

ITEM 16:

Consider a 10-year update to the Fort Pierce Inlet State Park Management Plan (Lease No. 2742).

LOCATION:

St. Lucie County

APPLICANT:

Florida Park Service

STAFF REMARKS:

Background

Fort Pierce Inlet State Park (FPISP) in St. Lucie County consists of approximately 713.60 acres. The park was initially acquired on August 10, 1973, with funds from the Environmentally Endangered Lands program. The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund holds fee simple title to the park and on March 4, 1974, the Trustees leased the property to the Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP).

FPISP protects over 700 acres of intertwined mangrove swamps, maritime hammocks, beach dunes, and various seagrass beds that are critical for the survival of in-shore and off-shore fish species and other marine animals. The park also provides habitat to many of Florida's important native and imperiled species such as the gopher tortoise, roseate spoonbill, inkberry, Johnson's seagrass, and the endangered beach star. FISP waters provide recreational opportunities for visitors surfing along the Atlantic Ocean coastline, or fishing along the man-made jetty. During World War II, the park and adjacent waters served as training grounds for U.S Navy Frogmen, forerunners of today's Navy Seals.

Management Plan Overview

The Florida Natural Areas Inventory has identified seven distinct natural community types and two altered landcover types at FPISP. The predominant natural community is mangrove swamp. Eight species of imperiled plants and 23 species of imperiled animals have been identified at FPISP.

The Division of Historical Resources maintains a Master Site File that documents many of Florida's archaeological and historical features. One archaeological site and three historic structures have been identified at FPISP.

Recreational activities at FPISP are dependent on the surrounding waters of the Indian River and Atlantic Ocean. Surfing and fishing are a major focus of recreational activity at the park along with annual surfing events. The beach is also popular for swimming, sunning and beachcombing. A high level of recreational boating occurs in the park and adjacent waters, although motorized boats are not able to launch from within the park. Birding is popular along the shorelines and hammocks. The picnic and playground facilities are frequently used. Primitive camping is available for groups and several miles of trails provide opportunities for hiking, biking and nature study. The park offers a variety of personal interpretive and recreational programs that include guided walks, talks and special events. Park staff also provide onsite Jr. Ranger programs and off-site educational programs for area schools.

The Florida Legislature requires that all land management plans include long and short-term goals. These goals must be measurable objectives, and short-term goals must be achievable within a two-year planning period. Pursuant to section 253.034, Florida Statutes, the Division of State Lands began compiling the short-term goals from each land management plan approved since July 1, 2016. The Division has included short-term goals from this management plan as part of this item.

While the ten-year management plan serves as the basic statement of policy and future direction for each park, several annual work plans provide more specific guidance for DRP staff to accomplish many of the resource management goals and objectives of the park. Where such detailed planning is appropriate to the character and scale of the park’s natural resources, annual work plans are developed for prescribed fire management, exotic plant management and imperiled species management. Annual or longer-term work plans are developed for natural community restoration and hydrological restoration.

Public Involvement

DRP solicited public input by conducting a public workshop and advisory group meeting on June 2 and 3, 2021. The purpose of the workshop was to present the management plan to the public. The purpose of the advisory group meeting was to provide the Advisory Group members the opportunity to review and discuss the management plan. No additional changes were recommended to the draft plan and no public comments were received.

Surplus Lands

The evaluation by the DRP determined that no portion of the FPISP is recommended for a potential surplus designation.

State Land Management Review Team

A Land Management Review (LMR) was conducted in September 2018. The review team found that the property is managed in accordance with the purposes for which it was acquired and the management practices, including public access, are in compliance with the management plan. Three consensus recommendations were offered:

- Increase the frequency of winter shorebird surveys.
- Seek out advice on the restoration or improvement of Tucker’s Cove.
- Provide informative signage at beach dune crossovers of the dangers of man-made holes on the beach during nesting season.

