>Dermochelys coriacea</u>	Leatherback turtle	E E
<u>Diadophis punctatus acricus</u>	Big Pine Key ringneck snake	T UR
<u>Drymachon corais couperi</u>	Eastern indigo snake	T T
<u>Elaphe guttata guttata</u>	Red rat snake	SSC
<u>Eretmochelys i. imbricata</u>	Atlantic hawksbill turtle	E E
<u>Eumeces egregius egregius</u>	Florida Keys mole skink	SSC UR
<u>Kinosternon bauri bauri</u>	Key mud turtle	E UR
<u>Lipidochelys kempi</u>	Atlantic ridley turtle	E E
<u>Thamnophis sauritus sackeni</u>	Florida ribbon snake	T

## BIRDS

<u>Ajaja ajaja</u>	Roseate spoonbill	SSC
<u>Charadrius alexandrinus</u>	Southeastern snowy plover	T UR
<u>Columba leucocephala</u>	White-crowned pigeon	T
<u>Uregretta caerulea</u>	Little blue heron	SSC
<u>Egretta rufescens</u>	Reddish egret	SSC UR
<u>Egretta thula</u>	Snowy egret	SSC
<u>Egretta tricolor</u>	Louisiana or Tricolor heron	SSC
<u>Falco peregrinus</u>	Peregrine falcon	E T
<u>Falco sparverius paulus</u>	Southeastern Kestrel	T UR
<u>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</u>	Bald eagle	T E
<u>Pelecanus occidentalis</u>	Brown pelican	SSC
<u>Sterna antillarum</u>	Least tern	T
<u>Sterna dougallii</u>	Roseate tern	T

## MAMMALS

<u>Odocoileus virginianus clavium</u>	Deer	E	E
<u>Oryzomys argentatus</u>	Silver rice rat	E	UR
<u>Procyon lotor auspicatus</u>	Key Vaca raccoon	T	UR
<u>Sylvilagus palustris hefneri</u>	Keys rabbit	E	E
<u>Trichechus manatus latirostris</u>	Indian manatee	E	E

### Notes:

FGFWFC = Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (list published in Section 39-27.03-05, F.A.C.)

E = Endangered

T = Threatened

SSC = Species of Special Concern

USFWS = United States Fish and Wildlife Service (list published in List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants, 50 CFR 17.11-12).

E = Endangered

T = Threatened

UR = Under review for federal listing

\* = Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida, P.C.H. Prichard, Series Editor. Vo. 1-6. University Presses of Florida, Gainesville, FL, 1978. (Species listed are Threatened.)

## I. REGIONAL LAND USE DEVELOPMENT AND ASSOCIATED IMPACTS

### 1. Regional Land Use and Development

The south Florida region may be interpreted to include a variety of locations or features depending upon: political subdivision, county lines, geological formations, climate, watershed or any number of other natural or artificial boundaries. For purposes of this discussion, the south Florida region will include Monroe, Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Hendry, Glades, Charlotte, Lee, Collier and the southern portion of Martin counties. This delineation is based upon their proximity to the aquatic preserve. All counties except Glades and Hendry, which are principally agricultural lands, are coastal areas with substantial population densities. All are within a five hour driving time of the preserve.

As an ecological unit the south Florida region is often characterized as the Kissimmee-Okeechobee, Everglades-Florida Bay-Coral Reef system. Water quality, accumulation, aquifer recharge, retention, dispersal and use are the common elements that unite this region. Water needs of agricultural and urban development must be balanced with the need to maintain or restore quality, quantity and periodicity of water flow to the larger environmental complex and for aquifer recharge. Pollution, depletion, flooding, drought, salt water intrusion, alteration or loss of environmentally sensitive wetlands, and priority of use are ongoing issues that must be addressed by the public and various management entities.

Potable water for the Florida Keys is provided by pipeline from well fields that tap the Biscayne Aquifer in south Dade County. Overland water flow moves south from the Kissimmee River basin, Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades to enter Florida Bay and eventually waters of the Gulf Stream and the Atlantic Ocean. Because these systems are interconnected, the impacts to one part of the system will eventually impact all of the system, depending upon severity and/or duration. The aquatic preserve lies 'down stream' of this complex system in the Coral Reef zone. It is linked to the larger region both environmentally and economically.

The Keys have historically been a haven for respite from the heavily developed urban areas along the east coast of Florida and the northeastern states. From the early days of Flagler's railroad to the present, a large proportion of the visitors to Keys are from the neighboring counties to the north. Many are seasonal visitors or part time residents. Interstate road system and international airports connect the islands with the region and the world.

U.S. Highway 1 links Key West with the other islands and the mainland of Florida with a series of 43 bridges and several causeways. This is the only arterial roadway into or out of the Keys. Key West International Airport lies 30 miles southwest of the preserve. Miami International Airport is approximately 130 miles northeast via U.S. 1 and the Florida Turnpike. Marathon Airport on Key Vaca offers local commuter service to Key West, Miami and several other cities in the region.

From earliest recorded history, the Keys have been an important maritime area. European trade routes and Caribbean basin traffic have linked the islands with the rest of the world. Ports in Miami and Key West continue that tradition. They are major points of cultural and economic exchange. Cruise ships and tours provide additional access for the millions of tourists who visit the area annually.

Fisheries were probably one of the primary enticements to the early explorers and settlers of the Keys. Sponges, turtles, finfish, conch and spiny lobster supported many families and entire villages in some areas. All but protected turtles and queen conch are still a mainstay to the local commercial fisheries. Although this industry employs a relatively small proportion of the population, it is probably the third most important industry in the Keys. Economies are also stimulated by the facilities

and services related to recreational fishing and accommodations for participants from throughout the region.

Geographically and historically, the region has been a strategic location for national security interests. The U.S. Navy, Coast Guard and Air Force staff and maintain several facilities throughout the Keys. Local populations and economies are affected by the presence of these facilities. Many of the retired staff have remained as residents after service.

The combination of climate, clear clean waters, coral reefs, abundant fish and wildlife and accessibility are the main attractions to both visitors and residents of the Florida Keys. The Keys are the most popular diving destination in the region and state and possibly, the continent. Millions of visitors generate billions of dollars to the local economies of the Keys and the region. Dive shops, schools, boats, lodging, apparel, restaurants, marinas, car rentals, airlines, photography and sundry other shops and businesses are geared to the needs and services for this industry.

## **2. Local Land Use and Development**

A major portion of the land area adjacent to Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve is undeveloped or is developed with low density commercial and residential use (Figure 4). Such is not the case for most of Big Pine Key. Intense commercial land use and development has proliferated along the US 1 corridor through the center of the island. Big Pine is also the fastest growing residential area in the lower Keys. Population on Big Pine/Bahia Honda increased from 806 in 1970 to 2,377 residents in 1980 (194.9%) (Monroe County, 1984). The 1990 census is predicted to witness a similar increase for the last decade.

(Note: Bahia Honda Key is now entirely under management by the Florida Park Service. Residents on the island include only minimal park staff).

Population growth has placed pressure upon natural resources, infrastructure and services. Destruction of Key deer habitat and the freshwater resources of the island are of paramount concern. To provide compatible use with conservation of species and their habitats, Monroe County designated the Big Pine Key area as an area of Critical County Concern in 1986. This designation provides for a Focal Point Plan to be prepared to address these issues. In 1989 this planning process began. Limited progress has been made to date (Monroe County, 1990).

It should also be noted that most development is serviced by septic tanks rather than central sewage in the Coupon Bight vicinity. Only one commercial facility has a secondary treatment plant. Some new development in wetlands is being required to install secondary treatment plants which incorporate boreholes for injection of effluents.

The land area south of US 1 and north of Coupon Bight is typically developed with residential, institutional, commercial and limited industrial uses. The Long Beach area and the Newfound Harbor Keys south of the Bight are principally low density residential or undeveloped.

For purposes of this management plan, adjoining uplands will be limited to four categories based upon type and intensity of use. These designations do not reflect any particular zoning or planning area districts as applied by Monroe County government. Low density residential will include properties and facilities intended for private single family use. Institutional use applies to those areas that are primarily used by private entities engaged in education, research, religious or civic activities. Commercial and industrial uses will be treated as Commercial/Industrial as intensity of use is similar. The Undeveloped areas category will include those lands that are mangrove and transitional wetlands, mangrove islands and pinelands or hammocks that are publicly owned. It will also include privately owned lands that are deemed unsuitable for development because of environmental sensitivity or lack of facilities improvements.

(a) Low Density Residential: Four improved (access roads and utilities in place) subdivisions lie north of the Bight and south of the US 1 roadway. They contain approximately 400 lots intended for single family use. Cahill Pines and Palms was developed by dredging six dead end canals in the area of the mangrove slough at the western shoreline of the island. Half of the main access canal and the western most canal connect to the waters of Pine Channel. Those in the east are plugged canals with no access to open water. Buildout on the 199 lots is approximately 60% at this time. Water quality in the canal systems is anticipated to be generally poor due to poor design, restricted circulation, septic leachate and hydrogen sulfide generated from mangrove muck sediments in the area.

Piney Point subdivision extends to the southwestern tip of the island. As with Cahill, most of this area was developed from dredged spoil material. Development is almost exclusively limited to the shoreline of Pine Channel with several short dead end canals perpendicular to the shoreline and west of Big Pine Avenue. Several lots east of this roadway have been developed with homes. All of the properties in this area have been targeted for purchase under the Coupon Bight Buffer Project (CARL). Twenty lots and two large parcels have been purchased to date. Ten privately owned, undeveloped residential lots adjoin the northern shoreline of the Bight. Negotiations for these properties is ongoing.

Pine Key Yacht Club Estates does not, as the name implies, abut open water. This 183 lot subdivision was platted in upland habitats with only the southern portion adjoining the saltmarsh buttonwood and impounded mangrove slough. Improvements are minimal, with the few developed sites primarily restricted to the northern one-fourth of the subdivision, closest to US 1.

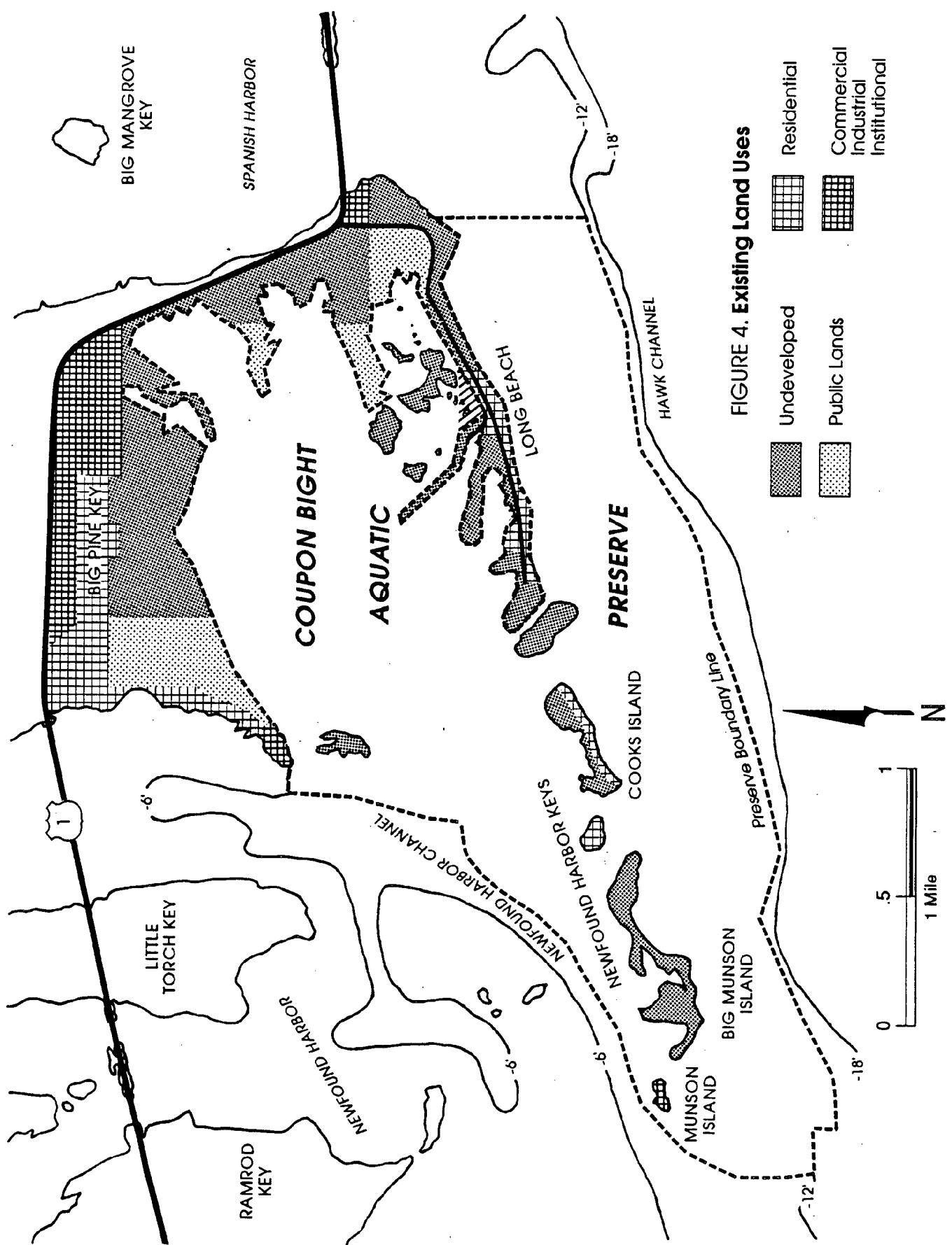


FIGURE 4. Existing Land Uses

Improvements and development in the Kinercha subdivision is similar to the Yacht Club, with most residences clustered near the US 1 roadway. Dirt roads that are heavily overgrown provide access to the saltmarsh and mangrove wetlands to the south. Illegal building, land clearing, dumping, poaching, camping, wild fires and other activities are evident in these areas because of accessibility and remoteness.

Two 'paper' subdivisions are also within this area. Tropical Park and Silas Knowles, each with 240 lots were platted with little regard for access or natural features and landforms. Both lie partially within the extensive area of saltmarsh and mangrove wetlands adjoining Coupon Bight. Random dirt trails and mosquito ditches crisscross the wetlands in these areas. They have also been targeted for purchase by the CARL program.

Low density residential development south of the Bight is concentrated in Long Beach Estates and on Cooks and Hopkins Islands. Long Beach Estates is divided into five sections, A-E. The only naturally occurring 'uplands' in this area consists of the low, narrow coastal berm that parallels the Atlantic Ocean in Sections A-C. Access is provided by Long Beach Road that effectively separates the berm from the mangrove wetlands of the Bight. Section A contains 50 lots, 50% of which are platted on undeveloped, privately owned submerged lands. The remaining lots are approximately 75% built out. Section B contains 47 lots. One third are platted on privately held submerged lands. Buildout is near 50% on the remaining lots. Section D is a 9 acre parcel of private, undivided and undeveloped submerged land. Section E contains 111 platted, undeveloped lots on privately owned submerged lands. A 3500 foot access channel, turning basin and dead end canal have been dredged from privately owned submerged lands to provide access to Coupon Bight. Depths on either side of the channel are 1-3 feet. Depths in the channel range from 6 to 10 feet. Depths in the basin and canal are much deeper. Dredged material was most probably used to fill the mangrove wetlands that once existed in this area.

The Atlantic side of Cooks Island was platted with 20 parcels intended for single family development. Some of those parcels have been resubdivided and approximately 7 are developed with residences. As with Long Beach, construction is limited to the coastal berm. The north shoreline adjoining the Bight is unplatted, privately owned mangroves. A single dirt road provides access between the parcels. Electricity is available through an aerial transmission line that extends from Long Beach to Little Munson Island over the waters of Coupon Bight. However, no service is presently provided to Cooks Island residents because the transmission line is privately owned by interests on Little Munson Island (City Electric, pers. com.). Potable water is provided via individual rain water cisterns or brought to the island via boat. Sewage is handled with cesspools, outdoor privy and make-shift septic tanks. Private single family docks provide access to Atlantic waters of the preserve.

Hopkins Island is developed with one residence and a small interior boat basin. Water and sewage are provided by the same means as on Cooks Island. Access to the waters of the Bight and the Atlantic are afforded by a mangrove-concealed canal and a 'wheel channel' between Hopkins and Cooks Islands. The 'wheel channel' is also used by residents of Cooks Island to gain access to Coupon Bight. No additional development is anticipated on this island because of its small size.

(b) Institutional Use: Areas north of Coupon Bight and south of US 1 include a marine institute, a church and cemetery. The institute is located on the southwestern tip of Big Pine Key. It is a private educational facility that offers various terms and courses of study for children and adults. Facilities include administrative and dormitory buildings, classrooms, cafeteria and a marina. Most activities are water oriented and outdoor classrooms are conducted at the marina and in adjacent waters, including those of the preserve. This facility also hosts visiting research scientists and intern staff from various colleges and universities.

The church and cemetery are adjoining properties near the northeast corner of the Bight. The cemetery is not, as the name implies, used for in-ground burials, as geology and parcel size are not suitable for this activity. A modest crematorium is located on the property. Ash is consigned to clients for dispersal or stored in vaults on the site. The church is also of modest proportions with typical buildings, parking and open space.

Big Munson Island is maintained by the Boy Scouts of America who operate a primitive adventure camp on the property. There are no permanent improvements on the island, nor is any future development planned (S.Wampler, pers. comm., 1990)

(c) Commercial/Industrial: Industrial activity is confined to the north side of the Bight. A large barrow pit operation is conducted on 34.87 acres that adjoin the northeastern corner on the US 1 roadway. Two low, narrow berms separate the actual pit and related slurry from the preserve waters. The pit size doubled between 1979 and 1982 and covered approximately 10.5 acres. By 1989 the dredged area covered approximately 17.2 acres of former wetlands. Further development of the pit is limited by the proximity of US 1 roadway and the church to the east and north. Expansion into the wetlands west of the pit is prohibited by DER permits.

A small industrial park lies one quarter mile west of the barrow pit on Industrial Boulevard. Activities and facilities include a automotive junk yard, concrete batch plant, construction supply and storage yard and an animal control impoundment and cremation furnace. This area also accommodates small commercial shops and offices. Total area is approximately 10 acres, about half of which occupies former wetlands or adjoins existing wetlands near the Bight.

Commercial development is principally limited to the US 1 corridor with some expansion to the south toward the Bight. Activities and facilities are principally tourist and resident support retail sales, accommodations, restaurants and offices.

South of the Bight there are two commercial resort facilities. A fishing lodge and campground is located at the eastern end of Big Pine Key with a mix of permanent mobile home sites, campsites and motel rooms. A dead end canal and turning basin offer access to Florida Bay or the Atlantic via Bogie (Spanish Harbor) Channel. This facility is just outside the preserve boundary but many guests frequent the area.

Little Munson Island was originally developed as a small private fishing camp, known locally as Sheriff's Island. It was recently sold and has been redeveloped as a resort with accommodations, restaurant and multiple docking facilities. Guests are transported to the island from Little Torch Key. Cisterns and transport provide potable water. Electricity is provided by a privately owned aerial transmission line that traverses Coupon Bight from Long Beach. No additional development is anticipated on the island.

(d) Undeveloped Lands: The remaining portions of those lands surrounding Coupon Bight and on the Newfound Harbor Keys may be considered as undeveloped lands. Minor encroachments include vehicle and foot paths, illegal dumping, mosquito ditches, mosquito spraying , small barrow pits and an abandoned oil drilling platform. The majority of those lands still in private ownership are identified for purchase though the CARL fund. Publicly owned lands include those already purchased under the Buffer Zone project, F.D.O.T. right-of-way and federal lands in the Cactus Hammock and adjacent areas along US 1.

Purchase of additional undeveloped lands has been identified as necessary to: 1) protect sensitive wetlands that are vital to the health and productivity of the aquatic preserve; 2) protect valuable and very limited habitat for endangered and threatened species and; 3) maintain the aesthetic qualities of one of the more pristine areas in the lower Keys. To this end, purchased lands will be maintained in or restored to their natural condition, where feasible. Any future development of these lands should be limited to that necessary to provide logistic support for the on-site management of the resources. Other use of and access to these lands should be limited to Department supervised environmental education and research.

### **3. Associated Impacts**

On a regional level, impacts to the preserve may be evaluated both from the economic and environmental perspectives. Visitors and part time residents contribute substantially to the local economy and tax base. Monies distributed for goods and services support existing businesses and foster new development of businesses and residences. The natural resource and aesthetic values of the

preserve are more difficult to define but are none the less important to the local economy.

Environmentally, the influx of visitors and new residents place added potential for increasing use and development that directly affect the aquatic preserve. Increased use by boaters, fisherman, divers and snorkelers may stress certain resources of the preserve and in some cases will require new or revised evaluations of the compatibility of these activities with the long term conservation of biological and aesthetic values for which the preserve was established. Maintenance of water quality, listed species habitat, viable fisheries, healthy benthic communities and a quality recreational experience may be adversely affected by excessive numbers or types of activities in the relatively small area of the preserve. At the minimum, a system of monitoring the types and intensity of use must be established to anticipate some of these impacts.

Commercial and residential development also impacts the quality and utility of the preserve. Excessive or poorly planned development may negatively impact water quality, vegetation, listed species, and the biological and aesthetic qualities for which the preserve was established. Monitoring of these activities and active participation in local planning efforts are seen as one avenue of addressing these concerns.

As analysis of regional or local populations, economies, planning and politics are beyond the scope of this management plan, many of these existing and anticipated impacts to the preserve will be addressed by the legislated statutes and rules and within the following chapters of the plan.

## CHAPTER IV

### MANAGEMENT AREAS

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter of the plan divides Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve into separate management areas and establishes the general or special rule criteria for allowable uses associated with each management area. Since the statutes and rules specifically addresses docks, marinas, shoreline stabilization and dredging, the primary focus of allowable uses will be directed toward structures and construction activities. Non-structural activities are addressed in Chapter V under management issues and policy guidelines.

