

Hog Point Cove Sanctuary Public Access Plan

Site Summary

The Hog Point Cove Sanctuary is comprised of 3 non-contiguous parcel groupings totaling 17.8 acres in South Melbourne Beach. These three groupings are referred to as HPC-1, HPC-2 and HPC-3 from north to south respectively. The site consists primarily of maritime hammock communities on the west side of State Road A1A bordered by private homes and State Road A1A. HPC-1 is bordered to the north by conservation land managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. HPC-1 is also a former commercial clam farm operation currently operated as a research station for partner organizations under the name Hog Point Cove Field Station. The facilities at HPC-1, including a caretaker structure and two docks, were severely damaged by Hurricane Matthew in 2016. The EEL Program had filed claims with FEMA to re-build the facilities but FEMA funding was not available. Beginning in early 2020 the EEL Program has partnered with Career Source Brevard to repair/rebuild the caretaker structure and the large dock. The agreement calls for EEL Program to pay for all materials and Career Source provides the manpower. As of January 1st, 2021 renovation of the caretaker house is complete and work to repair the 250 foot dock are underway.

The fragmented nature and varied land use history of Hog Point Cove Sanctuary requires each parcel grouping to be classified individually. HPC-1 is considered a modified Category I site, which means the site will be developed for research purposes. HPC-1 is ideal for this because the existing clam farm structure allows for operation of the Hog Point Cove Field Station with minimal impact on undisturbed habitat along with research opportunities for the Florida Institute of Technology and other local NGOs. HPC-2 and HPC-3 are classified as Category III sites, meaning they will be left undisturbed in order to preserve essential habitat and environmental resources. The small and fragmented nature of these parcels makes them unsuitable for development or public use.

Passive Recreation Definition

To the extent they do not interfere with biological management goals, EEL sanctuaries provide a range of passive recreation opportunities for the public. As a general guideline for EEL Program management decisions, passive recreation is defined as, “a recreational type of use, level and combination of uses that do not individually, or collectively, degrade the resource values, biological diversity, and aesthetic or environmental qualities of a site.”

Before developing a site public access plan, staff conducts a Public Access Site Assessment. From this assessment, the types and extent of activities can be determined with the goal to balance human use with the protection of natural resources. Items considered during the assessment include, environmental, cultural, recreational and educational resources, stakeholder interests, potential conflicts, universal access, connections to other recreational resources, and potential management and/or maintenance conflicts and constraints.

Activities that allow for the quiet enjoyment of nature are conducive to EEL Program goals. Common activities on EEL sanctuaries are hiking, biking, kayaking, fishing, and equestrian use. Activities and uses that are generally not allowed on EEL sanctuaries without permit include, but are not limited to: motorized vehicles, smoking, overnight use, commercial use, hunting / shooting sports, removal of plants or animals, relocating plants or animals, remote control and unmanned aerial vehicles, and pets.

Public Access Site Assessment

During the Public Access Site Assessment, it was noted that the northern parcels designated as HPC-1 was operated as a commercial clam farm in the 1980s and 1990s. There is a 70-acre lagoon lease associated with the historic use of the site that the County has maintained.

Recreational Uses and Amenities

No public access is planned for the Hog Point Cove Sanctuary. The small size, configuration and proximity to private properties make it unsuitable for public access that would not negatively affect adjacent property owner's privacy. Similar habitats are available for the public to visit at the Coconut Point Sanctuary 0.9 miles north and at the Maritime Hammock Sanctuary 3 miles south. Requests for access to the docks at HPC-1 by citizens looking for a way to access the beaches from the lagoon were reviewed in 2011. The request was denied because there was no public beach access adjacent to the Hog Point Cove Sanctuary and another option to access a public beach (Ponce Landing) from the lagoon was available through the Coconut Point Sanctuary, 1 mile to the north. In addition, public access was not compatible with the security of research activities that are underway and/or planned at the site. The site has been used in a limited way by education staff at the Barrier Island Center for school field trips.

Environmental Education Opportunities

The Hog Point Cove Sanctuary is to be operated primarily as a research center for educational and non-governmental institutions looking to conduct research into issues affecting both the Indian River Lagoon and the adjacent coastal communities. Within that framework, opportunities for guided environmental education do exist and will be coordinated through the Barrier Island Center and partners. Access to the lagoon shoreline, including access to the 250-foot dock and planned flow-through lagoon wet lab, offer chances to educate the public on issues related to lagoon and coastal restoration efforts carried out by multiple agencies within the region.