

# Our Natural Places

Pinellas County

Management Brief

## Allen's Creek Management Area

### At A Glance...

- 33 acres in size
- Located near Largo, FL
- Supports tidal wetlands and associated uplands



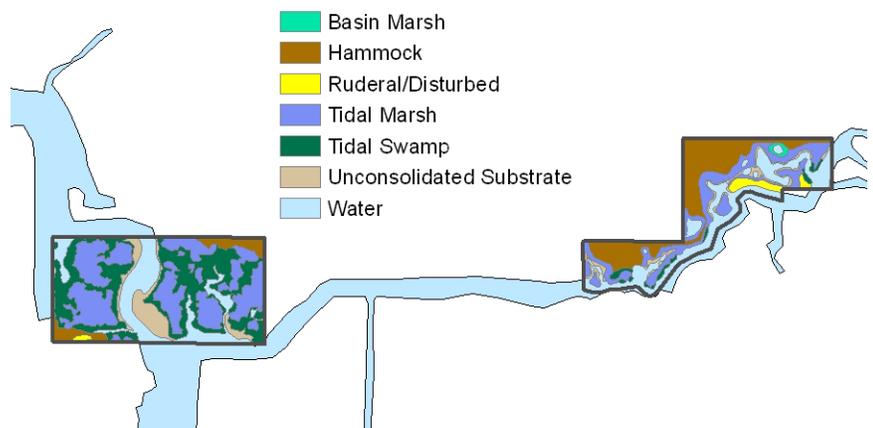
### Background

The Allen's Creek Management Area is located near the city of Largo and consists of two sections. The eastern section is 14 acres in size and is located at the end of Lancaster Drive while the western section is 19 acres in size and located near Rosery Road. The management area encompasses part of Allen's Creek and associated uplands. Historically the eastern section supported an equestrian training and riding center, a land

use that caused natural communities to degrade into bahia-dominated pasture. In contrast, the western section has remained largely undisturbed. Allen's Creek itself has been impacted by urbanization that has altered the hydrology and water quality of this brackish system. The property was purchased by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners in 1998 and 2000. This natural area is managed by Pinellas County's Department of Parks & Conservation Resources.

### Characteristics

Located in the Allen's Creek Drainage Basin, this management area is dominated hydrologically by Allen's Creek, which is tidally influenced, as well as by surficial runoff. With elevations ranging up to 10 feet above sea level, some portions of this management area are permanently inundated. Soils are predominantly mucks and well-drained fine sands. The western section of Allen's Creek Management Area consists primarily of wetlands dominated by mangroves, buttonwood, and rushes, with disturbed uplands dominated by exotic Brazilian pepper. The uplands in the eastern section are dominated by exotic grasses, though the area does support an open canopy of mature oaks and pines. Restoration plantings in this area have



Dominant natural communities of the Allen's Creek Management Area.

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promoted species such as dahoon holly, cabbage palm, marlberry, southern red cedar, wild coffee, American beautyberry, coontie, and muhly grass. The wetlands bordering Allen's Creek support diverse natural communities and are dominated by mangroves and saltgrasses.



*View within the Allen's Creek Management Area.*

## Management



*Native trees and shrubs planted in the restored uplands.*

Since assuming management of this area, the county has focused its efforts on major restoration projects. A joint endeavor of the Southwest Florida Water Management District and Pinellas County included extensive work to improve the quality of water entering Old Tampa Bay from this highly-urbanized watershed. The first phase of this project involved the creation of freshwater and estuarine wetlands to provide critical, low-salinity nursery habitat for wildlife. This work was recognized with a "Future of the Region Award" by the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council in 2007. The second phase focused on the enhancement of associated uplands by removing exotics and planting native species. Following restoration, this management area is now routinely used by a variety of wildlife. With improved hydrology, the area now captures runoff from the surrounding neighborhoods and provides the opportunity for cleansing through debris capture, sediment settling, and nutrient removal. Additional management activities include maintenance of the fence and signs that protect the property. As the restored uplands mature, the feasibility of returning a natural fire regime to this area will be explored. As with all natural areas located in an urban setting, the control of exotic vegetation will continue to be an on-going effort.

## Value

The Allen's Creek Management Area has special cultural significance to local residents and provides economic and environmental benefits to its neighbors. However, this natural space, similar to others within Pinellas County, provides valuable services to all residents and visitors to the region. By protecting native biodiversity, it supports countless organisms ranging from microbes to mammals. For example, manatees now regularly use the created wetlands within this management area. This area also makes important contributions to the region's hydrology by improving the quality of surface water before it enters Old Tampa Bay and by promoting the recharge of groundwater.



*The Allen's Creek Management Area provides habitat to many native species.*

## For additional information:

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