The intent of establishing management areas is four-fold: 1) to provide a better understanding of the general and special criteria designed to preserve and protect biological resources and habitat through the management of structure activities and design, 2) to identify the types of allowable uses on state-owned lands within a preserve, 3) to provide both the Bureau of Submerged Lands and Preserves' staff and other agencies a continuity of direction in the management of the preserve, and 4) to provide local planners with a guide for land use decisions.

Section B of this chapter will establish management area categories based upon upland land use and relative values of adjacent aquatic preserve resources. Section C delineates minimum criteria for allowable uses in the preserve, as established by statute and rule. Section D delineates each management area as to boundaries, description of resources and allowable uses, specific criteria and the rationale for each designation. It should be emphasized that the management areas and criteria pertain to **only state-owned submerged lands**. Privately held submerged lands are not included within the boundaries or description, nor are they subject to the limitations as described for aquatic preserve lands. The upland land use is described to reflect the existing use of the adjoining lands at the writing of this plan. These descriptions do not reflect, condone, approve or otherwise represent local planning regulations, zoning or future land use designation.

#### **B. MANAGEMENT AREA CLASSIFICATIONS**

The management areas are determined by identifying and delineating relatively homogenous areas of (1) adjacent upland uses, and 2) natural resources in the aquatic preserve. The upland use classifications acknowledge the local government's decision as to how a specific upland area can be used or developed. By necessity, the classification of management areas in this system is broader than county zoning or planning areas (e.g., Commercial/Industrial (CI) compared to the

Monroe County Urban Commercial (UC) and Suburban Commercial Planning Districts). The land use categories employed in this management plan are intended to group similar uses relative to the types of structures and activities that may be associated with each and to establish the types of uses and activities that may be authorized on state-owned submerged lands within the preserve. Thus a portion of the aquatic preserve that is adjacent to an upland area characterized by detached single-family residences in an improved subdivision would be identified as Single-family or SF prefix. Specific land uses to be incorporated in the classification of management areas include:

Single-Family Use (SF): This category is defined by state-owned lands adjacent to lands designated by the local government Land Use Plan as single family residential. Use of the aquatic preserve is solely for private, recreational activities. This category will not include family fisheries operations that are conducted upon a residential property. Fishing is considered a revenue generating activity and will be considered a commercial use.

Multi-Family Use (MF): This category represents state-owned lands adjacent to uplands designated in the local Land Use Plan as multi-family residential. This designation may include preserve lands adjacent to a group of single family property owners, as in the case of a homeowners' association, that may share common areas and amenities for the mutual benefit of the group.

Commercial-Industrial-Institutional Use (CII): This broad category represents state-owned lands adjacent to lands designated for these uses in the local Land Use Plan. It is also intended to incorporate structures or facilities on or over state-owned lands whose use involves the charging of fees or generation of revenue. Exceptions to this are federal, state or county owned properties that may charge a nominal fee, these facilities are considered a public use. Examples of CII uses are marinas that charge fees, business concerns, such as, dive shops, guide services, boat rentals, industry, and private educational facilities, that depend heavily on their direct access to the aquatic preserve in order to function, and establishments such as hotel/motels and restaurants, that use their direct access to the aquatic preserve as an economic enhancement. The structures associated with this category are many and diverse, including docks, marinas, ship stores, fishing piers, boat ramps, mooring buoys, utilities and pilings.

Single-family-Commercial Fishery Use (SF-CF): This category may include structures associated with commercial fishing, lobstering or crabbing, even though these activities may be conducted from a residence. A facility in the SF-CF category will be considered a commercial use and will be required to obtain a submerged lands lease pursuant to Chapter 18-21.005(1)(b).

Public Lands Use (PL): This category includes aquatic preserve areas adjacent or adjoining: facilities owned and/or operated by state, federal or local agencies for use by the general public at no charge or for a minimal fee; public services, such as roadways and utilities; and open waters beyond 500 feet from riparian shorelines or 100 feet from privately owned submerged lands. Certain lands within this category may have restricted or limited access depending upon season and/or management objectives and existing resources. Examples are identified rookeries, critical habitat of endangered species, patch reefs, controlled research areas, and areas being restored.

The natural resources portion of the classification system is established by evaluating the quality of a particular submerged or emergent resource within the preserve. Resources will be identified either as a **Primary Resource Protection Area (PRPA)** or a **Secondary Resource Protection Area (SRPA)**. The methodology used to determine this resource value shall be consistent with the latest methodology approved by the Bureau of Submerged Lands and Preserves. Discrepancies in Management Area Maps and actual resources on a site will be decided by onsite surveys and evaluation by preserve staff.

The **Primary Resource Protection Areas** are those areas recognized as having the greatest value to the overall biological integrity and diversity of the preserve. They are assigned a value of "1". A PRPA essentially combines Resource Protection Areas 1 and 2, as defined in Sections 18-20.003(31), and 18-20.003(32), F.A.C. Resource attributes which determine a PRPA include:

1. non-exotic and non-invasive aquatic/wetland vegetation (e.g., marine and freshwater grasses, attached algae, mangroves, marsh vegetation) that covers more than 1% of the surveyed area;
2. harvested bivalves (e.g., hard clams and oysters) with a clam frequency of 20% or greater within the survey area or oyster bars with a total surface area greater than five square meters;
3. unvegetated soft-bottom communities (i.e., infaunal invertebrates) with a Shannon-Weaver Diversity Index greater than 1.00;
4. hard-bottom communities (e.g., corals, soft corals, sponges, algal beds) that have a frequency greater than 5% within the survey area;
5. species designated as endangered, threatened, or of special concern (as contained in the most recent updates of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) that occupy or use the area for habitat (e.g., feeding, breeding, refuge or nesting); and

6. nesting sites for solitary or colonial birds.

State-owned lands that are characterized by the absence of the above resource attributes will be identified as a **Secondary Resource Protection Area (SRPA)** and assigned a resource value of "2". A SRPA is a Resource Protection Area 3, as defined by Section 18-20.003(33), F.A.C.

As stated previously, resource values are to be incorporated into the classification of management areas. For instance, if an area within the preserve is determined to be a Primary Resource Protection Area with a value of 1 and the adjacent uplands is zoned as single-family (SF), then this management area would be classified as **SF/1**.

### **C. MINIMUM CRITERIA FOR ALLOWABLE USES**

Chapter 18-20, F.A.C., provides the minimum standards with regard to the utilization of state-owned submerged lands within an aquatic preserve. The minimum standards for each allowable use are detailed below.

**All Dock Structures:** Section 18-20.004(5)(a), F.A.C., states that all docking facilities within an aquatic preserve shall meet the following standards and criteria:

1. no dock shall extend waterward of the mean or ordinary high water line more than 500 feet or 20% of the width of the waterbody at that particular location, whichever is less;
2. areas of significant biological, scientific, historic, and/or aesthetic value require special management considerations. Modifications to docks in these areas may be more restrictive and shall be determined on a case-by-case basis;
3. the number, lengths, drafts, and types of vessels allowed to utilize the proposed facility may be stipulated;
4. where local governments have more stringent standards and criteria for docking facilities, the more stringent standards for the protection and enhancement of the aquatic preserve shall prevail;

**Private Residential Single Docks:** Section 18-20.004(5)(b), F.A.C., states that private residential single docks, as defined by Section 18-20.003(23), F.A.C., shall conform to the following specific design standards and criteria:

1. any main access pier shall be limited to a maximum width of four feet;
2. must be designed and constructed to ensure maximum light penetration;
3. terminal platform must access a minimum of -4 feet depth at MLW;
4. when the water depth is -4 feet MLW at an existing bulkhead, the maximum dock length from the bulkhead shall be 25 feet, subject to modifications accommodating shoreline vegetation overhang;
5. wave break devices shall be designed to allow for maximum water circulation and built in such a manner as to be part of the dock structure;
6. the maximum size of the terminal platform shall be 160 square feet;
7. dredging to obtain navigable water depths is strongly discouraged.

**Private Residential Multi-Slip Docks:** Section 18-20.004(5)(c), F.A.C., states that private residential multi-slip docks, as defined by Section 18-20.003(24), F.A.C., shall conform to the following design standards and criteria:

1. the area of sovereignty submerged land preempted by the docking facility shall not exceed the square footage amounting to ten times the riparian waterfront footage of the affected waterbody of the applicant, or the square footage attendant to providing a single dock in accordance with the criteria for private residential single docks, whichever is greater. A conservation easement or other such restriction acceptable to the Board must be placed on the riparian shoreline, used for the calculation of the 10:1 threshold, to conserve and protect shoreline resources and subordinate/waive any further riparian rights of ingress and egress for additional docking facilities;
2. docking facilities and access channels shall be prohibited in Resource Protection Areas 1 and 2 (= PRPA), except as allowed pursuant to Section 258.42(3)(e)1, F.S., while dredging in Resource Protection Area 3 (= SRPA) shall be strongly discouraged;
3. water depths adjacent to and within the proposed mooring area shall have a minimum clearance of one foot between the deepest draft of the vessel and the submerged bottom at MLW;

4. main access piers and connecting walks shall not exceed six feet in width;
5. terminal platforms shall not exceed eight feet in width;
6. finger piers shall not exceed three feet in width and 25 feet in length;
7. pilings may be utilized as required to provide adequate mooring capabilities;
8. specific provisions of Section 18-20.004(5)(d), F.A.C., for commercial, industrial, and other revenue generating/income related docking facilities shall also apply to private residential multi-slip docks.

**Commercial-Industrial Docking Facilities and Marinas:** Section 18-20.004(5)(d), F.A.C., states that commercial, industrial, and other revenue generating/income related docking facilities, as defined by Section 18-20.003(10), F.A.C., shall conform to the following specific design criteria and standards:

1. docking facilities shall only be located in or near areas with good circulation, flushing, and adequate water depths;
2. docking facilities shall not be located in Resource Protection Areas 1 and 2 (= PRPA); however, main access piers may be allowed to pass through Resource Protection Area 1 or 2 that are located along the shoreline to reach an acceptable Resource Protection Area 3 (=SRPA), provided that such crossing will generate minimal environmental impact;
3. the siting of docking facilities shall take into account the access of boat traffic to avoid marine seagrass beds or other aquatic resources in the surrounding area;
4. the siting of new facilities within the preserve shall be secondary to the expansion of existing facilities when such expansion is consistent with other standards;
5. the location of new facilities and expansion of existing facilities shall consider the use of upland dry storage as an alternative to multiple wet slip docking;
6. marina siting will be coordinated with local governments to ensure consistency with local plans and ordinances;
7. marinas shall not be sited within state designated manatee sanctuaries;

8. in any areas with known manatee concentrations, manatee warning/notice and/or speed limit signs shall be erected at the marina and/or ingress and egress channels, according to Florida Marine Patrol specifications.

Exceptions to the standards and criteria for any docking facility may be considered, but only upon demonstration that such exceptions are necessary to ensure reasonable riparian ingress and egress. The following special criteria and standards are also applicable for use of state-owned submerged lands in the Florida Keys.

**Florida Keys Marina and Dock Siting Criteria:** Section 18-21.0041(1) establishes general policies and specific criteria for applications for leases, easements or consent to use sovereignty submerged lands in Monroe County for multi-slip docking facilities. Section 18-21.9941(1)(a) provides that special attention and consideration shall be given to the following:

1. the proximity to and potential adverse impacts on any rare, threatened or endangered species, or species of special concern, or their habitat, or on any portion of the entire Florida Reef Tract and other corals;
2. eliminating any adverse impacts on wetland or submerged vegetation or benthic communities; and
3. requiring adequate tidal flushing and/or circulation; and
4. maintaining or enhancing water quality at levels within or above State water quality standards; and
5. requiring adequate water depths to avoid dredging and other bottom disturbance; and
6. requiring consistency and conformity with local government land use plans, zoning and other land use or development regulations; and
7. requiring consistency and conformity with Chapters 27F-8, 27F-9, 27F-10, 27F-11, 27F-12, 27F-13, and 27F-15, F.A.C., as amended, "Principles for Guiding Development in the Florida Keys Area of Critical State Concern."

Section 18-21.0041(1)(b) 1. provides for a moratorium on all leases in the upper Keys until such time as rules are adopted for a Keys-wide aquatic preserve or until the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan with marina sitings policy is adopted, whichever occurs first.

Section 18-21.0041(1)(b) further requires that:

2. no docking facilities shall be approved which require either dredging or filling to provide access by canal, channel, road, or any other means, except for maintenance dredging of existing canals, basins, or channels, providing such maintenance does not exceed currently acceptable water depths;
3. docking facilities shall only be approved in locations having adequate water depths in the boat mooring, turning basin, access channels and other such areas to accommodate the proposed boat use;
  - a. a minimum depth of -4 feet MLW shall be required;
  - b. greater depths for those facilities designed for or capable of accommodating boats having greater than a 3 foot draft, so that a minimum of one foot of clearance is provided between the deepest draft of a vessel and the bottom;
  - c. depth requirements shall also apply to the area between the proposed facility and any natural or other navigation channel, inlet or deep water. Where necessary, marking of navigational channels may be required. At the Board's discretion, the conditions of the lease may stipulate the number, lengths, drafts and types of vessels to be moored in a facility.
4. Requirements for the size of the dock:
  - a. no dock shall exceed 500 feet in length, unless the Board determines that it is not contrary to the public interest;
  - b. no dock shall preempt more than 20% of the affected waterbody;
  - c. a dock intended for the use of a **private residence**, which is not subject to obtaining a lease, **shall not exceed 4 feet in width, terminal platform shall not exceed 160 square feet, the width of which shall not exceed 8 feet;**
5. Special conditions for new or expanded docking facilities for 10 or more boats require that water quality standards be maintained, monitored, and that violations of same are to be corrected and establishes penalties for failure to do so;
6. New or expanded docking facilities will identify ways to improve, mitigate or restore adverse environmental impacts caused by previous activities and encourages marina development to locate in already developed or disturbed areas;

7. Docking facilities for 10 or more boats shall be required to have a lease;
8. All applicants will be required to provide documentation to show that there is an economic demand for the number of boat slips requested, if the number is not consistent with the Department's Projections of Marina Needs for Monroe County;
9. multi-slip docking facilities shall not be considered for approval if located over a benthic community, except main access docks that may cross benthic communities to reach acceptable areas. This shall not preclude applications for consent of use for the purpose of using the minimum amount to obtain reasonable ingress and egress; and
10. the Board may grant special considerations to the approval of leases or other consent to use state lands for projects which are approved by the Department of Community Affairs which are for the purpose of furthering the commercial fishing village or commercial fishing enterprise zone concept.

**Sale, Lease, or Transfer of Lands:** Section 18-20.004(1)(b), F.A.C., states that there shall be no further sale, lease, or transfer of sovereignty lands within an aquatic preserve unless such transaction is in the public interest. Section 18-20.004(2), F.A.C., specifically defines the public interest test (see Appendix A for a copy of Chapter 18-20, F.A.C.). Section 18-20.004(1)(e), F.A.C., states that a lease, easement, or consent of use may be authorized for only the following activities: (1) a public navigation project; (2) maintenance of an existing navigation channel; (3) installation or maintenance of approved navigational aids; (4) creation or maintenance of a commercial/industrial dock, pier, or marina; (5) creation or maintenance of private docks; (6) minimum dredging of navigation channels attendant to docking facilities; (7) creation or maintenance of oil and gas transportation facilities; (9) creation, maintenance, replacement, or expansion of facilities required for the provision of public utilities; and (10) other activities which are a public necessity or which are necessary to enhance the quality or utility of the preserve and which are consistent with the Florida Aquatic Preserves Act (Sections 258.35 and 258.46, F.S.). Section 18-20.004(1)(f), F.A.C., states that structures to be built in, on, or over sovereignty lands are limited to those necessary to conduct water-dependent activities.

**Utility Easements:** Section 18-20.004(3)(c), F.A.C., states that utility cables, pipes, and other such structures shall be constructed and located in a manner that will cause minimal disturbance to submerged resources (e.g., seagrass beds, corals) and do not interfere with traditional uses. It will be policy to place additional utilities within designated corridors or existing easements unless no other reasonable alternative exists.

**Spoil Disposal:** Section 18-20.004(3)(d), F.A.C., states that spoil disposal within an aquatic preserve shall be strongly discouraged and may be approved only where the applicant has demonstrated that there is no other reasonable alternative and that the spoiling activity may be beneficial to, or at a minimum, not harmful to the quality or utility of the preserve. It will be the policy to prohibit spoil disposal onto a PRPA within the aquatic preserve.

**Piers:** Piers shall be constructed in accordance with the minimum criteria provided by Section 18-20.004(5)(b), F.A.C. In addition, the following conditions apply to all piers: (1) the entire structure will be elevated to a minimum of 5 feet above the MHWL, (2) hand rails will be installed around the perimeter of the structure, (3) at least one "Docking Prohibited" sign in English and Spanish language will be posted and maintained on each side of the pier, (4) no temporary or permanent mooring of vessels will be permitted, and (5) dredging is prohibited when associated with pier construction and/or maintenance.

**Ramps:** Boat ramps will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Factors to be evaluated will include: (1) the extent of alteration or elimination of natural resources or habitat (e.g., seagrasses, shoreline vegetation, nesting areas), and (2) accessibility to the ramp from water and land routes (e.g., adequate water depths over sovereignty submerged lands). In no event shall dredging or filling of sovereignty lands in a PRPA be authorized.

Additional criteria for the repair, replacement, and expansion of existing structures are provided for in Chapter 18-21, F.A.C. Replacement and expansion of structures must comply with the minimum criteria provided for in Chapter 18-20, F.A.C.

Criteria more restrictive than those listed in Chapter 18-20, F.A.C., will be used if the biological and physical conditions of an area warrant it. As an example, docks may be limited in size to protect seagrasses and coral beds. Areas requiring more stringent criteria will be referred to as special management areas and such areas will be labeled with the additional letter "a" on resource maps. Again, as an example, if management area SF/1 requires more restrictive criteria, then this special management area would be classified as **SF/1a**.

## **D. MANAGEMENT AREAS**

In this section, each management area is delineated with boundaries, descriptions, and allowable uses. Specific criteria and supporting rationale for each special management area is also provided. Final determination of allowable uses will be made by the Bureau of Submerged Lands and Preserves staff on a case-by-case basis. Figure 5 is a map of all management areas within the preserve. The purpose of providing this map is to give some general guidance and an understanding of where the management areas lie within the preserve.

Some of the management areas are subdivided to reflect specific upland uses in association with differing boundaries. As an example, two or more upland parcels may have little or no upland development, yet each parcel may have a different designated use. Other management areas may have a specific activity occurring within that is not reflective of the overall upland use. For instance, an upland parcel consists of a motel with a large dock that is adjacent to marine grass beds. The dock may have preceded the aquatic preserve designation, therefore it would be unreasonable to remove the facility. Conversely, future expansion of commercial activities will not be allowed to expand in the management area because of the presence of marine grasses.

The Multi-family Residential Management Area (MF) is established to recognize that certain Monroe County Land Use Districts allow attached residential dwelling units as a minor conditional use (e.g., Native Area District, Sub Urban Residential, Sub Urban Commercial). The Single-family-Commercial Fishery (SF-CF) is also established to recognize certain activities that are conducted from a residence within the Fishing Village Districts or as grandfathered in an Improved Subdivision District.

It should be noted that the following described boundaries include **only state-owned submerged lands and uplands**. Privately held submerged lands and riparian uplands are excluded from the boundaries, as provided for in Section 18-21.0041(3).

### **MANAGEMENT AREA PL/1 a** **(public lands/primary resource protection area)** **special management area**

**Boundaries:** This management area includes all sovereignty submerged lands within the Coupon Bight portion of the preserve and all submerged lands on the Atlantic shoreline beyond 500 feet from riparian shorelines of Long Beach Estates and the New Found Harbor Keys, excluding those areas described in Management Areas SF and CII. This management area will also include all lands acquired under the Coupon Bight CARL project administered by the Division of State Lands.

Description: The lagoon area is characterized by fringing mangroves, mangrove islands, hardbottom and marine grassbed associations. The shallow baylets and mangrove areas provide feeding and refuge habitat for wading and diving birds. State and federally owned lands adjoining the Bight exhibit beach/berm, salt marsh, buttonwood, pineland and tropical hardwood hammock associations and are prime habitat for the endangered Key deer and other species. The Atlantic portion is characterized by hardbottom, marine grassbeds, sand/mud banks and coral formations.

Present upland development adjoining the area north and east of the Bight (except Management Areas CII) is limited to abandoned mosquito ditches, dirt roads, an isolated residence and an abandoned drilling platform. Existing land use classification is Native Area and Offshore Island, both of which allow single family dwellings. All lands immediately adjoining the Bight are included within the proposed Coupon Bight CARL project boundary. On the southwest tip of Big Pine Key, lots in Piney Point are zoned Improved Subdivision and 3 of the unpurchased lots are developed with single-family residences that do not have riparian access. The remaining lots adjoining the Bight are undeveloped but have access to improved roads and utilities.

Other upland uses on the eastern shoreline of the Bight include state owned highway right-of-way and private lands zoned as Native Area by local government. The federally owned Cactus Hammock preserve provides a small parking area and nature trails.

A private utility easement traverses open waters of the Bight from Long Beach Estates to Little Munson Island. The northern shorelines of the New Found Harbor Keys are undeveloped (except Management Area CII) fringing mangroves with Native Area or Offshore Island zoning. Submerged resources in this area are typically lush grassbeds.

Allowable Uses: Private residential single docks; utility easements; mooring buoys; navigation aids; approved preserve signs; and boardwalks built according to the minimum criteria for single family docks and incorporating the specific criteria below.

Specific Criteria: The access pier of a dock shall be elevated to minimum of 4 feet above the mean high water line (MHWL) with the terminal platform elevated to a height sufficient to allow safe access into and out of a moored boat; trimming or removal of fringing mangroves shall be limited to the minimum required for the access pier of the dock or boardwalk to reach open water. Handrails and/or signage may be required to discourage docking at the access pier or other portions of the dock that traverse waters of less than -4 feet MLW.

