



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 are directly linked to the purpose of Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve and express why the Preserve's resources and values are important enough to warrant national park unit designation. (Please note that the statements are in no particular order).

- 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 closely related to Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve's designated purpose and merit primary consideration in planning and management because they are critical to maintaining the Preserve's purpose and significance. If these resources are allowed to deteriorate, the purpose and/or significance of the Preserve could be jeopardized.

The fundamental resources and values for Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve are

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.



4. 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.

5. 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 and 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.

Following are the other important resources and values for Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve:

1. 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.

2. 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 of Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve

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.