The 2018 LMR notes were reviewed as part of developing this plan and the agreed upon changes and recommendations were made to this management plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the management plan.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

- APPROVE**
- APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS:** _____
- DEFER**
- WITHDRAW**

NOT APPROVE

OTHER: _____

Fort Pierce Inlet State Park

Land Management Plan Short Term Goals

Goal	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action	Performance Measure
III	Restore and maintain natural communities/habitats	B	Conduct habitat/community restoration activities on 105 acres of spoil area natural community	1	Remove and maintain invasive exotic vegetation	Plan developed/updated
IV	Maintain, improve or restore imperiled species populations and habitats	B	Monitor & document 5 selected imperiled animal species	1	Implement monitoring protocols for 5 imperiled animal species	Number protocols developed
IV	Maintain, improve or restore imperiled species populations and habitats	C	Monitor and document 1 selected imperiled plant species	1	Develop monitoring protocols and surveys for 1 selected imperiled plant species	Number protocols developed
VI	Protect, preserve and maintain cultural resources	B	Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historical and archaeological sites	1	Ensure all known sites are recorded or updated in the Florida MSF	Number sites recorded or updated
VI	Protect, preserve and maintain cultural resources	B	Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historical and archaeological sites	2	Record structures as they become historic	Sites recorded or updated

Goal	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action	Performance Measure
VII	Provide public access and recreational opportunities	B	Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historical and archaeological sites	n/a	n/a	Number Interpretive / educational programs
VII	Provide public access and recreational opportunities	C	Develop 2 new interpretive, educational, and recreational programs	n/a	n/a	Number Interpretive / educational programs

Source: Florida DEP, Office of Environmental Services, Revised 2020-MWE.



FORT PIERCE INLET STATE PARK

Unit Management Plan Executive Summary

Purpose and Significance of the Park

Park Interpretive Themes

Park History

Fort Pierce Inlet State Park was initially acquired on August 10, 1973 with funds from the Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) program. The park is 713.60 acres.

Park Significance

During World War Two, the grounds of Fort Pierce Inlet were used as training grounds for thousands of U.S Navy Frogmen (present day Navy Seals). Dynamite Point, located on the western end of the Inlet, receiving its name as the spot was used for activities by the Navy Underwater Demolition Team who where trained to explode ammunition. Currently the park preserves those sites that proved to be very important for the war effort.

Fort Pierce’s location within a highly urbanized area of St. Lucie County provides nearly half a mile of ocean front along the Atlantic for salt water-based outdoor recreation such as surfing which is popular among the local community. Additional recreational opportunities, such as fishing can be found along the parks inlet. The park protects important sea grass beds that is the habitat for various fish species and marine animals in the area.





FORT PIERCE INLET STATE PARK

Unit Management Plan Executive Summary

Purpose and Significance of the Park

Park Interpretive Themes

Central Park Theme

More than a surfer’s dream, Fort Pierce Inlet State Park historic beachfront and twisted mangrove forests are also a bastion for threatened wildlife species.

Primary Interpretive Themes

Historic Beachfront

Hidden beneath the waves at Fort Pierce Inlet State Park, thousands of men trained in the dangerous task of underwater demolition during World War II.

Connections

The Fort Pierce Inlet waterways continues to serve as a vital connection for local access to the bountiful water of the Atlantic Ocean.

Regional Wildlife

Located along the biologically rich Indian River Lagoon, endangered sea turtles and other marine life depend on Fort Pierce Inlet State Park for survival.

Resilient Natural Communities

An amazing example of resiliency, the native plants and wildlife species of Fort Pierce Inlet State Park thrive among the altered landscapes of constructed jetties and recovered spoil.