Boardwalks shall be limited to the riparian upland, with the exception of sovereignty submerged lands adjacent to public lands, in which case they shall meet the minimum design criteria for single family docks and be constructed in such a manner as to allow maximum light penetration, natural flow of waters and have hand rails to prevent pedestrian access to traversed wetlands. Boat docking or mooring within 500 feet of a boardwalk is prohibited and "Docking Prohibited" signs will be displayed on the waterward face(s) of the structure. The only exception to the 4 feet width shall be to accommodate public access for documented handicapped use. If a public boardwalk is intended for handicapped use, it will be allowed to have 3 feet wide by 6 feet long by-pass(es) at 300 feet interval(s) on one or the other side of the main walkway.

Off shore structures will be limited to mooring buoys and navigational aids that will be established in the vicinity of the patch reefs to discourage boat groundings and anchor damage. The design and placement of mooring buoys shall be supervised by appropriate field staff and all aids to navigation shall be Coast Guard approved.

Rationale: The dock criteria are designed to limit impacts to important marine resources, such as mangroves, corals and marine grasses. Dock widths, heights and terminal platform coverage are necessary to prevent shading of these resources. Minimum depths are necessary to prevent scouring of bottom features and to prevent excessive suspension of sediments by prop wash. Public access elevated board walks are preferable to use of foot trails that compact soils, create erosion channels and destroy saltmarsh vegetation in wetland areas. Heights and widths of boardwalks are intended to reduce shading and to eliminate obstructions to Key deer and natural water flow.

#### MANAGEMENT AREA SF/1 (single family/primary resource protection area)

Boundaries: This area includes those sovereignty submerged lands near the center shoreline of Coupon Bight on Big Pine Key, the Atlantic shoreline of the Newfound Harbor Keys and the platted shoreline of Long Beach Estates from the MHW line out to 500 feet from shore.

Description: Submerged lands are characterized by fringing mangroves, scattered grass beds, coral banks, coral heads and hardbottom communities. Riparian shorelines are typically beach/berm and altered saltmarsh buttonwood or mangrove wetlands. Marine turtles frequent the beach/berm shorelines of Long Beach Estates and Cooks Island for nesting. This area also provides resting and foraging habitat for the endangered Key deer and numerous bird species.

Allowable Uses: Private residential single docks; mooring buoys; approved preserve signs; and shoreline stabilization incorporating special provisions below.

Shoreline Stabilization: Projects shall be limited to the use of native wetland or beach/berm vegetation. No new seawalls, rip rap, fencing or other structures shall be authorized on state-owned submerged lands and will be discouraged on riparian uplands. Removal of vegetation and/or alteration of shoreline contours shall be strictly discouraged. As with docks, existing structures will be investigated and encroachments upon sovereignty lands will evaluated within the context of whether prior authorization and/or permits were secured and whether the structures are in conformance with the provision of Chapter 18-21.004(1) (Management Policies, Standards, and Criteria) and (2) (Resource Management) for state-owned submerged lands.

Non-conforming Docks: All existing docks not presently in conformance with minimum criteria established in Sections 18-20.004(5) and Section 18-21.0041(b) shall be investigated. Those built prior to adoption of this plan by the Board of Trustees and having obtained all other valid permits, shall be designated a non-conforming use. Upon application to repair more than 50% or replace these non-conforming structures, any approved application shall reflect adherence to the present single family criteria or it shall be denied.

Those structures erected after adoption of this plan and not in compliance with these criteria, or other structures undertaken without benefit of permit or authorization, or authorized structures not in conformance to approved design and placement shall be deemed not in compliance with single family criteria and shall be cited as a violation of Chapter 18-21.0041 (Florida Keys Marina and Dock Siting Policies and Criteria) and the provisions of this management plan. Such structures deemed to be in violation shall be brought into compliance within 120 days of adoption of this plan and/or after proper notice to the riparian owner.

Rationale: Dock criteria are established to provide optimum protection of submerged resources and still provide riparian access to waters of the preserve. Preservation of native shoreline vegetation and topography are essential to the conservation of several endangered and threatened wildlife and plant species and to provide some degree of protection from wind and waves associated with tropical storms.

**MANAGEMENT AREA MF/1a**  
**(multi-family area/primary resource protection area)**

**Boundary:** This management area is tentatively established to accommodate facilities for the exclusive use of **riparian property owners** within the SF/1 and/or PL/1a management areas should multi-family use be approved for riparian uplands adjoining the preserve. This management area may include a dock for a group of single-family homeowners, such as a homeowners association, which may wish to construct a dock for the mutual benefit of the participating riparian property owners. The designation of this management area **does not encourage a greater density or intensity of land use** but is intended to discourage the proliferation of single-family docks and would therefore ameliorate the cumulative impact of these structures on certain valuable resources. Inclusion of any or all riparian property owners, not currently having a dock is encouraged. There are currently no specifically designated areas in the preserve. Applications for multi-family docks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

**Description:** Locations for private residential multi-slip docks would typically be in Primary Resource Protection Areas adjoining riparian lands in the Native Area, Sub Urban Residential and Sub Urban Commercial Land Use Districts, as currently defined by Monroe County. A proposed facility would be for the private recreational use of affected riparian owners.

**Allowable Uses:** private residential multi-slip docks (restricted); approved preserve signs

**Specific Criteria:** Applications for MF/1a shall adhere to the minimum criteria established for private residential multi-slip docks in Section 18-20(5)(c)1-8 and the more stringent criteria for the Florida Keys in Section 18-21.0041(1)(a) and (b). Fueling facilities, covered structures, commercial use (including family fisheries), fish cleaning tables, non-water dependent activities and live aboard vessels shall be strictly prohibited.

Additionally, facilities designed for more than 10 vessels shall be required to obtain a submerged lands lease. Conditions to a lease may include, but are not limited to: 1) installation and maintenance of navigational aids, where deemed necessary to avoid patch reefs, large coral heads and grassbeds; 2) installation and maintenance of appropriate signage informing the owners of the importance of the natural resources of the aquatic preserve; and 3) specific design criteria for access piers to reduce impacts to shoreline vegetation, topography and endangered/threatened species and their habitats.

**Rationale:** The restrictive criteria are intended to reduce impacts to shallow water habitats while providing riparian access to waters of the preserve. Several patch reefs and numerous large coral heads lie within one half mile of the Atlantic

shorelines of Long Beach Estates and the New Found Harbor Keys. A single multi-slip dock and navigational aids marking access to safe waters would significantly reduce impacts in these areas. A proliferation of single docks on each lot would disrupt the foraging and resting activities of the Key deer and wading birds, as well as, the nesting activities of marine turtles. Numerous individual docks would also negatively impact marine grassbeds, corals, and shoreline vegetation.

**MANAGEMENT AREA CII/1a**  
**(commercial-industrial-institutional/  
primary resource protection area)**  
**special management area**

Boundary: This management area will include all sovereignty submerged lands adjoining the U.S. 1 right-of-way and barrow pit at the northeast corner of Coupon Bight from the MHWL to 200 feet from shore.

Description: Adjoining uplands are composed of saltmarsh, buttonwood, beach/berm and impounded mangroves. Submerged lands are shallow baylets with fringing mangroves, marine grassbeds, hardbottom and mud/sand flats. Water depth is less than two feet on high tide. This area provides a valuable corridor for movement for the endangered Key deer from the north to south on Big Pine Key and hosts a multitude of resident and migratory bird species.

Allowable Use: Right-of-way improvements; approved preserve signs; utility easement (limited)

Specific Criteria: Activities in this management area will be limited to the following: 1) improvements or repairs to U.S.1 right-of-way and existing public utilities; 2) restoration of lands acquired by the CARL program to their natural topography and condition; 3) applied research directed specifically towards restoration of these habitats or the preservation of endangered or threatened species; 4) protection of wading bird nesting and feeding areas; 5) conservation of listed plant species; 6) limited access for Department supervised public environmental education; and 7) approved preserve signs and minimal public facilities to conduct these activities.

Rationale: All undeveloped lands within this management area are part of the proposed CARL Buffer Project and are primarily jurisdictional wetlands. South or west expansion of the barrow pit into wetlands is prohibited by FDER permit. Existing uses and activities are negatively impacting wildlife, vegetation, topography, rates of water flow and the quality of water entering the Bight. These activities are not water dependent and can be conducted outside the aquatic preserve. Submerged lands are shallow baylets with fringing and dwarf mangroves, not suitable for navigation or docks.

**SUB-MANAGEMENT AREA CII/1a**  
**(commercial-industrial-institutional/**  
**primary resource protection area)**  
**special management area**

**Boundary:** This management area encompasses a narrow easement for the existing aerial electrical transmission lines that traverses lands of the preserve from the western end of Long Beach Estates to Little Munson Island. This overhead line is privately maintained by the resort facility on Munson Island.

**Description:** The submerged resources in the area are primarily lush marine grassbeds. The aerial line presents a visual encroachment on the aesthetic resources of the preserve. It also presents a potential hazard to public safety, navigation and bird life.

**Allowable Use:** Commercial Utility Easement (Limited)

**Specific Criteria:** The existing aerial line shall be maintained in safe condition to prevent accident or injury to the public and resources of the preserve. Any application to replace or substantially repair all or portions of the line or poles shall be evaluated by the anticipated impacts to marine grassbeds. In no event shall dredging be authorized to access, repair or replace the line. Tug, barge or other equipment to access or operate in the area shall be of a draft that does not substantially disturb or prop dredge the bottom. Applications for such work shall be required to contain a description of the types, draft and numbers of vessels or equipment to be used and a detailed plan and time frame for restoring and replanting areas that may be damaged. Owners will be encouraged to seek an alternate means of supplying electricity to the island. Expansion or upgrading of the facility (involving more or larger poles or supplying service to other properties) will be discouraged.

**Rationale:** The line and poles traverse extremely shallow waters with lush grassbeds and narrow passes between Long Beach and all of the Newfound Harbor Keys. Conventional marine construction equipment could inflict serious damage to marine grassbeds in the area. The overhead lines are depicted as a navigational hazard on charts for the area. Passes are too shallow for sailboat (fixed keel) traffic but small sailboats do anchor leeward of the islands. Winds and waves associated with major storms could knock down poles or bring down portions of the power line into waters of the preserve creating hazards to navigation and public safety.

**MANAGEMENT AREA CII/2 a**  
**(commercial-industrial-institutional/  
secondary resource protection area)**  
**special management area**

Boundary: Those submerged lands included within Sovereignty Submerged Lands Lease No. 441230285 and the intervening area between the two parcels to a distance of 300 feet from the MHWL of the north shoreline of Little Munson Island (a.k.a. Sheriff's Island, Munson, and Little Palm Island). Additionally, those submerged lands from the MHWL to 50 feet from shore on the southern shoreline of said island for a distance of 1000 linear feet as an approved modification to the above lease.

Description: This management area is established to recognize the existing commercial use on Little Munson Island, consisting of a small hotel/motel, restaurant, two private docks, 800 feet +/- perimeter dock, boat basin, rip rap shoreline and amenities associated with a resort operation. Anticipated uses of the existing facilities on sovereign lands include private dockage for guests and employees of the facility, commercial tours, fishing, snorkeling, swimming, diving and other water dependent activities associated with the docks.

The specific boundary includes all state owned submerged lands currently under lease for the in water structures. The area between the two docks on the north shoreline is included within the management area since submerged resources are relatively sparse as a result of past use and the exposed nature of the shoreline. Natural resources within this boundary include scattered mangroves, scattered grassbeds, hardbottom and mud/sand banks. The remaining submerged lands adjoining the island and this management area are in Management Area PL/1a and shall be managed accordingly.

Allowable Uses: Commercial-Industrial Docks (limited)

Specific Criteria: Existing facilities and use shall be confined to the leased area and management area boundary. No expansion or new facilities will be authorized and all conditions of the existing lease shall be honored. No live aboards and no fueling facilities are authorized. Boats greater than 26 feet in length are strictly prohibited on the south perimeter dock and all boats moored at either of the three docks are required to maintain at least one foot clearance between the deepest draft of the vessel and the bottom, as provided by Chapter 18-21.0041(1)(b)3(a). All portions of docks over waters less than - 4 feet MLW shall have hand rails or signage to discourage boat mooring in those areas.

Seaplanes, individual internal combustion water craft (jet ski, jet boat, etc.) and ultra light air craft are not considered traditional uses within the preserve and typically encroach upon other management areas and other traditional uses. Therefore,

rentals or use of sea planes or ultra light air craft from the management area will be expressly discouraged. Jet skis and jet boats are expressly prohibited.

All commercial activities, other than the water dependent activities listed above must be contained on the riparian uplands. Concerts, conventions, exhibitions, competitions (races, contests, games, etc.), tournaments, entertainments, advertising, and other events or activities that would generate boat density beyond the mooring capacity of the existing dock facilities are discouraged and shall be conducted outside the aquatic preserve.

Rationale: The island and immediate vicinity have been traditionally used as a small private fish camp. Areas immediately adjoining the island have been severely impacted by past dredging, boating and erosion. The area south of the island is an expansive, shallow and productive marine grassbed. The area to the east of the island is composed of fringing mangroves and lush grassbeds. The area to the west and north provides access to deeper waters in New Found Harbor (Pine) Channel and a dredged access channel.

Restrictions and prohibitions of certain aircraft and watercraft are deemed necessary to preserve the biological and aesthetic qualities of the preserve. Boats with greater than 3 feet draft disturb bottom features, suspend sediments with prop wash and are imminently more inclined to prop dredge marine grassbeds in the vicinity of the island. Sea planes, jet boats, jet skis and ultra light aircraft are disruptive to feeding and resting activities of wading and diving birds that frequent shallow waters in the preserve. Operation of sea planes and individual water craft in shallow water also disturbs marine grassbeds and young mangroves and is most often in direct conflict with other traditional activities such as fishing, swimming, and snorkeling. Ultra light aircraft similarly disturb bird life and disrupt feeding activities of certain types of fish thereby encroaching upon feeding success of the birds and interfering with recreational fishing activities. Key deer are easily panicked by low flying aircraft and all aircraft over both the Key Deer Refuge and the Great White Heron Refuge are restricted to 500 feet altitude by federal law. The aesthetic enjoyment and privacy of other preserve visitors and residents of the area are also encroached upon.

Restrictions and prohibitions of certain commercial activities is deemed appropriate for several reasons. The listed activities are of a nature that would invite broad public participation, thereby generating excessive boat traffic in the vicinity, creating potential hazards to navigation and disrupting or interfering with other traditional uses and the marine resources of the preserve. These activities are either not water dependent or could be as effectively conducted outside the aquatic preserve.

**MANAGEMENT AREA SF-CF**  
**(single family-commercial fishery area)**

**Boundary:** No designated Fishing Village Land Use Districts presently adjoin the aquatic preserve. This management area is tentatively established to accommodate existing or future designations of single family fisheries enterprises that are conducted from a residence that may involve use of a dock on or over state-owned submerged lands.

**Description:** This management area may potentially include several locations in Management Area SF/1a or PL/1a that exhibit marine grassbeds, mangroves, beach/berm and hardbottom habitats. It shall apply to any future proposed use and to existing uses where the riparian owner has properly filed for grandfathering with Monroe County and/or where a riparian owner holds an occupational license to conduct such activities on said property. Existing and proposed facilities will be reviewed on a case by case basis to evaluate impacts to state-owned submerged lands.

This management area designation shall not apply to privately held submerged lands where such activities are conducted, except by negotiated agreement with the Board of Trustees and the affected owner (Chapter 258.40(1), F.S.). However, fishing facilities, vessels and structures on privately owned submerged lands shall not encroach upon, damage resources or preempt use of state owned submerged lands in the preserve.

**Allowable Use:** Private Residential Single Docks, Commercial-Industrial Docks (Limited)

**Specific Criteria:** All existing and proposed docks on state-owned submerged lands within the management area conducting fisheries operations shall conform to the single family dock design criteria previously established. Additionally, riparian owners having docks in this management area or in other management areas that are not presently under lease shall make application for a lease within 120 days of adoption of this plan and after appropriate notice by the Division to affected owner.

Those docks that do not presently conform to the single family criteria shall be assessed according to the compliance/ conformance criteria set forth for Commercial/Industrial docks. Those docks found to be not in compliance and/or those found to be in violation of authorized permits or lease shall be brought into compliance as outlined for Management Area SF/1 within one year of adoption of this plan and after appropriate notification of affected owner.

The following criteria shall also apply to these facilities and activities: 1) liveaboard vessels, fueling facilities and/or fuel storage are expressly prohibited; 2) dipping or storage of traps shall be confined to riparian uplands with appropriate buffers to

contain run-off on site; 3) there shall be a minimum of 1 foot clearance between the deepest draft of vessel(s) and the bottom at MLW; and 4) in-water holding pens or trap storage, mechanical loading of traps and/or mechanical off loading of catch is not authorized.

Rationale: Residential family fisheries are recognized as a traditional land use in residential subdivisions where grandfathered by Monroe County and in the Commercial Fishing Village District. All revenue generating/income related activities on state-owned submerged lands are required by rule Chapter 18-21.005(1)(b) to lease preempted lands. The single family dock criteria is intended to provide riparian access while providing maximum protection of marine resources within the preserve.

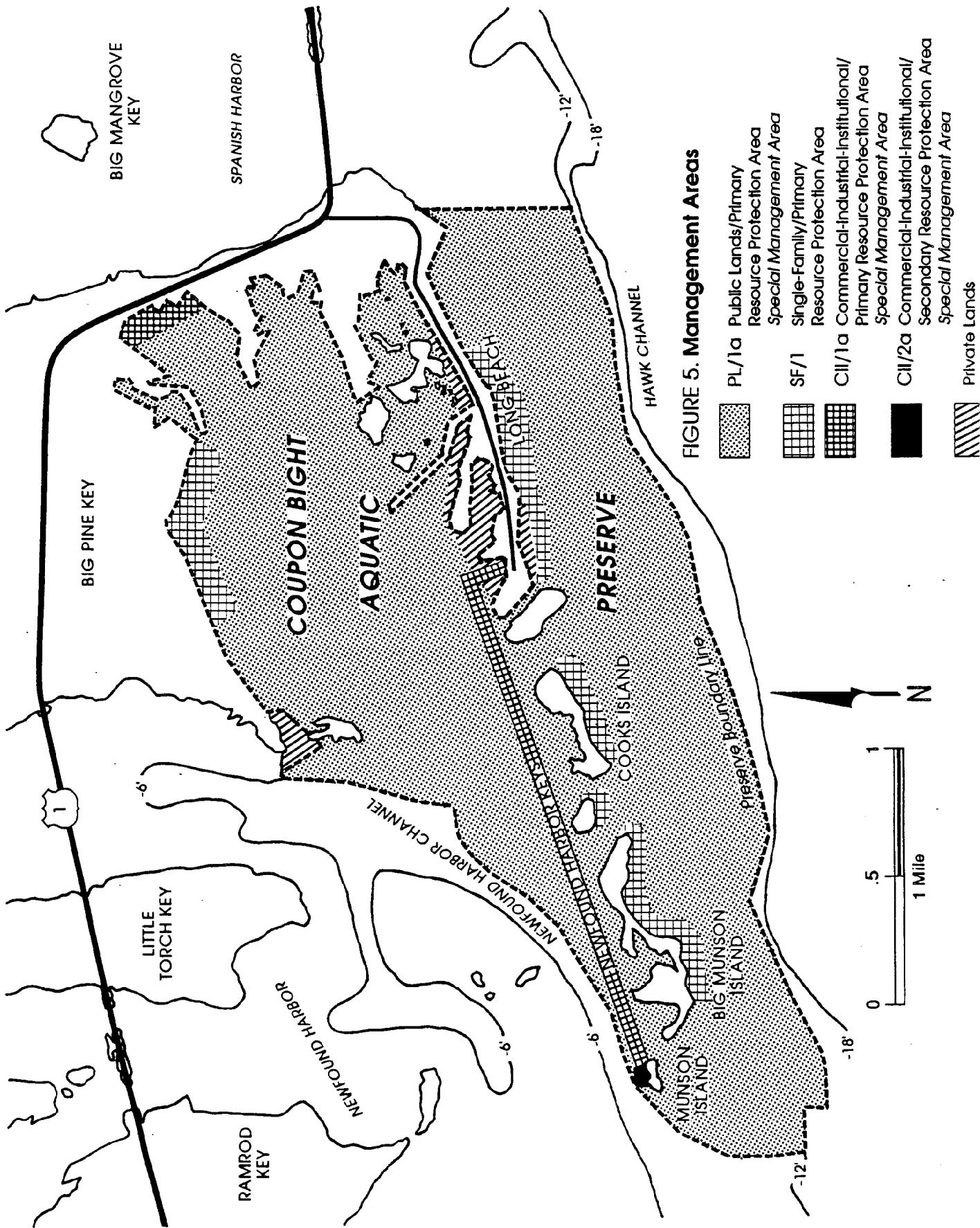


FIGURE 5. Management Areas



## CHAPTER V

### SITE SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The first part of this chapter deals with management issues involving specific activities, as opposed to permitted structures, that directly affect the biological integrity of the Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve. The issues that are specific to this area include, but are not limited to: conflicting uses, increasing air and watercraft traffic, the protection of designated species and their habitat, the protection of bird feeding and resting areas, research needs, damage to marine resources, acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands, and boundary extension. Other issues may arise as future use intensifies and these will be identified as they develop.

The second part of this chapter establishes policy guidelines for these issues. These policy guidelines are intended to provide additional management direction and supplement those set forth by Chapter 258, F.S., Chapters 18-20 and 18-21, F.A.C., or Chapter IV of this plan.

#### **A. MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND SPECIAL NEEDS**

##### **1. CONFLICTING USES**

To some extent many of the issues identified in this section are directly related to uses that may fulfill one individual or groups needs but are in conflict with another's activities (or safety) and/or the legislative intent for establishing the preserve. Activities that compromise or damage resources may not always seem significant unless cumulative impacts are taken into account. Any of the following activities should be evaluated for the long-term cumulative impacts.

