



Our Natural Places

Management Brief

Ozona Management Area

At A Glance...

- 8 acres in size
- Located near Ozona, FL
- Supports flatwoods and estuarine natural communities



Background

The Ozona Management Area is located in the Ozona area of unincorporated Pinellas County. This part of the county has experienced dramatic changes over the years largely due to urbanization. Aerial photographs from the 1920's suggest the management area once supported a freshwater marsh wetland and was surrounded by flatwoods and sandhill communities. Prior to 1942 a ditch was dredged to connect this area to the Gulf of

Mexico; this provided a conduit for saltwater to enter the formerly freshwater system. Subsequently, roads were improved, the natural coastline was altered, and mangrove-dominated swamps were filled. The Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners acquired the parcels that comprise this property between 1989 and 2001. This natural area is managed by the Department of Parks & Conservation Resources.

Characteristics

Located within the Pinellas-Anclote River Basin, this management area is dominated hydrologically by a ditch that flows to the Gulf of Mexico. Tides play a minimal role in the hydrology, which is regulated primarily by elevation changes in stormwater control structures. Low-lying areas within the region flood frequently. Elevation ranges up to 10 feet above sea level, though higher elevations are attributed to fill material associated with residential development. The soils are predominantly classified as mucks and frequently-flooded fine sands. The area supports flatwoods dominated by oaks and pines, and brackish estuarine swamps dominated by mangroves. The natural communities consist of a diverse array of native plants,



Dominant natural communities of the Ozona Management Area.

Ozona Management Area

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including bays, cedars, hollies, ferns, and rushes. Ruderal areas have resulted from disturbances such as mowing, dumping of trash, ditching, and filling. These disturbances have encouraged the extensive spread of invasive exotic species, including Brazilian pepper, punktree, guineagrass, and air-potato. The spread of other exotics, such as carrotwood and camphortree, has been promoted by surrounding landscaping of nearby residences. A small picnic area for public use is located on North Street. A County-maintained house is located on Orange Street, and the resident supports local management activities.



View within the Ozona Management Area.

Management



A bridge is placed over the ditch, allowing access to the uplands.

Since assuming management of this area, the county has focused its efforts primarily on controlling exotic species through the use of chemical treatment and mechanical clearing. Volunteers have devoted many hours to removing exotics by hand. As with all small natural areas surrounded by development, exotics will be an on-going challenge. The boundary of the Ozona Management Area has been secured with fences and signs have been posted. A small bridge was installed over the ditch to provide improved access for management activities. The picnic area on North Street and other areas along the fenceline are periodically mowed. Though natural communities of this region would have burned historically, reintroduction of fire is not currently a viable management strategy at the Ozona Management Area due to its small size and proximity of residential areas. Additional efforts at this management area may include improving the hydrology and planting native vegetation.

Value

The Ozona 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 enhancing native biodiversity, it supports countless organisms ranging from microbes to mammals. For example, a variety of wading birds utilize the estuaries. This management area also makes important contributions to the region's hydrology by improving the quality of surface water before it enters the Gulf of Mexico and by promoting the recharge of groundwater.



The Ozona Management Area provides habitat to many native species.

For additional information:

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