FORT PIERCE INLET STATE PARK

Unit Management Plan Executive Summary

Park Quick Facts

Natural Community Composition

- ◆ **Agency:** Department of Environmental Protection - Division of Recreation and Parks
- ◆ **Acreage :** 713.6
- ◆ **Location:** St. Lucie County
- ◆ **Lease Management Agreement Number(s):** 2742
- ◆ **Use:** Single
- ◆ **Designated Land Use:** Public Outdoor recreation and conservation
- ◆ **Responsibility:** Public Outdoor Recreation and Conservation
- ◆ **Sublease:** None
- ◆ **Encumbrances:** See Appendix 1 for details
- ◆ **Public Involvement:** See Appendix 2 for details
- ◆ **Optimum Boundary:** Approximately 60.16 acres
- ◆ **Surplus Lands:** None

Natural Communities	Acreage	Percentage of the Property
Mangrove Swamp	491.0	69%
Spoil Area	104.6	15%
Maritime Hammock	35.7	5%
Estuarine Composite Substrate	23.8	3%
Costal Strand	21.2	3%
Developed	17.9	2%
Beach Dune	14.4	2%
Estuarine Unconsolidated Substrate	3.5	<1%
Estuarine Seagrass Bed	3.2	<1%
Total Acreage	713.6	100%



FORT PIERCE INLET STATE PARK

Unit Management Plan Executive Summary

Park Accomplishments: 2006 — 2020

Ten-Year Planning Period Objectives

Previous Accomplishments

Since the 2006 Unit Management Plan for Fort Pierce Inlet , the park has made significant accomplishments in terms of resource management and continued protection of the park. A motor exclusion zone was delineated for Tucker Cove after it was acquired within the park boundary, 90 % of exotic Australian Pine was removed with the level of invasive plants at Jack Island currently at maintenance level. Additionally, an archaeological survey was completed in 2013.

Future Objectives

Moving forward throughout the next 10 years of this Unit Management Plan, the park plans to continue resource management efforts by maintaining all spoil areas in hopes to reintroduce native vegetation, protection of the three species of sea turtles who utilize the parks shoreline for yearly nesting. To continually improve the visitor experience, improvements will be made to all use areas including redesigning the main picnic area which is steps from the Atlantic Shoreline and to develop an overnight camping area for glamping, tents, or raised platforms.





FORT PIERCE INLET STATE PARK

Unit Management Plan Executive Summary

Selected Imperiled Species

Current Management Initiatives

Marine Sea Turtles and Gopher Tortoises

Fort Pierce Inlet State Park provides habitat for three sea turtles, the loggerhead, green, and leatherback. The park is an active participant in the statewide marine turtle monitoring program established by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC). These sea turtles use the beach for nesting during the months of May to October with surveys conducted by park staff on a daily basis.

The Gopher tortoise can be found within the parks spoil areas, costal strands, and beach dunes. District and park staff will continue to implement existing monitoring protocols established by FWC in order to observe population trends. Throughout the next 10 years of this plan, the park plans to implement monitoring protocols for the 3 species of sea turtles along with the gopher tortoise .

Shorebirds

While historically shorebirds have not nested at Fort Pierce Inlet, the beach serves as an important loafing and feeding area for shorebirds such as the black skimmer and royal tern especially during the summer months. Shorebird nesting activities are monitored and documented on a monthly basis during March through August.





FORT PIERCE INLET STATE PARK

Unit Management Plan Executive Summary

Resource Management — Imperiled Species Ten-Year Goals and Objectives

Imperiled Species Management

Goal: Maintain, improve or restore imperiled species populations and habitat in the park.

Objective: Monitor and document 1 selected imperiled plant species.

Johnson's seagrass is a documented estuarine community at Fort Pierce Inlet State Park, primarily within Tucker Cove. Surveys to locate and document Johnson's seagrass are conducted in partnership with the St Johns River Water Management and FDEP.

The park should be surveyed on a regular basis for the emergence of new seagrass. Along with the Johnson's seagrass, other types of seagrass should be monitored and recorded including: paddle, star, manatee and shoal. The park also protects 7 other imperiled plant species including:

- ◆ Crested coralroot
- ◆ Simpson's Stopper
- ◆ Prickly pear cactus
- ◆ Beach Star
- ◆ Inkberry
- ◆ Common wild pine
- ◆ Giant wild pine





FORT PIERCE INLET STATE PARK

Unit Management Plan Executive Summary

Resource Management Goals and Objectives

Natural Community, Exotic Species, Cultural Sites

Natural Community Restoration

Goal: Restore and maintain the natural communities/ habitats of the park

Objective: Restore 105 acres of spoil area.