Vessel mooring for extended periods shades submerged grasses and may create hazards to navigation. Prevailing easterly winds and weak tidal currents within the Bight tend to hold anchored boats in the same orientation for extended periods of time, especially during the summer months. Extended periods of shading reduces photosynthetic activity in benthic vegetation. Liveaboard vessels and other boats often compound impacts with chemicals, wastes and sewage that are introduced to surrounding waters, whether intentional or accidental. Boat operation and anchorage in shallow water disturbs bottom communities and resuspends sediments that affect light penetration to vegetation and coral. (Policy Guidelines 1, 2, 10, & 13.)

Anchoring on or near coral formations causes considerable damage from anchors and anchor lines that break or chaff corals. Boat groundings on the shallow reefs are frequent. Poor navigational skills and visibility are major causes of groundings. Divers (scuba and snorkel) can and do damage corals and other marine life. The inexperienced and uninformed touch and stand on formations, inflicting wounds and opening a colony to infection or predation. (Policy Guidelines 6, 10 and 12.)

Spear fishing and marine life collecting are believed to have seriously altered species, age and size class distribution on the patch reefs in the preserve. Removal of large predatory fish encourages a proliferation of grazing omnivores that feed on algae, as well as corals. Removal of the 'aquarium size' fish and invertebrates alters food webs and ecological partitioning on the patch reef. Diversity and the long term stability of these environments may be compromised. Lobster trap retrieval methods inflict similar damage when traps are dragged over the bottom or are set too close to coral formations and lines become entangled. Hook and line fishing introduces fishing tackle that also becomes entangled in corals and gorgonians. (Policy Guidelines 7, 8 & 10.)

## 2. INCREASED AIR AND WATER CRAFT USE

The past use of seaplanes in the preserve has given rise to heated outrage by many of local fishermen and residents and is extremely disruptive to bird life and the Key deer. The north half of Coupon Bight (southern boundary of the Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge) is federally restricted air space. There is no locally specified air port district which allows this type of activity, nor is there a designated federal landing area in the vicinity. The use of commercial or private seaplanes and ultra light air craft are not compatible with the traditional uses recognized for the preserve. Nor are these uses compatible with the resource management goals outlined in Chapter VI of this plan. (Policy Guideline 14.)

Logically, the numbers and types of watercraft within any given body of water must be compatible with the available space and existing water depths. Additionally, one must consider the purposes for designating the preserve; to manage primarily for the maintenance of essentially natural conditions, the propagation of fish and wildlife and public recreation. As populations increase so do the numbers and types of watercraft in the preserve. Increased pressure on limited resources and space invariably generates conflicts with other visitors and the intent of the preserves management philosophy for the natural resources. Preservation of natural conditions is critical to maintaining fish and wildlife habitats. If preserve visitors are to experience safe areas for swimming and snorkeling, quiet areas for fishing and wildlife observation, some regulation of boating traffic is essential. (Policy Guidelines 2, 4, 6, 10 & 13.)

### 3. PROTECTION OF DESIGNATED SPECIES AND THEIR HABITAT

The Great White Heron and the Key Deer Refuges were federally established to provide minimum habitat for these two designated species. Designated animal species are not sedentary but traverse and utilize a wide variety of habitats, many of which are not included within the refuge boundaries. These and other designated species are frequent visitors to or 'residents' of Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve. (Policy Guidelines 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, & 15.)

Key Deer: Habitat and corridors for movement from the New Found Harbor Keys and the Cactus Hammock Preserve to the main deer population on Big Pine Key must be maintained and protected to the greatest extent possible. To that end, all activities in the preserve will be reviewed within the provisions of the Key Deer Recovery Plan and will be subject to recommendations from the Key Deer Refuge Management Plan. Proposals to rehabilitate disturbed wetlands will also evaluate such activities as to how they would positively or negatively impact the deer. For example, backfilling abandoned mosquito ditches may reduce mortality of young deer that fall or are chased into the ditches and drown. Conversely, some of the ditches may retain fresh water that is vital for the deer during the winter dry season.

Listed Bird Species: Colonial wading and diving birds nest in close proximity to the preserve and use the area extensively for feeding and resting. The shallow baylets, mangroves and saltmarsh buttonwood areas are especially attractive to them. Destruction of grass beds and mangroves, boat traffic in shallow waters and vehicular traffic in the saltmarsh buttonwood areas disrupts or destroys vital habitat and inhibits expansion of nesting areas. Ground nesting birds are equally subject to disturbance from foot and vehicular traffic.

Marine Turtles: The limited beach/berm habitats in the preserve are the only suitable nesting areas for these globally depleted reptiles. Roads, buildings and other structures eliminate much of this needed area. Beach lighting during the nesting season disorients hatchlings and may contribute significantly to mortality when young turtles crawl onto roadways instead of towards the water. Exotic plants and mechanical beach 'cleaning' may also damage nests or discourage nesting crawls. Entanglement with nets, traps, buoy lines and fishing lines, ingested plastics, poaching (eggs or turtles), and wounds from boat propellers are also serious problems.

Other Listed Wildlife Species: As additional species are listed or as more information becomes available about the life histories and habitat needs of presently listed species, certain activities and management policies may need to be established or revised to reflect these changes. For the present, all state owned lands will be maintained in their 'essentially natural condition,' as listed species' affinity for these types of areas has been demonstrated.

Listed Plant Species: To the greatest extent possible, state owned lands within the preserve should be protected from land clearing, mangrove trimming and topographic alterations that would negatively impact habitats for these plants. Collecting, vehicular and foot traffic, altered water flow and herbicides represent serious impacts to the plants themselves and the habitat required for their survival. Pineland communities that would benefit from ecological burning should be identified and appropriate measures taken to institute a fire regime when deemed necessary. Restoration of historic plant communities and eradication of invasive exotic plants would also enhance habitat for these species and wildlife.

#### 4. DAMAGE TO SUBMERGED RESOURCES

Damage may be due to natural events, such as hurricanes or disease but is most often the direct result of man's activities in or adjacent to the preserve. Tropical storms may erode or bury grass beds, topple coral formations or blanket them with sediments. These are natural cyclic events that have occurred for thousands of years but as previously noted, the capabilities for recovery of these communities may be inhibited by the activities of man.

Poorly planned development and placement of docks or other structures impact submerged resources by increasing run-off, shading benthic vegetation and encouraging utilization of shallow water areas for boating. Inexperienced boaters and careless boat operation in shallow waters are responsible for propeller scouring or dredging of marine grass beds and damage to corals. Less visible is the damage caused by careless divers and snorkelers, degraded water quality, and the alteration of community structure from collecting fish and invertebrates. ( Policy Guidelines 1, 4, 5, 7, & 10.)

#### 5. RESEARCH NEEDS

Current research will hopefully provide a better understanding of the origins, processes, extent and severity of black band disease on coral reefs and the extensive mortality of marine grassbeds in Florida Bay. Since both of these phenomena (and others) are a regional concern, and since the coral and grassbed communities are habitat for a broad range of commercially and biologically significant species, all efforts to identify affected areas and garner funding support for research are considered a major priority.

Water quality research and monitoring are also a priority. The shallow, semi-enclosed configuration of Coupon Bight is not conducive to good flushing or tidal exchange. Knowledge of the sources, concentrations and long term effects of pollutants that enter waters of the preserve are needed. Chronic or episodic

release of polluted water into the Bight could devastate the lagoon. (Policy Guideline 9.)

## 6. ACQUISITION OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS

An extensive area of saltmarsh, buttonwood and mangrove wetlands lies to the north of the Bight. This area also contains pinelands, berms and tropical hardwood hammocks that are under pressure for future development. As noted in Chapter III, most of this area has been targeted for purchase under the CARL program. Several mangrove islands and several tracts of privately held submerged lands should also be included within this program. These areas are presently undeveloped and only minor alterations of natural features has occurred. The islands are potential colonial nesting bird habitats. The submerged land areas are in effect 'out holdings' within the boundary of the preserve. Present Monroe land use regulations provide for a broad range of activities within the Off Shore Island and Native Area Districts. These uses and activities are not compatible with the intent or the management objectives of the aquatic Preserve. (Policy Guidelines 3 & 11.)

## 7. BOUNDARY EXTENSION

Large coral heads and significant hardbottom and grassbeds lie seaward of the present Atlantic boundary. These areas are in waters from -12 to -18 foot depths. Extension of the boundary to -15 foot contour would create a buffer zone adjacent to the patch reefs. Marking of the boundary at this point would alert boaters to the submerged reefs before they are too near to avoid them. ( Policy Guideline 12.)

## 8. DEVELOP ARTHROPOD CONTROL PLAN

Past and present mosquito control activities have and will continue to impact resources within the aquatic preserve. Ditching and drainage have severely altered natural water flow, vegetation and habitat quality in the preserve. Aerial or ground application of insecticides and carrier substances for aerial mosquito control may introduce toxic substances into waters of the preserve. Coordination and cooperation with the local mosquito control district to develop a mutually acceptable management plan is imperative to protect human health and welfare and the aquatic resources of the preserve. (Policy Guideline 15.)

## **B. POLICY GUIDELINES**

This section of the plan contains a number of management policies that address the issues identified as being particular to Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve. Adoption of these policy guidelines will provide specific direction for managing those issues not addressed directly by statute or rule. The major policy guidelines for these issues include:

1. Promote recognition of the fact that marine grassbeds and corals provide valuable habitat and food sources for a variety of organisms essential to the biological integrity of the preserve. This biological integrity translates into significant economic value to this region, especially in terms of recreation, tourism and fisheries.
2. Reduce the impacts of marine grassbed prop dredging and coral damage by establishing no (motor) boating zones by seeking appropriate rule changes and/or in combination with local government ordinances, and by establishing navigation aids where needed.
3. Promote the acquisition of privately owned mangrove wetlands and submerged lands to enhance the available habitat for endangered, threatened and species of special concern and to maintain scenic vistas and aesthetic qualities of the preserve.
4. Protect valuable feeding and resting areas for birdlife and Key deer by prohibiting jet skis and (motor) boat operation in shallow waters, by seeking appropriate rule changes.
5. Protect all biological resources by prohibiting fueling facilities and fuel storage in the preserve, by seeking appropriate rule changes.
6. Protect coral patch reefs from boat anchor damage and overuse by establishing a mooring buoy system on larger patch reefs.
7. Protect the biological diversity and ecological balance of the patch reefs, hardbottom and marine grassbed communities by seeking legislation that would prohibit or substantially regulate collecting of algae, fish and invertebrates in the preserve.
8. Establish non-consumptive use zones on the larger patch reefs of the preserve. These management zones would be closed to consumptive uses such as, spearfishing, hook and line fishing, lobstering, and marine life collecting.

9. Identify specific research needs and actively seek support on a Division level for research funding.
10. Promote the protection of marine and upland resources by disseminating literature and conducting environmental education activities, both on and off site.
11. Promote acquisition of privately held, environmentally sensitive lands to protect upland and marine resources.
12. Support extension of the Atlantic preserve boundary to the -15 foot contour to protect large coral formations and provide a buffer zone to the patch reefs.
13. Protect water quality, aesthetic values and benthic communities by seeking appropriate legislation to prohibit or restrict extended mooring in the Coupon Bight portion of the preserve.
14. Reduce impacts to Key deer, feeding and nesting birds and aesthetic appreciation of the preserve by seeking appropriate federal and state code, statute or rule changes to prohibit commercial and private aircraft from flying less than 500 feet over or landing in the preserve.
15. Reduce or eliminate adverse impacts to biological resources of the preserve by coordination and cooperation with Monroe County Mosquito Control District and the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services to develop a mutually acceptable arthropod control management plan for the preserve area, pursuant to Chapter 388.411, F.S.

## CHAPTER VI

### **MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN**

The purpose of this chapter is to establish guidelines that allow for the sound management and protection of the aquatic preserves natural resources for the benefit of future generations (Section 258.35, F.S.)

Before an effective program can be designed to manage and protect natural resources, one must complete an inventory of the resources, establish what their functions are, decide the importance of these functions, and where these resources are located. Additional efforts will consist of identifying those activities or parameters that affect these resources, either positively or negatively. This information will form the foundation from which action will be initiated to manage and protect these resources. The management strategies for an aquatic preserve program must consist of a variety of components such as resource management, resource protection, research, and environmental education.

In general, the role of the program in management of the aquatic preserve includes: 1) providing information on the ecological functions and economic importance of resources within the preserve, 2) overseeing those activities that affect the natural resources, 3) ensuring that accurate biological and physical information is considered in permitting and planning decisions, 4) ensuring that all statutes and rules regarding the preserve's natural resources are complied with and that violations of these provisions are investigated and corrected by appropriate enforcement agencies, 5) conducting on site surveys for specific activities, 6) coordinating with other resource management and enforcement agencies, 7) educating the public on the inherent values associated with natural resources, 8) conducting or cooperating with a comprehensive management program that can be periodically updated to reflect the dynamics of natural systems and the changing needs of man and the resources. To achieve those ends this section of the plan establishes goals and identifies the supportive objectives and develops policy statements and tasks to accomplish those goals.

For all of the following goals, objectives and tasks, the Department of Natural Resources will, when appropriate and practical, participate with other agencies and organizations dedicated to protecting the local resources. In order to avoid duplication of effort the Department will initiate programs only when they do not overlap or compete with programs operated by other governmental agencies or non-profit corporations.

## **A. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

The overall goals of resource management within aquatic preserves are: 1) conducting and maintaining resource inventories, 2) assessing the impact of human activities on the resources, 3) establishing habitat restoration programs, and 4) cooperating with other agencies in assessing, improving and/or maintaining conditions that are conducive to preserving the resources and water quality.

### **GOAL A.1: CONDUCT AND MAINTAIN RESOURCE INVENTORIES**

**Objective A.1.1:** To conduct and maintain a resource inventory of submerged resources for the aquatic preserve.

**Task A.1.1.1:** Conduct an inventory of marine grassbeds, algal beds, coral banks, patch reefs and hardbottom areas by using LANDSAT imagery, aerial photography, and groundtruthing efforts every three years.

**Task A.1.1.2:** The data base generated from these inventories will be used to create and maintain biological resource maps that will be consulted when assessing a proposed activity or evaluating potential impacts from manmade or natural events not otherwise anticipated.

**Task A.1.1.3:** These inventories will be available to public agencies involved in resource management and land planning.

**Objective A.1.2:** To conduct and maintain a resource inventory of emergent vegetation and habitats for the preserve lands.

**Task A.1.2.1:** Conduct and maintain an inventory of mangroves, buttonwood/saltmarsh, beach/berm, pinelands, hammocks, and other shoreline vegetation in and adjacent to the preserve by using LANDSAT imagery, aerial photography and groundtruthing efforts every three years or more often if deemed necessary.

**Task A.1.2.2:** The database generated from these inventories will be used to create and maintain biological resource maps that will be consulted when assessing a proposed activity or evaluating potential impacts from manmade or natural events not otherwise anticipated.

**Task A.1.2.3:** These inventories will be available to public agencies involved in resource management and land planning.

**Objective A.1.3:** Conduct and maintain inventories of designated species and their habitats for the preserve.

**Task A.1.3.1:** Conduct and maintain inventories of designated species and their habitats by using data from existing literature, managing agencies, field observations and current research studies every three years or more often if deemed necessary.

**Task A.1.3.2:** Coordinate with appropriate management and enforcement agencies to ensure that preserve management decisions and public actions or activities are compatible with the viability and management of a species or habitat.

**Objective A.1.4:** To conduct and maintain inventories of wading and diving birds and their habitats in the preserve.

**Task A.1.4.1:** Conduct and maintain inventories of coastal waterfowl and migratory bird species that feed, nest, roost and loaf in the preserve and adjacent areas by using existing literature, bird counts, field observations, and current research studies every three years, or more often if deemed necessary.

**Task A.1.4.2:** Coordinate with appropriate management, enforcement and research agencies to ensure that preserve management decisions and public actions or activities are compatible with the viability and management of a species or habitat.

**Task A.1.4.3:** Coordinate with public or conservation agencies that may be conducting similar inventories of species, populations, life histories, migration patterns and habitat needs where mutual benefits in knowledge and management objectives are to be gained.

## **GOAL A.2: ASSESS THE EFFECTS OF HUMAN ACTIVITIES/CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

**Objective A.2.1:** To inventory and assess the effects of human activities on the natural resources of the preserve.

**Task A.2.1.1:** Survey and inventory structures and construction activities in the preserve every three years, or more often if deemed necessary. This survey shall contain at a minimum:

- a) types of structures (dock, pier, seawall, rip-rap, piling, mooring buoy, utility pole, etc.);
- b) design of structures (width, length, height above MHW, square footage of access pier and terminal platform, number of pilings, number and size of finger piers, construction material (wood, boulder or concrete), deck spacing, material treatment (pressure and/or chemical treated), type of anchorage for buoys or pilings, etc.);
- c) the water depth at the terminus of the structure and/or relation to MHW line for shoreline stabilization;
- d) number of boats using a structure;
- e) functional condition of the structure;
- f) any accessory facilities and ancillary uses associated with the structure;
- g) the structure's use category (e.g., single family, commercial, etc.);
- h) an inventory of the biological resources within the preempted area and within 25 feet of the structure or activity;
- i) a survey of all dredged areas including:
  - 1) the location, length, width, and depth of the dredged area;
  - 2) depth of profiles of the surrounding area;
  - 3) traditional use of the area;
  - 4) biological resources in the dredged and surrounding area;
  - 5) whether the dredged area is a private or public project;
  - 6) review of information on pre-existing resource conditions;
  - 7) potential alternatives to alleviate the need for maintenance dredging (shoreline stabilization, wave baffles, etc.); and
  - 8) whether channel markers may be needed to direct traffic away from adjacent submerged resources.
- j) a survey of all shoreline stabilization projects, including:
  - 1) location and total length of riparian shoreline;
  - 2) length of the shoreline stabilization;
  - 3) design of project;
  - 4) review of existing and pre-existing biological resources in the vicinity of the structure;

- 5) whether the project is effective in stabilizing the shoreline; and
  - 6) whether toe rip-rap or mangrove plantings may improve upon the effectiveness of the structure.
- k) a determination as to whether the structure or activity complies with the applicable statute or rule and with lease, easement or consent of use conditions, where appropriate;

**Task A.2.1.2:** Survey and inventory human activities within the preserve annually. This inventory will include at the minimum:

- a) numbers of individuals or groups involved in activities by category (consumptive, non-consumptive, water dependent, non-water dependent, commercial, recreational, educational, etc.) from weekly patrol logs, reports, or expanded visitor surveys and monitoring;
- b) illegal, unsafe or ecologically disruptive activities: and
- c) activities that require additional monitoring to evaluate intensity or trends in use of the preserve or its resources.

**Objective A.2.2:** To assess cumulative impacts of construction activities and structures on the resources of the preserve.

**Task A.2.2.1:** All activities and structures will be surveyed as outlined in Policy A.2.1.1 and appropriate files kept and updated every three years to establish net loss or gain of resources as related to structures and construction activities. Files shall contain at the minimum:

- a) size, configuration and preempted area of the structure and related use;
- b) a survey of the biological resources within the preempted area and within 50 feet of the preempted area;
- c) condition and extent of those resources as related to previous surveys (grassbeds expanding or declining, prop scouring, establishment of different type of community, etc.);
- d) whether existing use is consistent with type use activity authorized.

Objective A.2.3. Assess impacts of human activities on resources of the preserve.

Task A.2.3.2: Survey major access and use areas for impacts to natural resources associated with human activities. This file shall contain but is not limited to the following information;

- a) assessments of areas or resources damaged by visitors or transient traffic in the preserve (erosion, pollution, destruction of vegetation, interruption of wildlife habitat or behavior, vessel groundings, prop dredging, turbidity, trash dumping, etc.);
- b) illegal or unauthorized activities that require assistance from other agencies or enforcement authorities to resolve;
- c) management alternatives to alleviate impacts; and
- d) recommendations for management.

#### GOAL A.3: HABITAT RESTORATION

Objective A.3.1: Restore or enhance suitable habitats or resources where feasible.

Task A.3.1.1: Using resource inventories generated from Goal A.1., identify those resource areas that have been or are being negatively impacted by external influences. These influences may include, but are not limited to; prop scars, spoil banks, dredged areas, boat grounding areas, clearings, dumping, mosquito ditches, erosion, abandoned traps or vessels, exotic vegetation, and roads.

Task A.3.1.2: Prioritize potential restoration areas according to severity of impact to the immediate resources and to the overall functional integrity of the preserve.

Task A.3.1.3: Develop procedures and guidelines for addressing the priority areas for restoration, such as exotic plant removal, beach clean-up, removal or planting of spoil banks, revegetating grassbed or mangrove areas, enhancing listed species habitats, removal of derelict vessels and abandoned traps, filling in mosquito ditches, reestablishing historic water flows, etc.

**Task A.3.1.4:** Investigate and contact other agencies, groups, institutions, and individuals who may be available to provide scientific, logistic, financial, enforcement, manpower or other support in accomplishing the habitat restoration or enhancement.

**Task A.3.1.5:** Monitor and review progress on restoration projects.

- a) Monitor restoration procedures while in progress and restored areas on at least an annual basis.
- b) Maintain accurate records of the project including but not limited to:
  - 1) type of project;
  - 2) anticipated results;
  - 3) benefits to the resource;
  - 4) location, date, parties involved, duration of project;
  - 5) completion date;
  - 6) monitoring schedule;
  - 7) results or changes observed;
  - 8) additional maintenance or monitoring required;
  - 9) estimated cost of project in time and funding;
  - 10) an assessment of the success of the project or an explanation of why anticipated results were not achieved;
  - 11) recommendations as to how the project could or should be improved upon; and
  - 12) if the procedure could or should be used for future or similar projects.

#### **GOAL A.4.: RESTORE, ENHANCE OR MAINTAIN WATER QUALITY**

**Objective A.4.1.:** Coordinate with appropriate agencies to improve and/or maintain water quality in the preserve.

**Task A.4.1.1:** Acquire, maintain and review all records of water quality data for the preserve area.

**Task A.4.1.2:** Coordinate with regulatory and management agencies in identifying and managing areas within the preserve that may be contributing to sedimentation or other undesirable impacts to waters of the preserve (mosquito ditches, compaction of soils and channelization of run-off from roads, previous land clearing, etc.).

