



# Foundation Document Overview

## Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve

### Florida



#### Contact Information

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## Purpose



*The purpose of TIMUCUAN ECOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC PRESERVE is to protect the natural ecology of over 46,000 acres of lands and waters and over 6,000 years of human history along the St. Johns and Nassau rivers in northeast Florida.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Timucuan Ecological And Historic Preserve resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve protects the area where the St. Johns and Nassau rivers meet the Atlantic Ocean and form one of the largest remaining salt marsh estuaries on the Southeast Coast.
- Fort Caroline memorializes the French colonists who came to North America during the 16th century seeking religious freedom, wealth, and territorial expansion.
- Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve is home to Kingsley Plantation, the oldest surviving example of an antebellum Spanish Colonial plantation. The associated cabins are the largest concentration of existing slave quarters constructed of tabby found in the United States.
- The Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve contains over 200 archeological sites representing more than 6,000 years of continuous human history, including Archaic shell ring sites and the first site where investigations focused on the archeology of slavery and plantation life.
- The Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve is named after the indigenous people who once lived in this area. The Timucua chieftainships were the geographically largest population of American Indians in the territory, now the state of Florida. They were a gateway community where ideas, customs, and commerce flowed between the cultures of the Southeast and Caribbean. However, the Timucua Indians could not sustain themselves against the epidemic diseases brought to them and were extinct as a people by 1752.
- American Beach was the largest and most popular beach resort established by and for African Americans during the divisive Jim Crow era of racial segregation.
- The strategic military importance of the St. Johns River is exemplified by the presence of numerous installations within the Preserve for over 450 years, from Fort Caroline in 1564 to Naval Station Mayport today.

## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Salt marsh/estuary of the St. Johns, Nassau, and Fort George Rivers.** Estuarine wetlands and waterways encompass over 75% of the Preserve. Estuaries are among the most productive ecosystems on the planet and provide important breeding grounds for fish, birds, and numerous other animal species.
- **Kingsley Plantation Site.** The cultural landscape of the Kingsley Plantation gives a voice to the plantation owners and enslaved Africans who lived and worked there.
- **Commemoration of Fort Caroline.** Fort Caroline commemorates the French colony of la Caroline, founded in 1564. The scaled exhibit of the fort provides an opportunity for visitors to learn about the first contact between indigenous people and the colonial interests of Europeans in the Americas.
- **Archeological Resources.** From archaic shell rings and middens to the first excavations focused on the archeology of slavery and plantation life, the Preserve's 200 sites and extensive collections reflect a rich tapestry of over 6,000 years of human history.
- **Recreational Opportunities.** Recreational activities such as boating, kayaking, hiking, bird-watching, and fishing enable visitors to connect to and experience the Preserve in a variety of ways.



## Other Important Resources & Values



Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **American Beach.** Founded in 1935 by Abraham Lincoln Lewis, Florida's first African American millionaire, American Beach gave African Americans a place to recreate and enjoy the ocean during a time of racial segregation.
- **Theodore Roosevelt Area.** The 600-acre Theodore Roosevelt Area preserves a vestige of the coastal wetlands that once dominated the Florida coast and serves as a testament to the importance of preserving natural resources for future generations.





# Description

Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve was named in honor of the Timucua who inhabited the St. Johns River valley for thousands of years and were settled in the area at the time of first contact with Europeans. The modern-day history of Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve begins with Fort Caroline National Memorial, authorized as a national park unit in 1950 to commemorate the 16th-century French effort to establish a permanent colony in present-day Florida. In 1988, legislation was enacted to establish Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve to be administered jointly with Fort Caroline National Memorial, which is within the boundary of the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve.

Today, the Preserve encompasses 46,000 acres of diverse biological systems largely within the city limits of Jacksonville. These biological systems consist primarily of estuarine ecosystems, including salt marshes, coastal dunes, and upland hardwood hammocks, and salt, fresh, and brackish water, and serve as habitat for pods of dolphins, flocks of migratory birds, and a number of rare or sensitive species such as the Atlantic loggerhead sea turtle, the West Indian manatee, the wood stork, and the bald eagle.

Inhabited for over 6,000 years, the area contains archeological sites that illustrate one of the oldest and longest periods of human habitation in the Southeast region of the United States. Shell middens and ceremonial shell rings serve as archeological evidence of early American Indian occupation of the region. The history of French, Spanish, English, and American control of the area has also been documented and interpreted for visitors.