Spoil Area restoration will focus on the removal of invasive exotic vegetation such as cogon grass and the continued maintenance of the area. Once the spoil areas are in maintenance condition there should be efforts to reintroduce native vegetation that may be found in natural maritime hammocks. These steps are the best course of action to provide a community that is close to maritime hammock.

Exotic Species Management

Goal: Remove exotic species from the park and conduct needed maintenance control.

Objective: Annually treat 50 acres of exotic plant species in the park.

Areas of treatment will be identified annually, with priority given to areas where previous removal of exotics had previously taken place and where re-treatment is needed especially at the costal strand and maritime hammock communities. Additionally, the spoil area will be a top priority area as it undergoes restoration. The goal is to keep areas treated in maintenance condition.

Cultural Resource Management

Goal: Protect, preserve and maintain the cultural resources of the park

Objective: Assess and evaluate 4 of 4 recorded cultural resources.

As of this unit management plan, the park has 3 historic structure from the 1950s and 1970s and 1 archeological site. Within the span of this plan, 11 additional structures will become historic and will need to become assessed and recorded if needed.



FORT PIERCE INLET STATE PARK

Unit Management Plan Executive Summary

Recreational Use and Infrastructure

Ten-Year Facility Improvement and Development

Recreation and Facilities Management

Goal: Develop and maintain use areas and support infrastructure

Objective: Improve 6 existing use areas

Currently, the park has multiple use areas that are popular with visitors. Plans for the next 10 years are focused on improving these day use areas by upgrading infrastructure and the overall aesthetics of the main picnic area.