Task A.4.1.3: Report suspected or identified instances of violations to appropriate regulatory and enforcement agencies.

Task A.4.1.4: Support and assist, whenever possible, programs or research that will contribute to improving water quality or providing additional information on the status of the subject in the preserve area.

## **B. RESOURCE PROTECTION**

In order to maintain the biological integrity of the aquatic preserve, it is imperative to protect the resources that comprise the system. In most cases, it is not feasible, nor is it desirable, to provide protection for individual species that are a part of the various habitats that make up the preserve. Therefore, the goals of resource protection outlined in this element will be directed toward protecting the habitats that are vital to the survival of the species and in conjunction with other habitat types are the functional basis of biological integrity and stability within the preserve. These goals include: 1) protection of submerged resources (patch reefs, coral banks and heads, grassbeds and hardbottom habitats), 2) protection of emergent vegetation (mangroves, saltmarsh/buttonwood, beach/berm and tropical hardwood hammock habitats), and 3) protection of designated species habitats.

### **GOAL B.1.: PROTECTION OF SUBMERGED RESOURCES**

Objective B.1.1.: Minimize potential damage to submerged resources through the review of applications for use of state-owned lands in the aquatic preserve.

Task B.1.1.1.: Develop a written description of a scientifically based, standardized method to inventory the resources of the preserve. At a minimum, this method will contain the following information:

a) The area to be surveyed will be described:

- 1) as a polygon, and
- 2) it will include a buffer zone surrounding the project of sufficient size to include a majority of the potentially affected area.

b) How the survey is to be performed:

1) The submerged bottom, including:

- i. a description of all communities/habitats,
- ii. a description of the bottom type,
- iii. depth profiles,
- iv. tidal amplitude and stage,
- v. a physical description of the surrounding waterbody,
- vi. adjacent and adjoining uses, and
- vii. distance to navigation channels:

2) The shoreline, including:

- i. a description of the vegetation,
- ii. a description of the shoreline type,
- iii. a description of existing structures,
- iv. a description of adjoining and adjacent uses,
- v. presence/absence of listed animal species or their habitat or whether known to occur in the area; and
- vi. presence/absence of other wildlife or their signs.

c) A definition of a Resource Protection Area (RPA). This definition will be used to determine if significant resources or habitats exist within the area of expected impact. An RPA will include, but is not limited to:

- 1) marine grassbeds,
- 2) algal beds,
- 3) mangroves and saltmarsh/buttonwood associations,
- 4) hardbottom communities,
- 5) coral banks or heads,
- 6) patch reefs,
- 7) beach/berm,
- 8) listed species or their habitat, and
- 9) nesting sites for solitary or colonial birds.

Task B.1.1.2.: Coordinate with the appropriate regional DNR staff to process field staff comments to applications for use in a timely manner.

Task B.1.1.3.: Coordinate, when possible, with other appropriate agencies that have regulatory authority for these projects.

Objective B.1.2.: Ensure that projects and activities that have been built or are occurring have been authorized.

Task B.1.2.1.: Report activities that do not appear to have been authorized to the appropriate DNR enforcement agent.

Task B.1.2.2.: Coordinate and cooperate, when possible, with other appropriate agencies that have regulatory or enforcement authority for these projects or activities.

Task B.1.2.3.: Maintain records of reports and subsequent actions taken by regulatory and enforcement agencies. At a minimum, these records will contain:

- 1) Date, location first observed and observers name;
- 2) Date reported to appropriate agency, agency name, and reporters name;
- 3) Action taken by agency; and
- 4) Resolution of report, if known.

Objective B.1.3.: Ensure that projects and activities are in compliance with the authorization granted.

Task B.1.3.1.: Coordinate with the appropriate regional DNR staff to receive copies of all letters of consent, easement agreements, lease agreements, and other forms of authorization.

Task B.1.3.2.: Report variations from the authorized conditions to the appropriate DNR enforcement agent.

Task B.1.3.3.: Coordinate and cooperate, when possible, with other appropriate agencies that have regulatory or enforcement authority for these projects or activities.

Objective B.1.4.: Ensure that projects and activities do not degrade submerged resources of the preserve.

Task B.1.4.1.: Seek authorizations to establish no motorized vessels or personal watercraft zones in areas of shallow water.

Task B.1.4.2.: Require that all dredge projects in and adjacent to the preserve use current turbidity control practices.

Task B.1.4.3.: Establish a mooring buoy system near the larger patch reefs in the preserve.

Task B.1.4.4.: Inventory and report all abandoned vessels and traps to the Florida Marine Patrol and encourage removal in a timely manner.

Task B.1.4.5.: Encourage or require the establishment of channel markers, where appropriate, to protect marine grassbeds and corals from boating damage.

Task B.1.4.6.: Seek appropriate legislation to establish non-consumptive use zones in portions of the preserve.

Task B.1.4.7.: Seek appropriate legislation and rule changes to prohibit the harvesting of live rock, tropical fish and marine invertebrates within the preserve.

Task B.1.4.8.: Promote the acquisition of privately held submerged lands within the preserve.

## GOAL B.2.: PROTECTION OF EMERGENT VEGETATION AND HABITATS

Objective B.2.1.: Minimize potential damage to emergent vegetation and beach/berm through the review of all applications for use of state-owned land in the preserve.

Task B.2.1.1.: Field staff will develop a written format describing a scientifically based, standardized method to inventory the emergent vegetation and characteristics of a project site and it shall include, at a minimum, the following information:

a) Description of the area to be surveyed:

- 1) legal description of the subject property;
- 2) as a polygon; and
- 3) with a buffer zone surrounding the project of sufficient size so as to include a majority of the potentially affected area.

b) Detailing how the survey is to be performed:

- 1) a description of the vegetation with notations as listed plant species within the project site and buffer zone;
- 2) a description of geological features or formations, including the following, if beach/berm is present:
  - i. length and width of beach/berm on riparian shoreline;
  - ii. approximate height of the ridge crest; and
  - iii. distance from MHW to the ridge crest;
- 3) a description of existing structures or uses;
- 4) a description of adjoining or adjacent uses;
- 5) presence/absence of listed animal species, their habitat or whether known to occur on the site;
- 6) presence/absence of other wildlife species or their sign.

Task B.2.1.2.: Coordinate with other DNR staff in order to process surveys, determine compliance and provide recommendations and comments in a timely manner.

Task B.2.1.3.: Coordinate with other appropriate agencies that have regulatory authority for these projects.

Task B.2.1.4.: Coordinate and cooperate, whenever possible, with other agencies or conservation organizations that have specific management objectives, research or acquisition projects or other interests in the area of a project, or that may own lands adjacent to the project site, including but not limited to:

- a) Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge;
- b) Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge;
- c) Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission;
- d) National Audubon Society; and
- e) Trust for Public Lands;
- f) Monroe County Land Authority; and
- g) Sea Camp/NHMI; and
- h) The Nature Conservancy.

Objective B.2.2.: Ensure that structures and activities that have been built or are occurring have been authorized.

Task B.2.2.1.: Report activities that do not appear to have been authorized to the appropriate DNR enforcement agent.

Task B.2.2.2.: Coordinate and cooperate, whenever feasible and appropriate, with other agencies that have regulatory or enforcement authority for the project or activity.

Objective B.2.3.: Ensure that structures and activities that have been authorized are in compliance with the conditions of the authorization.

Task B.2.3.1.: Coordinate with the appropriate regional DNR staff to receive copies of all letters of consent, easement agreements, lease agreements and other authorizations for the use of state lands.

Task B.2.3.2.: Report variations from the authorized conditions to the appropriate DNR enforcement agent.

Task B.2.3.3.: Coordinate and cooperate, when feasible and appropriate with other agencies that have regulatory or enforcement authority for these projects or activities.

Objective B.2.4.: Develop a comprehensive management strategy for the C.A.R.L. buffer lands.

Task B.2.4.1.: Survey and inventory natural resources on acquired and proposed acquisitions.

Task B.2.4.2.: Develop 'green line' boundaries to assess potential impacts from adjacent and adjoining lands and development.

Task B.2.4.3.: Inventory impacted areas to determine the extent and severity of exotic plant invasion, hydrological modifications, dumping and other disturbances.

Task B.2.4.4.: Consult with appropriate agencies and management authorities to determine priority projects for restoration and enhancement of listed species habitat.

Task B.2.4.5.: Develop a resource restoration priority list with appropriate projects, manpower and funding needs, permitting requirements, expected benefits, and anticipated time line for completion.

Task B.2.4.6.: Monitor and evaluate results of habitat restoration and enhancement activities.

Task B.2.4.7.: Provide monthly patrols of the buffer lands.

Task B.2.4.8.: Secure areas of access and post boundaries.

Task B.2.4.9.: Prepare a summary of upland resource management activities every two years, detailing progress and limitations.

Task B.2.4.10.: Provide reports on additional management needs, including minimum funding and staffing for implementation.

### GOAL B.3.: PROTECT LISTED SPECIES AND THEIR HABITAT

Objective B.3.1.: Determine which portions of the aquatic preserve serve as habitat for listed species.

Task B.3.1.1.: Assimilate a working library of relevant literature and information on listed species expected to occur in the preserve.

Task B.3.1.2.: Coordinate with the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Audubon Society, and any other relevant group or agency to determine which listed species use what portion of the aquatic preserve for various aspects of their life cycle.

Task B.3.1.3.: Coordinate and cooperate, whenever possible, with appropriate agencies and groups to conduct monitoring, inventories, habitat evaluations or other activities that relate to the status or distribution of listed species or their habitat.

Task B.3.1.4.: During the course of routine field work and patrols, preserve staff will observe and record, whenever practical, sightings, locations, activity and other information relevant to a listed species.

Task B.3.1.5.: Report all manatee sightings to the Marathon office of the Division of Marine Resources.

**Objective B.3.2.:** Protect all listed species of plants and animals.

**Task B.3.2.1.:** Be familiar with listed species, identification, status and relevant laws pertaining to listed species.

**Task B.3.2.2.:** Report, without delay, any incidence of harassment, poaching, killing, taking or other unlawful activity, including unleashed dogs and artificial feeding stations, to the appropriate enforcement agencies.

**Task B.3.2.3.:** Maintain a current list of agencies and individuals who enforce relevant laws and those who are permitted or otherwise authorized to rescue, attend, hold, rehabilitate or salvage listed species or their remains.

**Task B.3.2.4.:** Coordinate and cooperate with appropriate management and enforcement agencies in identifying any activity or project that may potentially affect a listed species.

**Objective B.3.3.:** Protect habitat of listed species.

**Task B.3.3.1.:** Ensure that potential impacts to listed species habitats are identified in the review of projects or activities. Such potential impacts may include, but are not limited.

- 1) Modification or obstruction of beach/berm;
- 2) Dock or beach lighting;
- 3) Fences or other obstructions; and
- 4) Removal of vegetation, except invasive exotics.

**Task B.3.3.2.:** Coordinate and cooperate, whenever possible, with appropriate management and enforcement agencies to evaluate potential impacts to listed species as a result of a proposed project or activity.

**Task B.3.3.3.:** Recommend, where appropriate, modifications to a proposed project or activity that would eliminate or minimize encroachment upon the habitat of listed species.

**Task B.3.3.4.:** Seek appropriate state statute and rule changes to exclude personal/individual watercraft from listed species habitat, including jet ski, water taxi, jet boat, and similar types of motor powered watercraft.

**Task B.3.3.5.:** Seek appropriate federal statute changes and enforcement to regulate use of ultra-light, private and commercial aircraft over and in the aquatic preserve.

Task B.3.3.6.: Coordinate and cooperate with appropriate DNR and other enforcement agencies in the investigation of potential violations of state or local codes or ordinances that impact listed species habitats.

## **C. RESEARCH**

Effective management of a biological system relies almost entirely on information as to how that system functions. Research is the progenitor of this information. Great strides have been made in marine grassbed and mangrove ecology, yet large gaps remain in understanding the functions of the various components of these systems and how they interact with one another. Coral reef ecology is a fledgling science that has blossomed only with the improvements in SCUBA equipment. Understandably, there is much yet to be learned about all of these systems. The goals for research in the aquatic preserve will be directed toward primarily applied research programs, rather than basic, or theoretical research.

The goals of the research program are (1) to gain a better understanding of what factors are essential to the functional, biological integrity of the major habitats within the aquatic preserve and (2) to gain a better understanding of the factors that govern the continued survival and propagation of designated species that use the various habitats of the preserve.

### **GOAL C.1.: MAINTAIN OR ENHANCE THE FUNCTIONAL INTEGRITY OF HABITATS**

Objective C.1.1.: Determine the primary factors that influence the survival of marine grassbeds and algae.

Task C.1.1.1.: Pursue and support research directed toward identifying physical, chemical and/or pathogenic sources of marine grassbed damage.

Task C.1.1.2.: Pursue, at the bureau level, funding to conduct research on the effects of dock/pier shading on the various species of marine grasses and algae of the preserve.

Task C.1.1.3.: Pursue, review and support, where deemed practical, research directed toward protecting or restoring marine grass beds.

Task C.1.1.4.: Pursue and support research directed toward boating impacts (prop dredging, shading, sediment suspension, etc.) on marine grassbeds.

**Objective C.1.2.:** Determine the primary factors that influence the distribution, survival and productivity of mangrove habitats.

**Task C.1.2.1.:** Promote and support research on the physical, chemical, and pathogenic factors that influence mangrove habitats.

**Task C.1.2.2.:** Pursue funding, at a Department level, to investigate the ecological functions of impounded 'dwarf' mangroves.

**Task C.1.2.3.:** Pursue funding and support research projects directed toward restoration of artificially altered mangrove systems.

**Task C.1.2.4.:** Promote and support research on the effects of mangrove trimming.

**Objective C.1.3.:** Determine the primary and secondary factors that affect the species of the hardbottom and coral patch reefs.

**Task C.1.3.1.:** Promote and support research that identifies the physical, chemical and pathogenic factors that influence coral growth, recruitment and mortality.

**Task C.1.3.2.:** Promote and, whenever feasible, participate in compiling an inventory of the benthic infauna present in hardbottom and patch reefs in the preserve.

**Task C.1.3.3.:** Seek, at a Department level, funding for research on the effects of spear-fishing on the size/class range, distribution and dominance of coral/algae grazing fishes and predatory fishes on patch reefs.

**Task C.1.3.4.:** Seek, at a Department level, funding for research on the effects of tropical fish and invertebrate collecting on the species, size range, distribution, density, and diversity of populations on patch reefs.

**Task C.1.3.5.:** Seek, at a Department level, funding for research on the effects of sponge harvesting on hardbottom communities.

**Task C.1.3.6.:** Seek, at a Department level, funding for research on the effects of trap placement and retrieval methods on the submerged resources of the preserve.

**Task C.1.3.7.:** Review and accept, where appropriate, experimental research proposals for the culture of hardbottom sponges in the preserve.

Objective C.1.4.: Encourage applied research directed toward enhancing management of the preserve's resources.

Task C.1.4.1.: Review and encourage, where appropriate, applied research proposals that may be carried out within the preserve or in related or similar environments.

Task C.1.4.2.: Encourage public and private institutions, colleges and universities to submit research proposals.

Task C.1.4.3.: Explore and pursue available grants funding for applied research projects.

Task C.1.4.4.: Coordinate with and communicate applied research needs to Department and Bureau central office staff.

## GOAL C.2.: SURVIVAL AND PROPAGATION OF LISTED SPECIES

Objective C.2.1.: Determine which portions of the preserve serve as habitat for designated species.

Task C.2.1.1.: Pursue, at a Department level, funding for research on the distribution of listed species in the CARL Buffer Zone project.

Task C.2.1.2.: Support, and when feasible, participate in research to establish critical habitat areas for listed species of plants and animals in the preserve.

Task C.2.1.3.: Support and pursue funding for research on the distribution, life cycles and habitat needs of listed species of fishes, reptiles, insects and mollusks of the preserve.

Task C.2.1.4.: Coordinate with appropriate agencies, organizations and universities/colleges to promote applied research projects for listed species.

Task C.2.1.5.: Participate, whenever feasible, with agencies or organizations that survey or monitor listed species in the preserve.

Task C.2.1.6.: Cooperate with the Division of Marine Resources in monitoring and reporting manatee sightings and information.

Task C.2.1.7.: Cooperate with the Division of Marine Resources in monitoring and reporting marine turtle nesting and strandings.

(1): Preserve staff or volunteers who participate in strandings and salvage activities shall be properly trained and permitted and shall maintain accurate records and make timely reports of all activities in the preserve.

#### **D. ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

Public awareness and involvement is potentially the most valuable tool a resource management program may utilize. The public is often not aware of the resources of the preserve nor of the various impacts that human activities have upon those resources. The 'public' may be students, property owners, user groups (e.g., divers, fishing enthusiasts, boaters, etc.), special interest groups (realtors, developers and contractors), conservation or preservation organizations, and local, regional and state government agencies that are involved in making planning or regulatory decisions affecting the preserve.

The many values derived from marine habitats, including water quality, viable fisheries, recreation and open space, attract many visitors and residents to the preserve area. These same values may be irreparably harmed, if the public is not environmentally sensitive or informed. Therefore, one of the primary aims of the aquatic preserve program will be to educate the public as to the importance of the resources and to enlist public support and participation in the protection and conservation of those resources for present and future generations to enjoy.

#### **GOAL D.1.: PUBLIC EDUCATION TO PROMOTE WISE RESOURCE USE**

Objective D.1.1.: Coordinate with and provide assistance to existing environmental education programs at public and private schools and institutions.

Task D.1.1.1.: Notify the county school board and private schools of the preserve's programs and the availability of its staff to assist or provide guidance for their existing environmental educational programs.

Task D.1.1.2.: Participate in the development and utilization of the Monroe County Environmental Story and other teaching aids for public and private schools and institutions.

Task D.1.1.3.: Seek funding to develop an educational display and literature for the preserve.

Task D.1.1.4.: Seek funding and staffing to establish and conduct classroom programs and field trips in the preserve.

Objective D.1.2.: Produce environmental educational literature, materials and programs that inform adults and children of the preserve's natural resources and the importance of preserving and protecting those resources.

Task D.1.2.1.: Seek funding for the development of educational literature, materials and staffing for presentations to:

- 1) Homeowners' associations;
- 2) Civic and church groups;
- 3) Special interests (realtors, consultants, developers, contractors, utilities, etc.);
- 4) Boating/sport shows and special events;
- 5) Camping facilities and tourist resorts;
- 6) Marinas, tackle shops and boat ramps;
- 7) Agency and local government staffs;
- 8) Environmental educators;
- 9) Conservation, preservation, conference, and research groups, and
- 10) Diving, fishing and commercial interests.

Task D.1.2.2.: Develop media articles and presentations for local radio, television and publications to inform the general public of the preserve, its resources and of relevant protection needs, programs and research findings.

Task D.1.2.3.: Seek support, development and education of a Friends of Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve volunteers group to assist with environmental education programs and special environmental projects.

Task D.1.2.4.: Coordinate with other resource management agencies and, where appropriate, co-sponsor exhibits, signs, programs or other public contact activities.

Objective D.1.3.: Pursue coordination with organizations and agencies and, where appropriate, assist in the development of special programs for physically and mentally challenged adults and children.

Task D.1.3.1.: Contact appropriate agencies to determine the need for special programs.

Task D.1.3.2.: Seek funding for development and staffing for needed programs.

Objective D.1.4.: Seek funding and/or contracts to develop and conduct environmental education programs for the preserve.

Task D.1.4.1.: Pursue funding and/or contracts to provide educational materials, facilities and programs.

Task D.1.4.2.: Seek funding for development and maintenance of displays, specimen collections, a reference library and staffing for interpretive programs.

Objective D.1.5.: Provide environmental education workshops to instruct other environmental educators.

Task D.1.5.1.: Pursue development and funding for biannual instructional workshops for environmental, science, and other interested teachers and instructors.

Task D.1.5.2.: Encourage aquatic preserve staff and volunteers to attend conferences and seminars to further teaching skills and become familiar with other education programs.

## CHAPTER VII

### MANAGEMENT COORDINATION NETWORK

This chapter presents a general overview of the various federal, state, regional, and local agencies that regulate or hold any interests in the management or use of Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve. Private organizations augment management functions in several areas, including education and research. The success of the aquatic preserve management plan is dependent upon coordination with these agencies and organizations to achieve many of the goals and objectives of resource management and protection. A breakdown of the specific jurisdictions of federal and state regulatory agencies is presented in Table 11. Section E of this chapter will briefly enumerate volunteer groups and other organizations with programs or activities interests in the preserve area.

#### **A. FEDERAL AGENCIES**

A number of federal agencies have property interests, land and wildlife management programs, research activities, construction activities, and regulation programs that deal either directly or indirectly with the aquatic preserve.

In accordance with the federal consistency review process, the Bureau of Submerged Lands and Preserves reviews many of the federal programs and activities as to their affect on the management objectives of the aquatic preserve programs. This review is coordinated through the Florida Department of Environmental Regulation's Office of Coastal Management in order to enforce the provisions of the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended.

#### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)**

The USFWS has responsibility for fish and wildlife as authorized in the Coastal Resources Barrier Act, National Environmental Protection Act, Migratory Bird Act, Endangered Species Act, and Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. Locally, their personnel administer and manage wildlife refuge and preserved lands, review dredge and fill projects, and are charged with the protection and recovery of endangered species and bird rookeries.

#### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE)**

The COE has jurisdiction over the navigable waters of the United States under the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. A revision of the Rivers and Harbors Act in 1968 extended the COE jurisdiction, allowing them to consider impacts to the fish and

wildlife, conservation, pollution, aesthetics, ecological and other relevant factors of a proposed project. The COE regulatory programs were expanded in 1972 with the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments, also known as the Clean Water Act (CWA). Section 404 of this act controls dredge and fill activities and has since been extended to wetlands from Amendments to the CWA in 1977.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

The USGS performs surveys and research pertaining to topography, geology, mineral and water resources of the United States. USGS also collects and publishes water resources data.

U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The EPA has jurisdiction over surface waters of the state. Enforcement authority was given under the Clean Water Act of 1972 and broadened under the 1977 revision. In general, EPA is responsible for pollution control and abatement, including: air, water, noise, solid waste, toxic waste, and radiation. Under Section 104 of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA), as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA), EPA may initiate studies, clean-up, and pursue restitution of incurred expenses for pollution violations and damages. Authority is divided between EPA and the U.S. Coast Guard regarding the management of oil or hazardous substances discharged into surface waters. They also review permits issued by DER for the treatment, disposal and storage of hazardous wastes.

U.S. Coast Guard (USGS)

The USGS regulates boating safety, enforces maritime law, operates search and rescue missions, and surveillance and interdiction of contraband importation. USGS also regulates construction of bridges, causeways, and aerial utilities that may pose navigation hazards and the placement and maintenance of public navigation aids. Joint responsibility for response to the discharge or spillage of oil or other hazardous substances into surface waters is shared with EPA.

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMF)

The NMF is under the U.S. Department of Commerce and records commercial fish landing, enforces national fishery laws, and protects vital fishery habitats. Under the Endangered Species Act, this agency may also regulate activities and enforce marine turtle and mammal protection legislation.

#### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Under the Department of Commerce Office of Coastal Zone Management, NOAA administers to programs of local interest. The National Marine Sanctuaries (NMS) program oversees the management of Looe Key and Key Largo National Marine Sanctuaries, as well as several National Marine Estuaries in the region. The recently designated Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary encompasses most of the waters around the Keys. Everglades and Biscayne National Parks are excluded from the boundary. Program planning is now underway and will address varied issues including existing programs, water quality, resource inventories, user group profiles, education and management options. NOAA will coordinate with and function closely with DNR staff of the Division of Marine Resources in developing management strategies and policy. NOAA also administers the Hurricane Center in Miami, which monitors and issues bulletins on tropical weather for the north and south Atlantic and the Caribbean Basin.

#### **B. STATE AGENCIES**

Many state agencies have property interests, land and wildlife management programs, research activities, regulatory authority and construction activities with the preserve. Additionally, DNR administers programs which may affect the resources and watersheds of the preserve.

##### Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Several Divisions within the Department perform various functions of administration, regulation and enforcement of laws and programs related to natural resources and/or their use.

The Division of Marine Resources has several programs beneficial to the management of aquatic preserves. The Marine Research Laboratory in St. Petersburg and the Marathon Field Office have several projects which include resource protection area mapping, fishery habitat utilization studies, fisheries statistics, conch reintroduction programs and spiny lobster research. The Division is instrumental in administering manatee protection programs and marine turtle data gathering. They also administer a permitting program for the collection of certain marine species and the use of certain chemicals. As previously noted, staff from this Division's Bureau of Sanctuaries and Research Reserves will be responsible for coordinating with NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary program for the Keys.

The Division of Law Enforcement's Marine Patrol, whose legal authority is granted under Chapter 370, F.S., enforces Florida laws relating to marine resources, fishery laws, boating safety, vessel titling/registration, contraband interdiction, and the protection of endangered and threatened species.

The Division of Beaches and Shores conducts two programs of interest to the aquatic preserve. Surveys of Monroe County beaches and a Beach Restoration Management Plan (1990) have been developed for Florida beaches. The Long Beach area is identified as a noncritical erosion area. Recommendations for management in this area include public acquisition and dune preservation. The Division also has coastal construction regulatory authority under Section 161.041, F.S. Section 161.052, F.S. requires a 50 foot setback for construction along sandy/rocky shorelines.

The Division of State Lands, under the provisions of Chapters 253 and 258, F.S., performs the staff duties related to the acquisition, administration and disposition of public lands on behalf of and with the approval of the Governor and Cabinet, sitting as the Board of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund. Staff duties include review and recommendations to the Board regarding applications for the use, sale, lease or transfers of all state-owned lands and enforcement of the provisions for unauthorized use of those lands. Under Chapter 18-21, F.A.C., the Division is charged with management of sovereignty submerged lands and spoil islands.

Aquatic preserves were established under Chapter 258, F.S. Originally administered by the Division of Recreation and Parks, the administration of aquatic preserves was transferred to the Division of State Lands in 1988. Specific management policy, standards and criteria for most aquatic preserves are contained within Chapter 18-20, F.A.C.

The authority for the Conservation and Recreational Lands program (CARL) is also derived from Chapter 253, F.S. This program is the primary vehicle for the acquisition of private lands that are deemed to be environmentally sensitive or that may serve as potential lands for future recreational needs. Recent passage of the Preservation 2000 legislation will greatly enhance funding for targeted purchases.

The Division of Resource Management is responsible for the management of aquatic plants, mineral resources, oil and gas exploration, and geologic studies. It also supervises state Navigation Districts and the Canal Authority.

#### Department of Environmental Regulation (DER)

The DER administers programs regulating air, water, noise, wastewater, stormwater, and hazardous waste pollution through a permitting and certification process. Chapter 376, F.S. directs DER to cooperate with DNR in offering consultation, enforcement, prosecution, and technical advise in pollutant discharge, control and removal.

Chapter 403, F.S. enumerates the DER responsibilities in the areas of water and air quality, facilities siting, resource recovery and management, pollution control and wetland permitting. This chapter serves as the authority for the initiation of dredge

and fill applications in conjunction with COE and DNR. The authority to regulate activities and protect water quality granted in Chapter 403 is facilitated by the Water Quality Standards established in Chapter 17-3, F.A.C. This chapter of the administrative code sets forth specific criteria for surface water classifications and permitting criteria for those classifications. The Special Protection, Outstanding Florida Waters (OFW) classification is assigned to waters of the aquatic preserve and most waters of the Florida Keys. The OFW classification affords the highest protection for state waters.

Chapter 17, F.A.C. also contains sections governing permitting procedure and criteria for facilities, dredge and fill projects, stormwater discharge, and deepwater ports.

The DER Office of Coastal Management is charged with coordinating activities related to coastal management and reviewing federal actions for consistency with the State Coastal Management Program. The Office of Coastal Management also awards grants for research and management planning.

Chapter 253.77, F.S., as amended by the Warren S. Henderson Wetlands Protection Act of 1984, requires that any request for the use of state-owned lands shall have prior approval of the Trustees. An interagency agreement between DNR and DER provides for DNR staff comments into the DER permitting process for identifying environmental impacts to the resources of the aquatic preserve.

#### Department of Community Affairs (DCA)

DCA reviews Developments of Regional Impact (DRI), designates Areas of Critical State Concern (ACSC), and approves comprehensive plans. The DRI process involves major development projects that have impacts on a larger area than is covered by just one county and involves a regional review from neighboring local governments and from state agencies.

The ACSC program is intended to protect the areas of the state where development has endangered or may endanger resources of regional or statewide significance. Under an ACSC designation, the local governments are required to notify the DCA of any application for a development permit. The Florida Keys portion of Monroe County were designated as an ACSC in 1979. In 1984, under authority granted in Chapter 380, F.S. and defined in Administrative Rule 27F-8, the Boundary and Principles for Guiding Development for the Florida Keys Area of Critical State Concern were adopted to conserve and protect the natural, environmental, historic and economic resources, and other values of the lands and waters of the Florida Keys. The Florida Keys ACSC designation and the Principles for Guiding Development are intended to remain in place until such time as Monroe County shall have developed a comprehensive growth management plan and future development regulations as required by Chapter 163, F.S. Such plan shall be

consistent with the State Comprehensive Plan, State Statutes, Codes and rules. Conformance to the minimum criteria established in Chapter 9J-5, D.A.C. is also required.

Monroe County is currently involved in this planning process and is expected to submit a completed plan by July 1991. The Coastal Management and Conservation Elements of the future plan are the most significant to the management goals and objectives of the aquatic preserve. These elements should establish goals and objectives that are consistent with those of this plan. Cooperation and coordination in developing the plans is critical to the successful development and implementation of either plan.

Department of Transportation (DOT)

The DOT is involved with aquatic preserves where they maintain the U.S. 1 or Overseas Highway and the bridges and causeways that abut the preserve boundary. Leases or permits for the use of state-owned rights-of-way are coordinated through the DOT. Applications for these uses are not generally circulated for field review. Local cooperation is vital to establish lines of communication regarding projects that may affect the preserve. The DOT also administers funding for environmental restoration projects, which has in the past been available for aquatic preserve projects.

Department of State/Division of Historical Resources (DHR)

Under Chapter 267, F.S. DHR is granted responsibility for the preservation and management of the state's archaeological and historical resources. This responsibility includes those cultural resources located on state-owned lands. All activities that may potentially affect a known or suspected resource must be coordinated with and/or approved by the DHR.

Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS)

HRS administers numerous programs to protect public health by overseeing functions that involve water supplies, sewage disposal and solid waste control. Authority for these responsibilities are found in Chapters 154, 381, and 386, F.S. and in the 10D series of F.A.C., known as the Sanitary Code. HRS is also responsible for mosquito control activities under Chapter 388, F.S. and may delegate that authority to a local mosquito control district (MSD).

Mosquito control and septic tank permitting are of immediate concern to the management of the aquatic preserve. The Monroe County MSD administers the local program through ground and aerial applications of larvicides and adulticides. Chapter 10D-54, F.A.C. requires that any arthropod (mosquito) control activities conducted by local MSDs on environmentally sensitive public lands, such as parks,

aquatic preserves and similar properties be coordinated in advance by the responsible mosquito control agency with the Executive Directory of DNR, GFC, and the regional directory of the USFWS. This chapter also establishes areas, types, rates, timing and equipment standards for control activities.

HRS administers the permitting and placement of septic tanks under Chapter 10D-6, F.A.C. This chapter establishes standards for onsite sewage disposal systems (OSDS). Part II of that chapter establishes specific standards for OSDS installation, operation and monitoring in the Key Largo Limestone or Miami (Oolite) rock formations.

#### Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC)

The MFC manages marine life by regulating the harvesting of all marine life, except listed species. Their authority covers gear specifications, bag limits, size limits, species that may not be sold, protected species, closed seasons or areas, quality control codes, special considerations related to egg bearing females, and the harvest and relaying of oyster and clams. The MFC makes annual recommendations to the Governor and Cabinet regarding marine fisheries research priorities and changes to existing laws.

#### Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC)

The GFC, authorized under Chapters 39.101 and 39.102, F.A.C. implements and enforces specific regulations to protect all wildlife and their habitats. As such, the GFC is the state coordinator for species designated for protection in Florida.

### C. REGIONAL AGENCIES

In addition to federal and state agencies, two regional agencies have functions and programs that may affect the aquatic preserve. These organizations conduct activities that are on a broader scale than are those of the local governments.

#### South Florida Water Management District (WMD)

The WMD was established by Chapter 61-69, Laws of Florida, as a public corporation for carrying out Chapter 378, F.S. and operates under and is governed by provisions of Chapter 373, F.S. Chapters 40D-4 and 40D-40 were adopted to ensure continued protection of the water resources of the district including wetlands and other natural resources. The statutes resulted from passage of Chapter 84-79, Laws of Florida, also known as the Warren G. Henderson Wetlands Protection Act of 1984.

The WMD administers permitting programs for consumptive water use, management, storm water discharge, storage of surface water, well drilling and operation, water level control, regulation of artificial recharge facilities, and works of the district. The WMD is also responsible for developing Surface Water Improvement Management (SWIM) plans as authorized by Chapter 87-97, Laws of Florida and Chapter 373, F.S. The SWIM plans are designed to improve, restore and manage surface waters.

#### South Florida Regional Planning Council (RPC)

The RPC serves as a regional planning body for the local government of Monroe County, as well as incorporated areas in the Keys and other south Florida counties and municipal areas. The RPC duties include: aid to local government planning efforts; regional representation for the DRI process; regional clearing house for state and federal projects and programs; providing information from the local governments to the state and federal levels; assisting local governments in securing grants in aid; and preparing and administering the Regional Policy Plan.

The DRI review of projects which affect the preserve will be reviewed by both the field staff and central office personnel. DRIs for marinas, major developments, subdivisions, and commercial or industrial developments adjacent to the preserve will be reviewed closely for their potential impact on the preserve.

#### D. LOCAL GOVERNMENT/AGENCIES (LGT)

Local government consists of unincorporated Monroe County and the incorporated areas of Key Colony Beach, Layton and the City of Key West. The incorporated areas are governed by a city commission and the unincorporated areas are governed by a five member County Commission. Previous efforts to incorporate the island of Big Pine Key failed to garner voter support. However, there is reason to believe that this issue is not dormant and the proposal may again surface for referendum.

As previously noted, the Florida Keys portion of Monroe County has been designated as an Area of Critical State Concern and both incorporated and unincorporated areas are in the process of formulating Comprehensive Growth Management Plans.

#### Relationship to Local Management Plans

The Florida Keys Comprehensive Plan of 1986 (Volume II, Analysis and Policy Element) established several Areas of Critical County Concern (ACCC) and Marine Resource Areas of Particular Concern (APC), including Coupon Bight and

Lignumvitae Key Aquatic Preserves. Management policies for Coupon Bight are directed toward cooperation with DNR and regulation of land and water activities to ensure compatibility with maintenance and preservation of the preserve. Septic tanks are discouraged and storm water management and low intensity uses are encouraged.

Generic designations for Marine Resource APCs include marine grassbeds, coral formations and fringing mangroves, including associated vegetation within 50 feet of the landward edge of those mangroves. Management policies mandate that these biotic communities be preserved to the fullest extent possible and that creation and restoration of these communities will be encouraged whenever feasible and necessary.

Local governments are required by the Local Government Comprehensive Planning Act of 1975 (Section 163.3163, F.S.), as amended by Chapter 85-55, Laws of Florida, to the Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act (LGCP), to have a management plan with elements relating to different governmental functions (i.e., housing, physical facilities, conservation, land use, coastal zone protection, etc.). Recent statutory amendments require these plans to be updated and for counties to adopt land development regulations and improve coastal management protection. The coastal management element of the LGCP, along with the land use and conservation elements, establishes long range plans for orderly, and balanced development, with particular attention to the identification and protection of environmental resources in the planning area. Conformance with the criteria, policies, and practices of a local government comprehensive plan is required for all development within the local government jurisdiction.

Monroe County is currently revising and formulating new goals, objectives and policies that are intended to fulfill the requirements for the LGCP act and the criteria of 9J-5, F.A.C. The intent of the aquatic preserve management program, and this plan, is to guide county efforts during the planning process towards developing local plan criteria and standards that will be consistent with and complimentary to the objectives of the aquatic preserve program.

#### **E. OTHER ENTITIES**

The following organizations have various resource management, research and educational programs that are of benefit or a compliment to the preserve management program. Coordination with these groups will be a priority when common goals or objectives are to be realized.

The Nature Conservancy enters into negotiations for purchasing environmentally sensitive lands on behalf of the state and federal government. As a private entity, this organization may expedite negotiations and close purchases in a time frame acceptable to prospective sellers. Their efforts are currently expanding to include management agreements for on site management of purchased lands, marine programs and coordinating volunteer efforts.

The Trust for Public Lands is involved primarily in land acquisition and management. Targeted areas are typically adjacent to existing a refuge, park or other protected area.

Florida Keys Land and Sea Trust is a private group that has been instrumental in land acquisition and environmental education in the Keys. The Trust has purchased the Crane Point Hammock and developed the Natural History Museum of the Florida Keys in Marathon. Most recent additions include a children's museum. This facility also hosts educational programs and research.

Reef Relief is a local organization that has been instrumental in funding and installing mooring buoys on high use reef areas. They currently maintain 119 buoys at 7 reefs in the lower Keys. They also staff and maintain an environmental education center in Key West and participate in many other educational activities directed toward safe, and environmentally sound, boating and diving.

The National Audubon Society's Research Center in Tavernier conducts numerous research projects in the Keys. These projects are funded through public and private grants. Most studies are directed toward habitat utilization and availability for avian species. Projects such as the Florida Breeding Bird Atlas are cooperative efforts between Audubon staff, volunteers and agency personnel. Information from these various studies are beneficial in developing resource inventories and management objectives.

Sea Camp of Newfound Harbor Marine Institute conducts on site education programs directed toward the marine environment. This facility, adjacent to the preserve, hosts school groups, teacher workshops, college students and research scientists on a year round basis. They have received state funding for two environmental studies and a slide program detailing the natural resources and history of the aquatic preserve.

The Izaac Walton League of the Florida Keys is a local chapter of the larger national group. This organization is developing and distributing educational materials and presenting programs on wetlands and marine habitats of the Keys.

The Key Deer Alliance is a volunteer staffed organization whose primary focus involves protection of the Key deer and its habitat. Efforts include disseminating

educational materials, erecting signs, mowing road edges, constructing guzzlers or water holes, and environmental clean up.

Save A Turtle is a local volunteer organization that is sponsored by DNR and the Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. Members of this group receive training and are permitted to work with endangered and threatened marine turtles. Activities include beach surveys, nest monitoring, nest relocation, turtle strandings and salvage operations. Activities are reported on standardized forms which are submitted to state and federal data banks.

Many other groups actively represent special interests, conservation, and local and regional development and planning issues. Local groups include but are not limited to; Big Pine Key Civic Association, Monroe County C.A.R.E.S., Clean Water Action, the Wilderness Society, Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association, and Big Pine Key Botanical Club.

**TABLE 11: MANAGEMENT COORDINATION NETWORK**

LOCAL AGENCIES		REGIONAL AGENCIES			FEDERAL AGENCIES		
LGT	Local Governments (Cities, Towns, Municipalities)	RPC	Regional Planning Council				
CGT	County Governments	WMD	Water Management Districts				
LDD	Local Drainage Districts	FIN	Florida Inland Navigation District				
MCD	Mosquito Control Districts						
ICD	Inlet Commissions/Districts						
SWC	Soil and Water Conservation Districts						
STATE AGENCIES		FEDERAL AGENCIES					
DCA	Florida Department of Community Affairs	CG	United States Coast Guard				
DER	Florida Department of Environmental Regulation	COE	United States Army Corps of Engineers				
DNR	Florida Department of Natural Resources	EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency				
GFC	Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission	FWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service				
DOS	Florida Department of State	NMF	National Marine Fisheries				
DOT	Florida Department of Transportation	GS	United States Geological Survey				
FMP	Florida Marine Patrol						
FSG	Florida Sea Grant						
MFC	Marine Fisheries Commission						
DAC	Florida Department of Consumer and Agricultural Services						
HRS	Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services						

Source: modified from the Indian River Lagoon Joint Reconnaissance Report, 1987



## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **STAFFING AND FISCAL NEEDS**

Historically, the Aquatic Preserves Program has been largely dependent on federal coastal zone grant funds for its operation, and as a result, the funding of both field positions and central office positions has been limited.

In order for the Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve to be managed in accordance with the goals, objectives and policies, set forth in this plan, adequate funding, staffing and equipment is essential. It is anticipated that the management and administration of the three aquatic preserves in the Keys (Coupon Bight, Lignumvitae Key and Biscayne Bay-Card Sound portion) could be accomplished with one field office staffed with five full time employees. An annual review of the accomplishments of the program relative to the tasks listed in Chapter VI will help to determine if the initial staffing estimate is adequate to meet the legislative intent of the program.

A budget covering projected staff time, equipment, travel and other expenses for this area, which would include Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve, is found in Table 12. The budget is required to fulfill the short range needs of the preserve as described in this management plan, and to accomplish the Department goal of on-site management for all aquatic preserves by 1991, as expressed in the Agency Functional Plan.

TABLE 12

ANTICIPATED TWO-YEAR BUDGET FOR COUPON BIGHT, LIGNUMVITE KEY  
AND THE CARD SOUND PORTION OF BISCAYNE BAY AQUATIC PRESERVES

<u>SALARY</u>	<u>1ST YEAR</u>	<u>2ND YEAR</u>
ES III (with benefits)	\$ 38,424	\$ 39,577
ES II (with benefits)	33,836	34,851
ES I (with benefits)	28,224	29,071
Secretary (with benefits)	17,255	17,773
OPS Environmental educator	22,391	23,063
<u>Subtotal</u>	<u>\$140,130</u>	<u>\$144,335</u>
<u>OPERATING CAPITAL OUTLAY</u>		
Vehicles (3 @ \$12,000 each)	\$ 36,000	
Office equipment	11,500	
Computer	5,000	
Education materials	2,500	
<u>Subtotal</u>	<u>\$ 55,000</u>	
<u>OPERATING EXPENSES</u>		
Rent/Gas/Phone/Supplies	\$ 28,000	\$ 32,000
Education supplies	1,500	1,600
<u>Subtotal</u>	<u>\$ 29,500</u>	<u>\$ 33,600</u>
<u>TOTAL COST</u>	<u>\$246,630</u>	<u>\$177,935</u>

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **RESOURCE AND ACTIVITY MONITORING PROGRAM**

To ensure that this management plan is effectively implemented, on-site staffing is imperative. Additional staffing will be necessary in order to institute programs targeted at 1) monitoring changes in the natural resources, 2) recording use activities, 3) tracking progress and accomplishments that are directed at retaining the original integrity and value of the preserve, and 4) preparing and conducting environmental education activities.

#### **A. RESOURCE MONITORING**

To monitor changes in the natural resources, a geographic information system (GIS) will be necessary. A GIS is a computer based system that is used to capture, edit, display, and analyze geographic information. The first GIS programs were developed about 20 years ago to manage large collections of natural resource and environmental information. Since their development, they have been used in other areas, such as utilities mapping, inventory management, and land use planning. However, their most important application continues to be natural resource monitoring and management.

Future use of a GIS system would include the periodic inventory, compilation, and analysis of temporal and spatial data concerning the present state of the natural resources within the preserve. Historical aerial photography could be computerized for comparison with later data to conduct a temporal analysis of resource abundance. Detailed monitoring of revegetation/restoration efforts could also be computer analyzed. The on-line access to these natural resource data bases will facilitate informed management decisions concerning the use and protection of lands and their resources. Cooperation and file sharing is possible with other agencies handling such data with identical and similar systems. Similar environments and relationships between various resources may be compared and analyzed to gain a more integrated approach to protection and management.