Park Entrance

- Pave main park road
- Mitigate stormwater issues

Support Area

- Build New Residence

Multi—Use Pathway

- Repave Shared Use Trail (1.2 miles)
- Landscape Park Road Median

Inlet Picnic Area

- Improve Landscaping
- Explore concession opportunities

Main Day Use Area

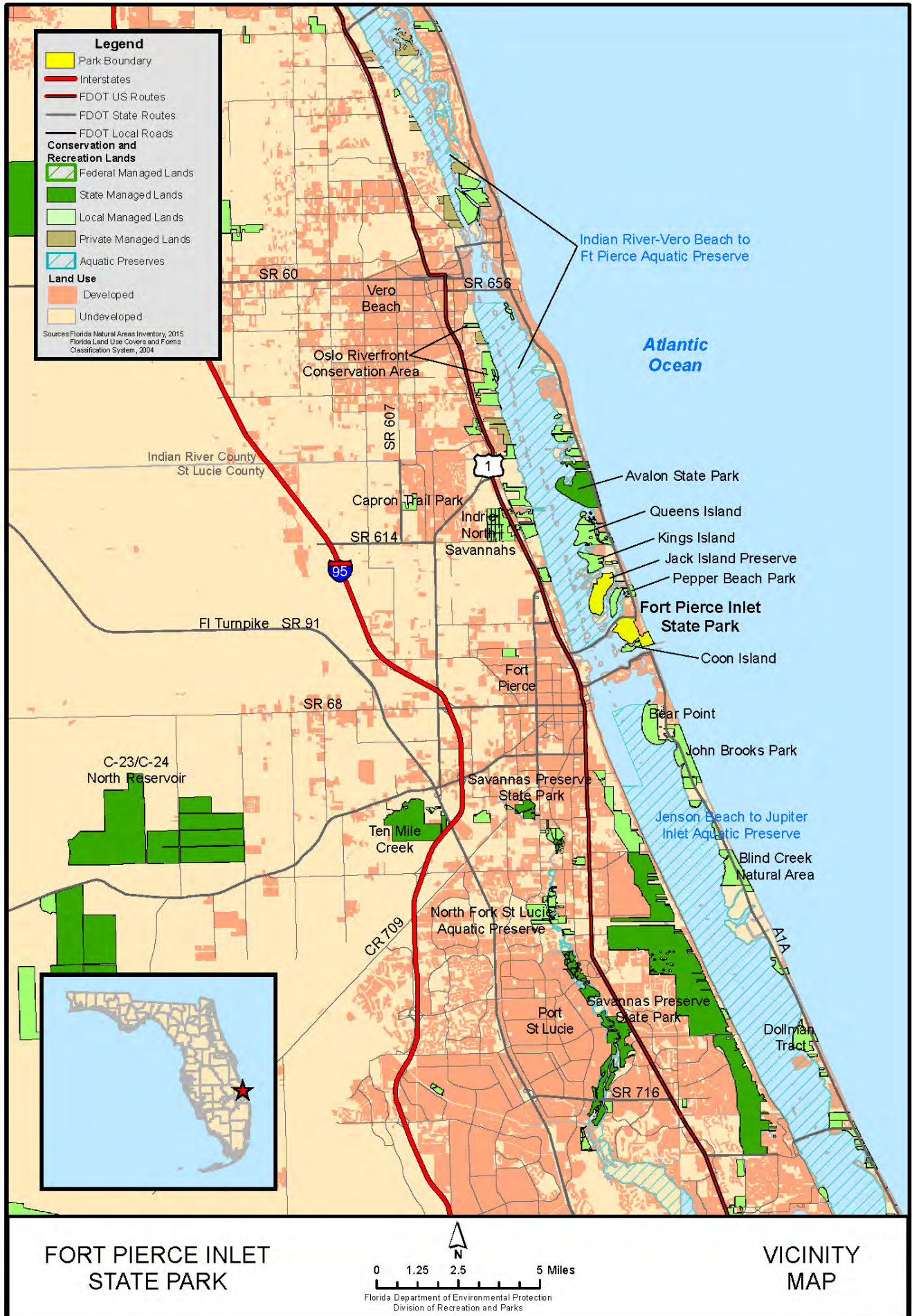
- Improve Landscaping
- Redesign picnic area
- Explore concession opportunities

Atlantic Beach Access Area

- Replace North & South Bathrooms
- Improve Pedestrian Access

Objective: Construct 1 new use area

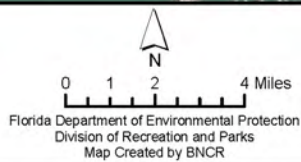
On the east shore of Tucker Cove, the existing group camp area is underutilized throughout the year. This area would serve well as an overnight camping area. Potential overnight opportunities could include glamping, tents, or raised platforms. RV campgrounds or cabins will not be considered at this time.