#### **B. ACTIVITY MONITORING**

As human interaction in and around the preserve increases, additional pressures are to be expected in the form of recreational and development activities. Monitoring the types of use and their compatibility, their frequency of occurrence, as well as, proven and expected detrimental effects on the preserve's natural resources, will provide a foundation for developing any additional future plan amendments and restrictions required to protect these resources. Periodic boat

counts, user questionnaires and structure inventories are various methods that may be employed to gather relevant data on activities and user group profiles.

### **C. PROGRESS MONITORING**

For this management plan to be effectively implemented and evaluated, it is necessary to monitor the accomplishments and progress on a regular basis. Sharing this information with other units and agencies, will help develop a team approach to problem solving and implementing management strategies.

The compilation of the monitoring program will be directed to the central office in Tallahassee in the form of a field office annual report. This information will then go into the development of a state-wide status report on the Aquatic Preserve Management Program focusing on resource restoration/deterioration, compatible and non-compatible use activities, and will aid in developing more appropriate management strategies system wide.

The field office annual report should detail the following:

1. The state of the natural environment of the aquatic preserve.
  - a. Through the use of the resource inventories and the GIS system, document the status of biological resources (e.g., seagrass loss or gain).
  - b. Identify the current number of structures/activities either started or completed in the preserve. These structures/activities will be categorized as follows:
    - 1) authorized projects (e.g., private residential single docks, multi-family, commercial),
    - 2) unauthorized projects, and
    - 3) projects not in compliance with the original authorization
2. A list of accomplishments of those policies and tasks outlined in Chapter VII.
  - a. Each task will be listed and the activities required to complete that task will be detailed. If the task was not done or not completed, an explanation will be given. If the explanation was due to insufficient funding/staff, then this fact will be detailed so that an update of Chapter IX can be made.
3. Any new goals and/or objectives will be reflected in an update of Chapter VII.

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## APPENDIX A

V. 9, p. 692-20

### Administrative Codes

(R. 3/87)  
18-20.002

CHAPTER 18-20 FLORIDA AQUATIC PRESERVES		
18-20.001	Intent.	(c) To coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies to aid in carrying out the intent of the Legislature in creating the preserves;
18-20.002	Boundaries and Scope of the Preserves.	(d) To use applicable federal, state, and local management programs, which are compatible with the intent and provisions of the act and these rules, and to assist in managing the preserves;
18-20.003	Definitions.	(e) To encourage the protection, enhancement or restoration of the biological, aesthetic, or scientific values of the preserves, including but not limited to the modification of existing manmade conditions toward their natural condition, and discourage activities which would degrade the aesthetic, biological, or scientific values, or the quality, or utility of a preserve, when reviewing applications, or when developing and implementing management plans for the preserves;
18-20.004	Management Policies, Standards and Criteria.	(f) To preserve, promote, and utilize indigenous life forms and habitats, including but not limited to: sponges, soft coral, hard corals, submerged grasses, mangroves, salt water marshes, fresh water marshes, mud flats, estuarine, aquatic, and marine reptiles, game and non-game fish species, estuarine, aquatic and marine invertebrates, estuarine, aquatic and marine mammals, birds, shellfish and mollusks;
18-20.005	Uses, Sales, Leases, or Transfer of Interests in Lands, or Materials, Held by the Board. (Repealed)	(g) To acquire additional title interests in lands wherever such acquisitions would serve to protect or enhance the biological, aesthetic, or scientific values of the preserves;
18-20.006	Cumulative Impacts.	(h) To maintain those beneficial hydrologic and biologic functions, the benefits of which accrue to the public at large.
18-20.007	Protection of Riparian Rights. (Repealed)	(4) Nothing in these rules shall serve to eliminate or alter the requirements or authority of other governmental agencies, including counties and municipalities, to protect or enhance the preserves provided that such requirements or authority are not inconsistent with the act and this chapter.
18-20.008	Inclusion of Lands, Title to Which Is Not Vested in the Board, in a Preserve.	Specific Authority 120.53, 258.43(1) FS. Law Implemented 258.35, 258.36, 258.37, 258.39, 258.393 FS. Chapter 80-280 Laws of Florida. History—New 2-23-81. Amended 8-7-85. Formerly 16Q-20.01, Transferred from 16Q-20.001.
18-20.009	Establishment or Expansion of Aquatic Preserves.	18-20.002 Boundaries and Scope of the Preserves.
18-20.010	Exchange of Lands.	(1) These rules shall only apply to those sovereignty lands within a preserve, title to which is vested in the board, and those other lands for which the board has an appropriate instrument in writing, executed by the owner, authorizing the inclusion of specific lands in an aquatic preserve pursuant to Section 2(2) of Chapter 73-534, Laws of Florida, Sections 258.40(1) and 258.41(5), Florida Statutes, future aquatic preserves established through general or special acts of the legislature, and pursuant to Rule 18-20.008, Florida Administrative Code. Any publicly owned and maintained navigation channel authorized by the United States Congress, or other public works project authorized by the United States Congress, designed to improve or maintain commerce and navigation shall be deemed to be excluded from the
18-20.011	Gifts of Lands.	
18-20.012	Protection of Indigenous Life Forms.	
18-20.013	Development of Resource Inventories and Management Plans for Preserves.	
18-20.014	Enforcement.	
18-20.015	Application Form. (Repealed)	
18-20.016	Coordination with Other Governmental Agencies.	
18-20.017	Lake Jackson Aquatic Preserve.	

*Library References:* Riparian rights in navigable waters. I. Henry Dean, 55 Fla. Bar J. 247, 250 (Mar., 1981).

#### 18-20.001 Intent.

(1) All sovereignty lands within a preserve shall be managed primarily for the maintenance of essentially natural conditions, the propagation of fish and wildlife, and public recreation, including hunting and fishing where deemed appropriate by the board, and the managing agency.

(2) The aquatic preserves which are described in 73-534, Laws of Florida, Sections 258.39, 258.391, 258.392 and 258.393, Florida Statutes, future aquatic preserves established pursuant to general or special acts of the legislature, and in Rule 18-20.002, Florida Administrative Code, were established for the purpose of being preserved in an essentially natural or existing condition so that their aesthetic, biological and scientific values may endure for the enjoyment of future generations.

(3) The preserves shall be administered and managed in accordance with the following goals:

(a) To preserve, protect, and enhance these exceptional areas of sovereignty submerged lands by reasonable regulation of human activity within the preserves through the development and implementation of a comprehensive management program;

(b) To protect and enhance the waters of the preserves so that the public may continue to enjoy the traditional recreational uses of those waters such as swimming, boating, and fishing;

provisions of this chapter, pursuant to Subsection 258.40(2), Florida Statutes. Furthermore, all lands lost by avulsion or by artificially induced erosion shall be deemed excluded from the provisions of this chapter pursuant to Subsection 258.40(3), Florida Statutes.

(2) These rules do not apply in Boca Ciega Bay, Pinellas County or Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserves.

(3) These rules are promulgated to clarify the responsibilities of the board in carrying out its land management functions as those functions apply within the preserves. Implementation and responsibility for environmental permitting of activities and water quality protection within the preserves are vested in the Department of Environmental Regulation. Since these rules are considered cumulative with other rules, a person planning an activity within the preserves should also consult the other applicable department rules (Chapter 18-21, Florida Administrative Code, for example) as well as the rules of the Department of Environmental Regulation.

(4) These rules shall not affect previous actions of the board concerning the issuance of any easement or lease; or any disclaimer concerning sovereignty lands.

(5) The intent and specific provisions expressed in 18-20.001(e) and (f) apply generally to all existing or future aquatic preserves within the scope of this chapter. Upon completion of a resource inventory and approval of a management plan for a preserve, pursuant to 18-20.013, the type designation and the resource sought to be preserved may be readdressed by the Board.

(6) For the purpose of clarification and interpretation, the legal description set forth as follows do not include any land which is expressly recognized as privately owned upland in a pre-existing recorded mean high water line settlement agreement between the board and a private owner or owners. Provided, however, in those instances wherein a settlement agreement was executed subsequent to the passage of the Florida Coastal Mapping Act, the determination of the mean high water line shall be in accordance with the provisions of such act.

(7) Persons interested in obtaining details of particular preserves should contact the Bureau of State Lands Management, Department of Natural Resources, 3900 Commonwealth Blvd., Tallahassee, FL 32303 (telephone 904-488-2297).

(a) The preserves are described as follows:

1. Fort Clinch State Park Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Nassau County in Book 108, pages 343-346, and in Book 111, page 409.

2. Nassau River — St. Johns River Marshes Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Duval County in Volume 3183, pages 547-552, and in the Official Records of Nassau County in Book 108, pages 232-237.

3. Pellicer Creek Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of St. Johns County in Book

181, pages 363-366, and in the Official Records of Flagler County in Book 33, pages 131-134.

4. Tomoka Marsh Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Flagler County in Book 33, pages 135-138, and in the Official Records of Volusia County in Book 1244, pages 615-618.

5. Wekiva River Aquatic Preserve, as described in Section 258.39(30), F.S.

6. Mosquito Lagoon Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Volusia County in Book 1244, pages 619-623, and in the Official Records of Brevard County in Book 1143, pages 190-194.

7. Banana River Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Brevard County in Book 1143, pages 195-198, less those lands dedicated to the U. S. A. prior to the enactment of the act, until such time as the U. S. A. no longer wishes to maintain such lands for the purpose for which they were dedicated, at which time such lands would revert to the board, and be managed as part of the preserve.

8. Indian River — Malabar to Sebastian Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Brevard County in Book 1143, pages 199-202, and in the Official Records of Indian River County in Book 368, pages 5-8.

9. Indian River — Vero Beach to Fort Pierce Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Indian River County in Book 368, pages 9-12, and in the Official Records of St. Lucie County in Book 187, pages 1083-1086.

10. Jensen Beach to Jupiter Inlet Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of St. Lucie County in Book 218, pages 2865-2869.

11. North Fork, St. Lucie Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Martin County in Book 337, pages 2159-2162, and in the Official Records of St. Lucie County in Book 201, pages 1676-1679.

12. Loxahatchee River — Lake Worth Creek Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Martin County in Book 320, pages 193-196, and in the Official Records of Palm Beach County in Volume 1860, pages 806-809.

13. Biscayne Bay — Cape Florida to Monroe County Line Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Dade County in Book 7055, pages 852-856, less, however, those lands and waters as described in Section 258.165, F. S., (Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve Act of 1974), and those lands and waters within the Biscayne National Park.

14. Lignumvitae Key Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Monroe County in Book 502, pages 139-142.

15. Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Monroe County in Book 502, pages 143-146.

16. Cape Romano — Ten Thousand Islands Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Collier County in Book 381, pages 298-301.

17. Rankery Bay Aquatic Preserve, as described in Section 258.39(31), F.S.
18. Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve as described in Section 258.39(28), Florida Statutes.
19. Pine Island Sound Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Lee County in Book 648, pages 732-736.
20. Matlacha Pass Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Lee County in Book 800, pages 725-728.
21. Gasparilla Sound — Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserve, as described in Section 258.392, F.S.
22. Cape Haze Aquatic Preserve, as described in Section 258.39(29), F.S.
23. Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve, as described in Section 258.391, F.S.
24. St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Citrus County in Book 276, pages 238-241.
25. Alligator Harbor Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Franklin County in Volume 98, pages 82-85.
26. Apalachicola Bay Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Gulf County in Book 46, pages 77-81, and in the Official Records of Franklin County in Volume 98, pages 102-106.
27. St. Joseph Bay Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Gulf County in Book 46, pages 73-76.
28. St. Andrews State Park Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Bay County in Book 379, pages 547-550.
29. Rocky Bayou State Park Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Okaloosa County in Book 593, pages 742-745.
30. Yellow River Marsh Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Santa Rosa County in Book 206, pages 568-571.
31. Fort Pickens State Park Aquatic Preserve, as described in the Official Records of Santa Rosa County in Book 220, pages 60-63, in the Official Records of Escambia County in Book 518, pages 659-662, less the lands dedicated to the U. S. A. for the establishment of the Gulf Islands National Seashore prior to the enactment of the act, until such time as the U. S. A. no longer wishes to maintain such lands for the purpose for which they were dedicated, at which time such lands would revert to the board and be managed as part of the preserve.
32. For the purpose of this section the boundaries of the Lake Jackson Aquatic Preserve, shall be the body of water in Leon County known as Lake Jackson in Sections 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 11 and 14, Township 1 North, Range 1 West and Sections 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, and 35, Township 2 North, Range 1 West lying below the ordinary high water line. Such lands shall include the submerged bottom lands and the water column upon such lands, as well as all publicly owned islands, within the boundaries of the preserve. Any privately held upland within the boundaries of the preserve shall be deemed to be excluded therefrom; provided that the Board may negotiate an arrangement with any such private upland owner by which such land may be included in the preserve.
33. Terra Ceia Aquatic Preserve, as described in Section 258.393, Florida Statutes.
34. Future aquatic preserves established pursuant to general or special acts of the legislature. Specific Authority 120.53, 258.43(1) F.S. Law Implemented 258.39, 258.391, 258.392, 258.393, 258.40, 258.41, 258.42, 258.43, 258.44, 258.45 F.S. History—New 2-23-81, Amended 8-7-85, Formerly 16Q-20.02. Transferred from 16Q-20.002.
- 18-20.003 Definitions.** When used in these rules, the following words shall have the indicated meaning unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:
- (1) "Act" means the provisions of Section 258.35 through 258.46, F.S., the Florida Aquatic Preserve Act.
  - (2) "Activity" means any project and such other human action within the preserve requiring board approval for the use, sale, lease or transfer of interest in sovereignty lands or materials, or which may require a license from the Department of Environmental Regulation.
  - (3) "Aesthetic values" means scenic characteristics or amenities of the preserve in its essentially natural state or condition, and the maintenance thereof.
  - (4) "Applicant" means any person making application for a permit, license, conveyance of an interest in state owned lands or any other necessary form of governmental approval in order to perform an activity within the preserve.
  - (5) "Beneficial biological functions" means interactions between flora, fauna and physical or chemical attributes of the environment, which provide benefits that accrue to the public at large, including, but not limited to: nutrient, pesticide and heavy metal uptake; sediment retention; nutrient conversion to biomass; nutrient recycling and oxygenation.
  - (6) "Beneficial hydrological functions" means interactions between flora, fauna and physical geological or geographical attributes of the environment, which provide benefits that accrue to the public at large, including, but not limited to: retardation of storm water flow; storm water retention; and water storage, and periodical release.
  - (7) "Biological values" means the preservation and promotion of indigenous life forms and habitats including, but not limited to: sponges, soft corals, hard corals, submerged grasses, mangroves, saltwater marshes, fresh water marshes, mud flats, marine, estuarine, and aquatic reptiles, games and non-games fish species, marine, estuarine, and aquatic mammals, marine, estuarine, and aquatic invertebrates, birds and shellfish.
  - (8) "Board" means the Governor and Cabinet sitting as the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund.
  - (9) "Channel" means a trench, the bottom of which is normally covered entirely by water, with the upper edges of its sides normally below water.

(10) "Commercial, industrial and other revenue generating/income related docks" means docking facilities for an activity which produces income, through rental or any other means, or which serves as an accessory facility to other rental, commercial or industrial operations. It shall include, but not be limited to docking for: marinas, restaurants, hotels, motels, commercial fishing, shipping, boat or ship construction, repair, and sales.

(11) "Department" means the State of Florida Department of Natural Resources, as administrator for the board.

(12) "Division" means the Division of State Lands, which performs all staff duties and functions related to the administration of lands title to which is, or will be, vested in the board, pursuant to section 253.002, F.S.

(13) "Dock" means a fixed or floating structure, including moorings, used for the purpose of berthing buoyant vessels either temporarily or indefinitely.

(14) "Essentially natural condition" means those functions which support the continued existence or encourage the restoration of the diverse population of indigenous life forms and habitats to the extent they existed prior to the significant development adjacent to and within the preserve.

(15) "Extreme hardship" means a significant burden, unique to the applicant and not shared by property owners in the area. Self-imposed circumstances caused to any degree by actions of any person subsequent to the enactment of the Act shall not be construed as an extreme hardship. Extreme hardship under this act shall not be construed to include any hardship which arises in whole or in part from the effect of other federal, state or local laws, ordinances, rules or regulations. The term may be inherent in public projects which are shown to be a public necessity.

(16) "Fill" means materials from any source, deposited by any means onto sovereignty lands, either for the purpose of creating new uplands or for any other purpose, including spoiling of dredged materials. For the purpose of this rule, the placement of pilings or riprap shall not be considered to be filling.

(17) "Lease" means a conveyance of interest in lands, title to which is vested in the board, granted in accordance with specific terms set forth in writing.

(18) "Marina" means a small craft harbor complex used primarily for recreation.

(19) "Oil and gas transportation facilities" means those structures necessary for the movement of oil and gas from the production site to the consumer.

(20) "Person" means individuals, minors, partnerships, corporations, joint ventures, estates, trusts, syndicates, fiduciaries, firms, and all other associations and combinations, whether public or private, including governmental entities.

(21) "Pier" means a structure in, on, or over sovereignty lands, which is used by the public primarily for fishing, swimming, or viewing the preserve. A pier shall not include a dock.

(22) "Preserve" means any and all of those areas which are exceptional areas of sovereignty lands and the associated water body so designated in Section 258.39, 258.391, and 258.392, F.S., including all sovereignty lands, title to which is vested in the board, and such other lands as the board may acquire or approve for inclusion, and the water column over such lands, which have been set aside to be maintained in an essentially natural or existing condition of indigenous flora and fauna and their supporting habitat and the natural scenic qualities and amenities thereof.

(23) "Private residential single dock" means a dock which is used for private, recreational or leisure purposes for a single family residence, cottage or other such single dwelling unit and which is designed to moor no more than two boats.

(24) "Private residential multi-slip dock" means a docking facility which is used for private recreational or leisure purposes for multi-unit residential dwellings which shall include but is not limited to condominiums, townhouses, subdivisions and other such dwellings or residential areas and which is designed to moor three or more boats. Yacht clubs associated with residential developments, whose memberships or utilization of the docking facility requires some real property interest in the residential area, shall also be included.

(25) "Public interest" means demonstrable environmental, social, and economic benefits which would accrue to the public at large as a result of a proposed action, and which would clearly exceed all demonstrable environmental, social, and economic costs of the proposed action. In determining the public interest in a request for use, sale, lease, or transfer of interest in sovereignty lands or severance of materials from sovereignty lands, the board shall consider the ultimate project and purpose to be served by said use, sale, lease, or transfer of lands or materials.

(26) "Public navigation project" means a project primarily for the purpose of navigation which is authorized and funded by the United States Congress or by port authorities as defined by Section 315.02(2), F.S.

(27) "Public necessity" means the works or improvements required for the protection of the health and safety of the public, consistent with the Act and these rules, for which no other reasonable alternative exists.

(28) "Public utilities" means those services, provided by persons regulated by the Public Service Commission, or which are provided by rural cooperatives, municipalities, or other governmental agencies, including electricity, telephone, public water and wastewater services, and structures necessary for the provision of these services.

(29) "Quality of the preserve" means the degree of the biological, aesthetic and scientific values of the preserve necessary for present and future enjoyment of it in an essentially natural condition.

(30) "Resource management agreement" means a contractual agreement between the board and one

or more parties which does not create an interest in real property but merely authorizes conduct of certain management activities on lands held by the board.

(31) "Resource Protection Area (RPA) 1" — Areas within the aquatic preserves which have resources of the highest quality and condition for that area. These resources may include, but are not limited to corals; marine grassbeds; mangrove swamps; salt-water marsh; oyster bars; archaeological and historical sites; endangered or threatened species habitat; and, colonial water bird nesting sites.

(32) "Resource Protection Area 2" — Areas within the aquatic preserves which are in transition with either declining resource protection area 1 resources or new pioneering resources within resource protection area 3.

(33) "Resource Protection Area 3" — Areas within the aquatic preserve that are characterized by the absence of any significant natural resource attributes.

(34) "Riparian rights" means those rights incident to lands bordering upon navigable waters, as recognized by the courts of this state and common law.

(35) "Sale" means a conveyance of interest in lands, by the board, for consideration.

(36) "Scientific values" means the preservation and promotion of certain qualities or features which have scientific significance.

(37) "Shore protection structure" means a type of coastal construction designed to minimize the rate of erosion. Coastal construction includes any work or activity which is likely to have a material physical effect on existing coastal conditions or natural shore processes.

(38) "Sovereignty lands" means those lands including, but not limited to: tidal lands, islands, sandbars, shallow banks, and lands waterward of the ordinary or mean highwater line, to which the State of Florida acquired title on March 3, 1845, by virtue of statehood, and of which it has not since divested its title interest. For the purposes of this rule sovereignty lands shall include all submerged lands within the boundaries of the preserve, title to which is held by the board.

(39) "Spoil" means materials dredged from sovereignty lands which are redeposited or discarded by any means, onto either sovereignty lands or uplands.

(40) "Transfer" means the act of the board by which any interest in lands, including easements, other than sale or lease, is conveyed.

(41) "Utility of the preserve" means fitness of the preserve for the present and future enjoyment of its biological, aesthetic and scientific values, in an essentially natural condition.

(42) "Water dependent activity" means an activity which can only be conducted on, in, over, or adjacent to, water areas because the activity requires direct access to the water body or sovereignty lands for transportation, recreation, energy production or transmission, or source of

water and where the use of the water or sovereignty lands is an integral part of the activity.

*Specific Authority 258.43(1) FS. Law Implemented 258.37, 258.43(1) FS. History—New 2-25-81. Amended 8-7-85. Formerly 16Q-20.03. Transferred from 16Q-20.003.*

**18-20.004 Management Policies, Standards and Criteria.** The following management policies, standards and criteria are supplemental to Chapter 18-21, Florida Administrative Code (Sovereignty Submerged Lands Management) and shall be utilized in determining whether to approve, approve with conditions or modifications or deny all requests for activities on sovereignty lands in aquatic preserves.

(1) **GENERAL PROPRIETARY**

(a) In determining whether to approve or deny any request, the Board will evaluate each on a case-by-case basis and weigh any factors relevant under Chapter 253 and/or 258, Florida Statutes. The Board, acting as Trustees for all state-owned lands, reserves the right to approve, modify or reject any proposal.

(b) There shall be no further sale, lease or transfer of sovereignty lands except when such sale, lease or transfer is in the public interest (see Section 18-20.004(2) Public Interest Assessment Criteria).

(c) There shall be no construction of seawalls waterward of the mean or ordinary high water line, or filling waterward of the mean or ordinary high water line except in the case of public road and bridge projects where no reasonable alternative exists.

(d) There shall, in no case, be any dredging waterward of the mean or ordinary high water line for the sole or primary purpose of providing fill for any area landward of the mean or ordinary high water line.

(e) A lease, easement or consent of use may be authorized only for the following activities:

1. a public navigation project;
2. maintenance of an existing navigational channel;

3. installation or maintenance of approved navigational aids;

4. creation or maintenance of a commercial/industrial dock, pier or a marina;

5. creation or maintenance of private docks for reasonable ingress and egress of riparian owners;

6. minimum dredging for navigation channels attendant to docking facilities;

7. creation or maintenance of a shore protection structure;

8. installation or maintenance of oil and gas transportation facilities;

9. creation, maintenance, replacement or expansion of facilities required for the provision of public utilities; and

10. other activities which are a public necessity or which are necessary to enhance the quality or utility of the preserve and which are consistent with the act and this chapter.

(f) For activities listed in paragraphs 18-20.004(1)(e)1.—10. above, the activity shall be

designed so that the structure or structures to be built in, on or over sovereign lands are limited to structures necessary to conduct water dependent activities.

(g) For activities listed in paragraphs 18-20.004(1)(c)7., 8., 9. and 10. above, it must be demonstrated that no other reasonable alternative exists which would allow the proposed activity to be constructed or undertaken outside the preserve.

(h) The use of state-owned lands for the purpose of providing private or public road access to islands where such access did not previously exist shall be prohibited. The use of state-owned lands for the purpose of providing private or public water supply to islands where such water supply did not previously exist shall be prohibited.

(i) Except for public navigation projects and maintenance dredging for existing channels and basins, any areas dredged to improve or create navigational access shall be incorporated into the preempted area of any required lease or be subject to the payment of a negotiated private easement fee.

(j) Private residential multi-slip docking facilities shall require a lease.

(k) Aquaculture and beach renourishment activities which comply with the standards of this rule chapter and Chapter 18-21, Florida Administrative Code, may be approved by the board, but only subsequent to a formal finding of compatibility with the purposes of Chapter 258, Florida Statutes, and this rule chapter.

(l) Other uses of the preserve, or human activity within the preserve, although not originally contemplated, may be approved by the board, but only subsequent to a formal finding of compatibility with the purposes of Chapter 258, Florida Statutes, and this rule chapter.

#### (2) PUBLIC INTEREST ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

In evaluating requests for the sale, lease or transfer of interest, a balancing test will be utilized to determine whether the social, economic and/or environmental benefits clearly exceed the costs.

##### (a) GENERAL BENEFIT/COST CRITERIA:

1. any benefits that are balanced against the costs of a particular project shall be related to the affected aquatic preserve;

2. in evaluating the benefits and costs of each request, specific consideration and weight shall be given to the quality and nature of the specific aquatic preserve. Projects in the less developed, more pristine aquatic preserves such as Apalachicola Bay shall be subject to a higher standard than the more developed urban aquatic preserves such as Boca Ciega Bay; and,

3. for projects in aquatic preserves with adopted management plans, consistency with the management plan will be weighed heavily when determining whether the project is in the public interest.

##### (b) BENEFIT CATEGORIES:

1. public access (public boat ramps, boatslips, etc.);

2. provide boating and marina services (repair, pumpout, etc.);

3. improve and enhance public health, safety, welfare, and law enforcement;

4. improved public land management;

5. improve and enhance public navigation;

6. improve and enhance water quality;

7. enhancement/restoration of natural habitat and functions; and

8. improve/project

endangered/threatened/unique species.

##### (c) COSTS:

1. reduced/degraded water quality;

2. reduced/degraded natural habitat and function;

3. destruction, harm or harassment of endangered or threatened species and habitat;

4. preemption of public use;

5. increasing navigational hazards and congestion;

6. reduced/degraded aesthetics; and

7. adverse cumulative impacts.

##### (d) EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC BENEFITS:

1. donation of land, conservation easements, restrictive covenants or other title interests in or contiguous to the aquatic preserve which will protect or enhance the aquatic preserve;

2. providing access or facilities for public land management activities;

3. providing public access easements and/or facilities, such as beach access, boat ramps, etc.;

4. restoration/enhancement of altered habitat or natural functions, such as conversion of vertical bulkheads to riprap and/or vegetation for shoreline stabilization or re-establishment of shoreline or submerged vegetation;

5. improving fishery habitat through the establishment of artificial reefs or other such projects, where appropriate;

6. providing sewage pumpout facilities where normally not required, in particular, facilities open to the general public;

7. improvements to water quality such as removal of toxic sediments, increased flushing and circulation, etc.;

8. providing upland dry storage as an alternative to wetslip; and

9. marking navigation channels to avoid disruption of shallow water habitats.

#### (3) RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

(a) All proposed activities in aquatic preserves having management plans adopted by the Board must demonstrate that such activities are consistent with the management plan.

(b) No drilling of oil, gas or other such wells shall be allowed.

(c) Utility cables, pipes and other such structures shall be constructed and located in a manner that will cause minimal disturbance to submerged land resources such as oyster bars and submerged grass beds and do not interfere with traditional public uses.

(d) Spoil disposal within the preserves shall be strongly discouraged and may be approved only

structures shall be constructed and located in a manner that will cause minimal disturbance to submerged land resources such as oyster bars and submerged grass beds and do not interfere with traditional public uses.

(d) Spoil disposal within the preserves shall be strongly discouraged and may be approved only where the applicant has demonstrated that there is no other reasonable alternative and that activity may be beneficial to, or at a minimum, not harmful to the quality and utility of the preserve.

#### (4) RIPARIAN RIGHTS

(a) None of the provisions of this rule shall be implemented in a manner that would unreasonably infringe upon the traditional, common law and statutory riparian rights of upland riparian property owners adjacent to sovereign lands.

(b) The evaluation and determination of the reasonable riparian rights of ingress and egress for private, residential multi-slip docks shall be based upon the number of linear feet of riparian shoreline.

(c) For the purposes of this rule, a private, residential, single docking facility which meets all the requirements of Rule 18-20.004(5) shall be deemed to meet the public interest requirements of Rule 18-20.004(1)(b), Florida Administrative Code. However, the applicants for such docking facilities must apply for such consent and must meet all of the requirements and standards of this rule chapter.

#### (5) STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR DOCKING FACILITIES

(a) All docking facilities, whether for a single or multi-slip residential or commercial, shall be subject to the following standards and criteria:

1. no dock shall extend waterward or the mean or ordinary high water line more than 500 feet or 20 percent of the width of the waterbody at that particular location whichever is less;

2. certain docks may fall within areas of special or unique importance. These areas may be of significant biological, scientific, historic and/or aesthetic value and require special management considerations. Modifications may be more restrictive than the normally accepted criteria. Such modifications shall be determined on a case-by-case analysis, and may include, but shall not be limited to changes in location, configuration, length, width and height;

3. the number, lengths, drafts and types of vessels allowed to utilize the proposed facility may also be stipulated; and

4. where local governments have more stringent standards and criteria for docking facilities, the more stringent standards for the protection and enhancement of the aquatic preserve shall prevail.

(b) Private residential single docks shall conform to the following specific design standards and criteria:

1. any main access dock shall be limited to a maximum width of four (4) feet;

2. the dock decking design and construction will insure maximum light penetration, with full consideration of safety and practicality;

3. the dock will extend out from the shoreline no further than to a maximum depth of minus four (- 4) feet (mean low water);

4. when the water depth is minus four (- 4) feet (mean low water) at an existing bulkhead the maximum dock length from the bulkhead shall be 25 feet, subject to modifications accommodating shoreline vegetation overhang;

5. wave break devices, when necessary, shall be designed to allow for maximum water circulation and shall be built in such a manner as to be part of the dock structure;

6. terminal platform size shall be no more than 160 square feet; and

7. dredging to obtain navigable water depths in conjunction with private residential, single dock applications is strongly discouraged.

(c) Private residential multi-slip docks shall conform to the following specific design standards and criteria:

1. the area of sovereignty, submerged land preempted by the docking facility shall not exceed the square footage amounting to ten times the riparian waterfront footage of the affected waterbody of the applicant, or the square footage attendant to providing a single dock in accordance with the criteria for private residential single docks, whichever is greater. A conservation easement or other such use restriction acceptable to the Board must be placed on the riparian shoreline, used for the calculation of the 10:1 threshold, to conserve and protect shoreline resources and subordinate/waive any further riparian rights of ingress and egress for additional docking facilities;

2. docking facilities and access channels shall be prohibited in Resource Protection Area 1 or 2, except as allowed pursuant to Section 258.42(3)(e)1., Florida Statutes, while dredging in Resource Protection Area 3 shall be strongly discouraged;

3. docking facilities shall only be approved in locations having adequate existing water depths in the boat mooring, turning basin, access channels, and other such areas which will accommodate the proposed boat use in order to insure that a minimum of one foot clearance is provided between the deepest draft of a vessel and the bottom at mean low water;

4. main access docks and connecting or cross walks shall not exceed six (6) feet in width;

5. terminal platforms shall not exceed eight (8) feet in width;

6. finger piers shall not exceed three (3) feet in width, and 25 feet in length;

7. pilings may be utilized as required to provide adequate mooring capabilities; and

8. the following provisions of Rule 18-20.004(5)(d) shall also apply to private residential multi-slip docks.

(d) Commercial, industrial and other revenue generating/income related docking facilities shall conform to the following specific design standards and criteria:

1. docking facilities shall only be located in or near areas with good circulation, flushing and adequate water depths;

2. docking facilities and access channels shall be prohibited in Resource Protection Area 1 or 2, except as allowed pursuant to Sections 258.42(3)(e)1., Florida Statutes; while dredging in Resource Protection Area 3 shall be strongly discouraged;

3. the docking facilities shall not be located in Resource Protection Area 1 or 2; however, main access docks may be allowed in pass through Resource Protection Area 1 or 2, that are located along the shoreline, to reach an acceptable Resource Protection Area 3, provided that such crossing will generate minimal environmental impact;

4. beginning July 1, 1986 new docking facilities may obtain a lease only where the local governments have an adopted marina plan and/or policies dealing with the siting of commercial/industrial and private, residential, multi-slip docking facilities in their local government comprehensive plan;

5. the siting of the docking facilities shall also take into account the access of the boat traffic to avoid marine grassbeds or other aquatic resources in the surrounding areas;

6. the siting of new facilities within the preserve shall be secondary to the expansions of existing facilities within the preserve when such expansion is consistent with the other standards;

7. the location of new facilities and expansion of existing facilities shall consider the use of upland dry storage as an alternative to multiple wet-slip docking;

8. marina siting will be coordinated with local governments to insure consistency with all local plans and ordinances;

9. marinas shall not be sited within state designated manatee sanctuaries; and

10. in any areas with known manatee concentrations, manatee warning/notice and/or speed limit signs shall be erected at the marina and/or ingress and egress channels, according to Florida Marine Patrol specifications.

(e) Exceptions to the standards and criteria listed in Rule 18-20.004(5), Florida Administrative Code, may be considered, but only upon demonstration by the applicant that such exceptions are necessary to insure reasonable riparian ingress and egress.

#### (6) MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

The board may enter into management agreements with local agencies for the administration and enforcement of standards and criteria for private residential single docks.

(7) In addition to the policies, standards and criteria delineated in subsections (1) through (6), the provisions of the following management plans apply to specific aquatic preserves and are incorporated herein by reference. Where regulatory criteria in 18-20, F. A. C., may differ with specific policies in the management plans listed herein, the general rule criteria shall prevail.

#### Date Adopted

Alligator Harbor  
Banana River

September 23, 1986  
September 17, 1985

Cockroach Bay  
Estero Bay  
Charlotte Harbor  
(Cape Haze,  
Gasparilla  
Sound-Charlotte  
Harbor, Matlacha  
Pass and Pine Island  
Sound)

Indian River-Malabar  
to Vero Beach  
Indian River Lagoon  
(Vero Beach to Fort  
Pierce and Jensen  
Beach to Jupiter  
Inlet)

Loxahatchee  
River-Lake Worth  
Creek  
Nassau River-St.  
Johns River Marshes  
and Fort Clinch  
State Park

North Fork of the St.  
Lucie River  
St. Joseph Bay  
St. Martins Marsh  
Terra Ceia

Wekiva River  
Specific Authority 258.43(1) FS. Law Implemented  
258.41, 258.42, 258.43(1), 258.44 FS. History—New  
2-25-81, Amended 6-7-85. Formerly 16Q-20.004,  
Transferred from 16Q-20.004, Amended 6-4-88.

18-20.005 Uses, Sales, Leases, or Transfer of  
Interest in Lands, or Materials, Held by the  
Board.

Specific Authority 258.43(1) FS. Law Implemented  
253.02, 253.12, 258.42 FS. History—New 2-25-81,  
Repealed 6-7-85. Formerly 16Q-20.05. Transferred from  
16Q-20.005.

18-20.006 Cumulative Impact. In evaluating applications for activities within the preserves or which may impact the preserves, the department recognizes that, while a particular alteration of the preserve may constitute a minor change, the cumulative effect of numerous such changes often results in major impairments to the resources of the preserve. Therefore, the department shall evaluate a particular site for which the activity is proposed with the recognition that the activity may, in conjunction with other activities adversely affect the preserve which is part of a complete and interrelated system. The impact of a proposed activity shall be considered in light of its cumulative impact on the preserve's natural system. The department shall include as a part of its evaluation of an activity:

(1) The number and extent of similar human actions within the preserve which have previously affected or are likely to affect the preserve, whether considered by the department under its current authority or which existed prior to or since the enactment of the Act; and

(2) The similar activities within the preserve

which are currently under consideration by the department; and

(3) Direct and indirect effects upon the preserve and adjacent preserves, if applicable, which may reasonably be expected to result from the activity; and

(4) The extent to which the activity is consistent with management plans for the preserve, when developed; and

(5) The extent to which the activity is permissible within the preserve in accordance with comprehensive plans adopted by affected local governments, pursuant to section 163.3161, F.S., and other applicable plans adopted by local, state, and federal governmental agencies;

(6) The extent to which the loss of beneficial hydrologic and biologic functions would adversely impact the quality or utility of the preserve; and

(7) The extent to which mitigation measures may compensate for adverse impacts.

*Specific Authority* 258.43(1) FS. *Law Implemented* 258.36, 258.43, 258.44 FS. *History*—New 2-25-81. Formerly 16Q-20.06. Transferred from 16Q-20.016.

#### 18-20.007 Protection of Riparian Rights.

*Specific Authority* 258.43(1) FS. *Law Implemented* 258.123, 258.124(8), 258.44 FS. *History*—New 2-25-81. Repealed 6-7-85. Formerly 16Q-20.07. Transferred from 16Q-20.007.

#### 18-20.008 Inclusion of Lands, Title to Which Is Not Vested in the Board, in a Preserve.

(1) Lands and water bottoms which are within designated aquatic preserve boundaries, or adjacent thereto and which are owned by other governmental agencies, may be included in an aquatic preserve upon specific authorization for inclusion by an appropriate instrument in writing executed by the agency.

(2) Lands and water bottoms which are within designated aquatic preserve boundaries or adjacent thereto, and which are in private ownership, may be included in an aquatic preserve upon specific authorization for inclusion by an appropriate instrument in writing executed by the owner.

(3) The appropriate instrument shall be either a dedication in perpetuity, or a lease. Such lease shall contain the following conditions:

(a) The term of the lease shall be for a minimum period of ten years.

(b) The board shall have the power and duty to enforce the provisions of each lease agreement, and shall additionally have the power to terminate any lease if the termination is in the best interest of the aquatic preserve system, and shall have the power to include such lands in any agreement for management of such lands.

(c) The board shall pay no more than \$1 per year for any such lease.

*Specific Authority* 258.43(1) FS. *Law Implemented* 258.40, 258.41 FS. *History*—New 2-25-81. Formerly 16Q-20.08. Transferred from 16Q-20.018.

#### 18-20.009 Establishment or Expansion of Aquatic Preserves.

(1) The board may expand existing preserves or establish additional areas to be included in the

aquatic preserve system, subject to confirmation by the legislature.

(2) The board may, after public notice and public hearing in the county or counties in which the proposed expanded or new preserve is to be located, adopt a resolution formally setting aside such areas to be included in the system.

(3) The resolution setting aside an aquatic preserve area shall include:

(a) A legal description of the area to be included. A map depicting the legal description shall also be attached.

(b) The designation of the type of aquatic preserve.

(c) A general statement of what is sought to be preserved.

(d) A statement that the area established as a preserve shall be subject to the management criteria and directives of this chapter.

(e) A directive to develop a natural resource inventory and a management plan for the area being established as an aquatic preserve.

(4) Within 30 days of the designation and establishment of an aquatic preserve, the board shall record in the public records of the county or counties in which the preserve is located a legal description of the preserve.

*Specific Authority* 258.43(1) FS. *Law Implemented* 258.41 FS. *History*—New 2-25-81. Formerly 16Q-20.09. Transferred from 16Q-20.009.

#### 18-20.010 Exchange of Lands.

The board in its discretion may exchange lands for the benefit of the preserve, provided that:

(1) In no case shall an exchange result in any land or water area being withdrawn from the preserve; and

(2) Exchanges shall be in the public interest and shall maintain or enhance the quality or utility of the preserve.

*Specific Authority* 258.43(1) FS. *Law Implemented* 258.41(5), 258.42(1) FS. *History*—New 2-25-81. Formerly 16A-20.10. Transferred from 16Q-20.010.

#### 18-20.011 Gifts of Lands.

The board in its discretion may accept any gifts of lands or interests in lands within or contiguous to the preserve to maintain or enhance the quality and utility of the preserve.

*Specific Authority* 258.43(1) FS. *Law Implemented* 258.42(5) FS. *History*—New 2-25-81. Formerly 16Q-20.11. Transferred from 16Q-20.011.

#### 18-20.012 Protection of Indigenous Life Forms.

The taking of indigenous life forms for sale or commercial use is prohibited, except that this prohibition shall not extend to the commercial taking of fin fish, crustaceans or mollusks, except as prohibited under applicable laws, rules or regulations. Members of the public may exercise their rights to fish, so long as not contrary to other statutory and regulatory provisions controlling such activities.

*Specific Authority* 258.43(1) FS. *Law Implemented* 258.43(1) FS. *History*—New 2-25-81. Formerly 16Q-20.12. Transferred from 16Q-20.012.

**18-20.013 Development of Resource Inventories and Management Plans for Preserves.**

(1) The board authorizes and directs the division to develop a resource inventory and management plan for each preserve.

(2) The division may perform the work to develop the inventories and plans, or may enter into agreements with other persons to perform the work. In either case, all work performed shall be subject to board approval.

*Specific Authority 258.43(1) FS. Law Implemented 253.03(7), 253.03(8) FS. History—New 2-25-81. Amended 8-7-85. Formerly 16Q-20.13. Transferred from 16Q-20.013.*

**18-20.014 Enforcement.** The rules shall be enforced as provided in Section 258.46.

*Specific Authority 258.43(1) FS. Law Implemented 258.46 FS. History—New 2-25-81. Formerly 16Q-20.14. Transferred from 16Q-20.014.*

**18-20.015 Application Form.**

*Specific Authority 253.43(1) FS. Law Implemented 258.43 FS. History—New 2-25-81. Repealed 8-7-85. Formerly 16Q-20.15. Transferred from 16Q-20.015.*

**18-20.016 Coordination with Other Governmental Agencies.** Where a Department of Environmental Regulation permit is required for activities on sovereignty lands the department will coordinate with the Department of Environmental Regulation to obtain a copy of the joint Department of Army/Florida Department of Environmental Regulation permit application and the biological survey. The information contained in the joint permit application and biological assessment shall be considered by the department in preparing its staff recommendations to the board. The board may also consider the reports of other governmental agencies that have related management or permitting responsibilities regarding the proposed activity.

*Specific Authority 253.43(1) FS. Law Implemented 258.43 FS. History—New 2-25-81. Formerly 16Q-20.16. Transferred from 16Q-20.016.*

**18-20.017 Lake Jackson Aquatic Preserve.** In addition to the provisions of Rules 18-20.001 through 18-20.016, the following requirements shall also apply to all proposed activities within the Lake Jackson Aquatic Preserve. If any provisions of this Rule are in conflict with any provisions of Rules 18-20.001 through 18-20.016 or Chapter 73-534, Laws of Florida, the stronger provision for the protection or enhancement of the aquatic preserve shall prevail.

(1) No further sale, transfer or lease of sovereignty lands in the preserve shall be approved or consummated by the Board, except upon a showing of extreme hardship on the part of the applicant or when the board shall determine such sale, transfer or lease to be in the public interest.

(2) No further dredging or filling of sovereignty lands of the preserve shall be approved or tolerated by the Board of Trustees except:

(a) Such minimum dredging and spoiling as may be authorized for public navigation projects or for preservation of the lake according to the expressed intent of Chapter 73-534, Laws of Florida; and

(b) Such other alteration of physical conditions as may be necessary to enhance the quality or utility of the preserve.

(3) There shall be no drilling of wells, excavation for shell or minerals, and no erection of structures (other than docks), within the preserve, unless such activity is associated with activity authorized by Chapter 73-534, Laws of Florida.

(4) The Board shall not approve the relocations of bulkhead lines within the preserve.

(5) Notwithstanding other provisions of this act, the board may, respecting lands lying within the Lake Jackson basin:

(a) Enter into agreements for and establish lines delineating sovereignty and privately owned lands;

(b) Enter into agreements for the exchange and exchange sovereignty lands for privately owned lands;

(c) Accept gifts of land within or contiguous to the preserve.

*Specific Authority 258.39(26) FS. Law Implemented 258.39(26), 258.43 FS. History—New 8-7-85. Formerly 16Q-20.017. Transferred from 16Q-20.017.*

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