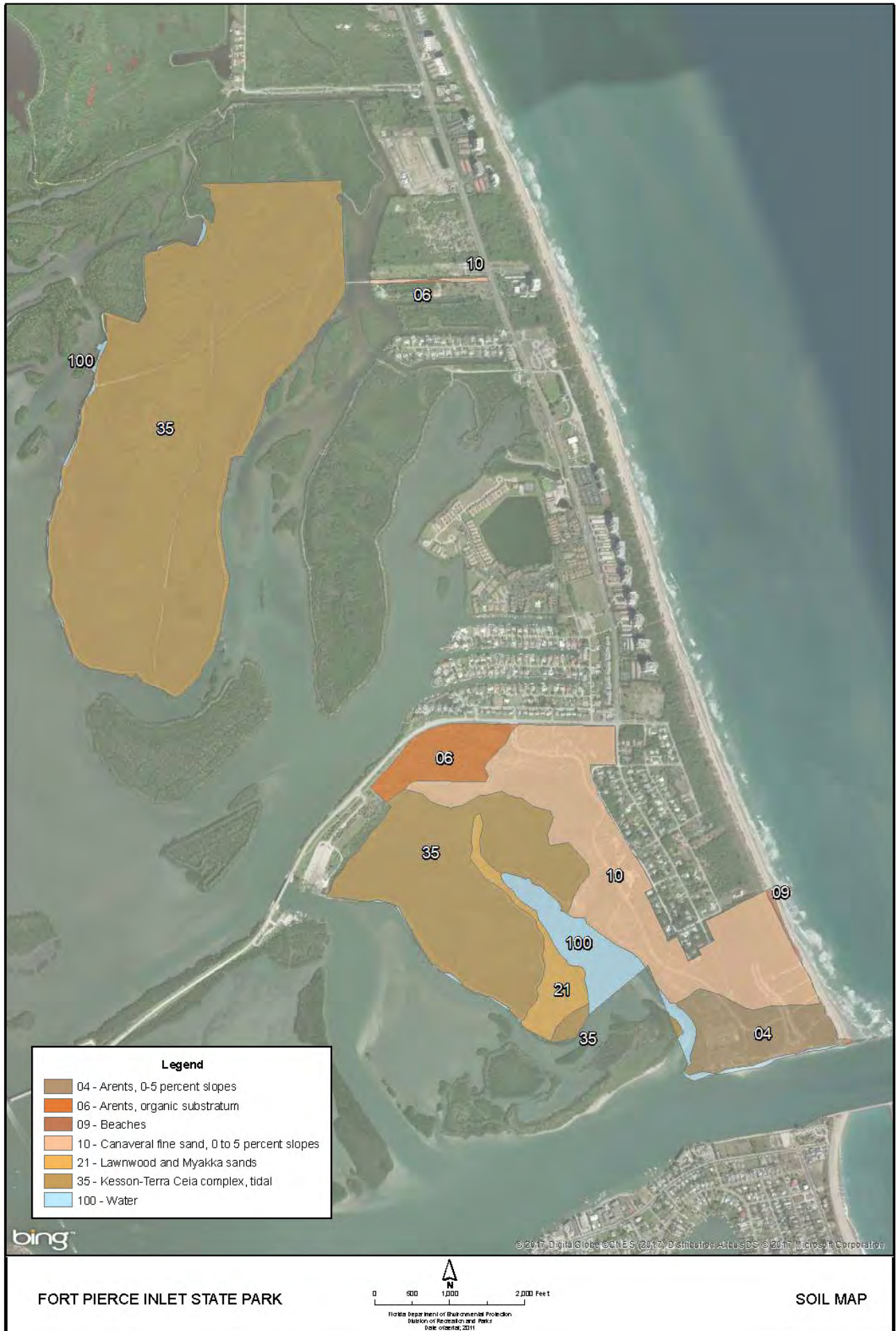




FORT PIERCE INLET STATE PARK



MANAGEMENT ZONES MAP

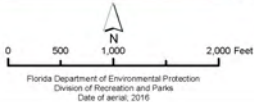




Legend

BD - Beach Dune - 12.43 ac.
CS - Coastal Strand - 21.28 ac.
ECPS - Estuarine Composite Substrate - 23.83 ac.
ESGB - Estuarine Seagrass Bed - 3.23 ac.
EUS - Estuarine Unconsolidated Substrate - 3.59 ac.
MAH - Maritime Hammock - 35.7 ac.
MS - Mangrove Swamp - 491.0 ac.
DV - Developed - 17.92 ac.
SA - Spoil Area - 104.62 ac.

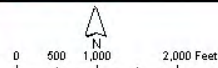
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NATURAL COMMUNITIES MAP



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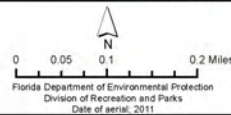


Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

BASE MAP



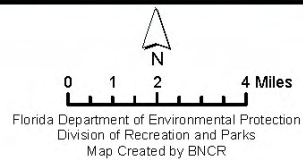
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CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLAN



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OPTIMUM BOUNDARY MAP