

Shell Key Preserve

The most extraordinary feature of the Preserve is Shell Key itself, an undeveloped barrier island. The Preserve supports rare ecosystems that are critical to the survival of a number of wildlife species. Some of the same natural features that attract wildlife to Shell Key also attract thousands of human visitors annually.



Group Activity Permits

Activities involving groups of 50 or more require a permit. To obtain information or to obtain a group activity permit call (727) 453-6900.

Report Abuse

Federal, State and County laws and ordinances are enforced. To report abuse or misuse, call the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office at (727) 582-6200.

Volunteers

Volunteers assist County staff with coastal cleanups, educational programs, and research surveys. If you wish to volunteer, call us at (727) 453-6900.

Bird Preservation Area

A protected 110-acre Bird Preservation Area has been set aside as a sanctuary for nesting, migrating, and wintering birds. This area extends to the waterline in some portions of the Preserve. Access within the Bird Preservation Area is prohibited without prior authorization.

Thousands of protected migrating and wintering shore and sea birds use the Preserve during the fall, winter and spring months. Nesting species that enjoy special protection by the State include the American oystercatcher, least tern and black skimmer. All bird species benefit when humans do not disturb them. Please remember that we are visitors to an area they call home.



American oystercatcher ©Tom Veso



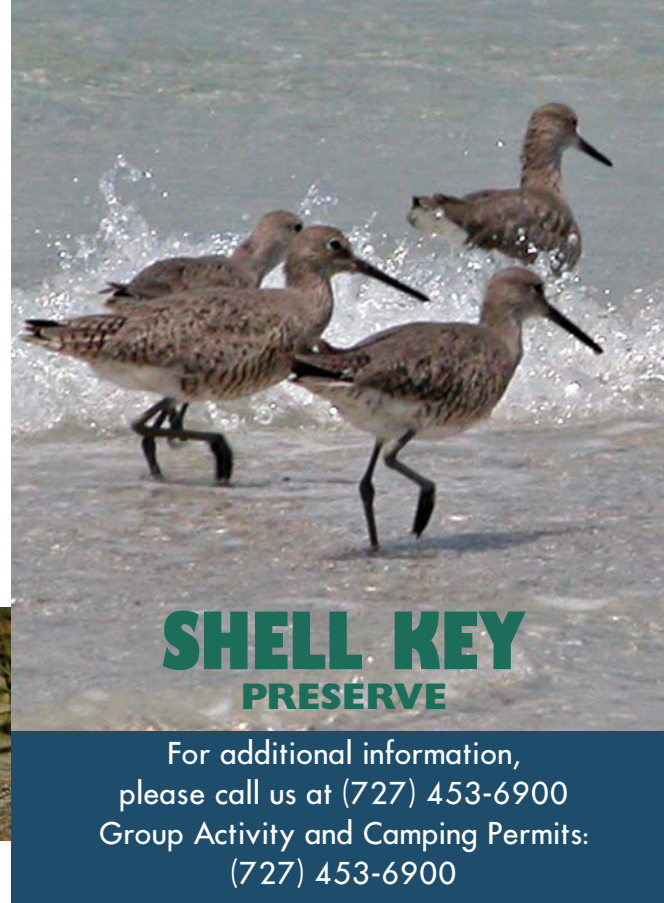
Black skimmer ©Tom Veso

Help us maintain the valuable amenities of the Preserve as you enjoy the beaches, fish the shallows, and watch the birds.

Before you leave, take a moment to look around and take everything you brought with you. This ensures a pleasant experience for the next visitor, which may be you.



Least tern ©Tom Veso



Shell Key Preserve is a 1,828-acre preserve, which includes a 195-acre barrier island known as Shell Key. The entire region is a sanctuary for nesting, wintering, and migrating birds, as well as a popular fishing and boating area. Access to Shell Key is limited to water vessels only and boaters should check local tide charts before navigating the shallow waters that lie to the east of Shell Key.



Funding for this publication provided, in part, by the Tampa Bay Estuary Program.



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www.pinellascounty.org/environment

Pinellas County complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. To obtain accessible formats of the document, please contact the Department of Environmental Management at: (727) 464-4761/TDD (727) 464-4106



Shell Key Preserve is managed by Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management's Environmental Lands Division under a plan developed with the community to protect the natural resources while providing recreational use. Help us protect the Preserve's barrier and mangrove islands, seagrass beds, sand bars, and mudflats by remembering that we are the visitors to this extraordinary place.

General Rules

- All flora and fauna are protected.
- Return shells with live animals to the water.
- Please remove all trash when you leave.
- Fireworks and weapons are prohibited within the Preserve.
- Permits are required for activities involving groups with 50 or more people.

Fishing

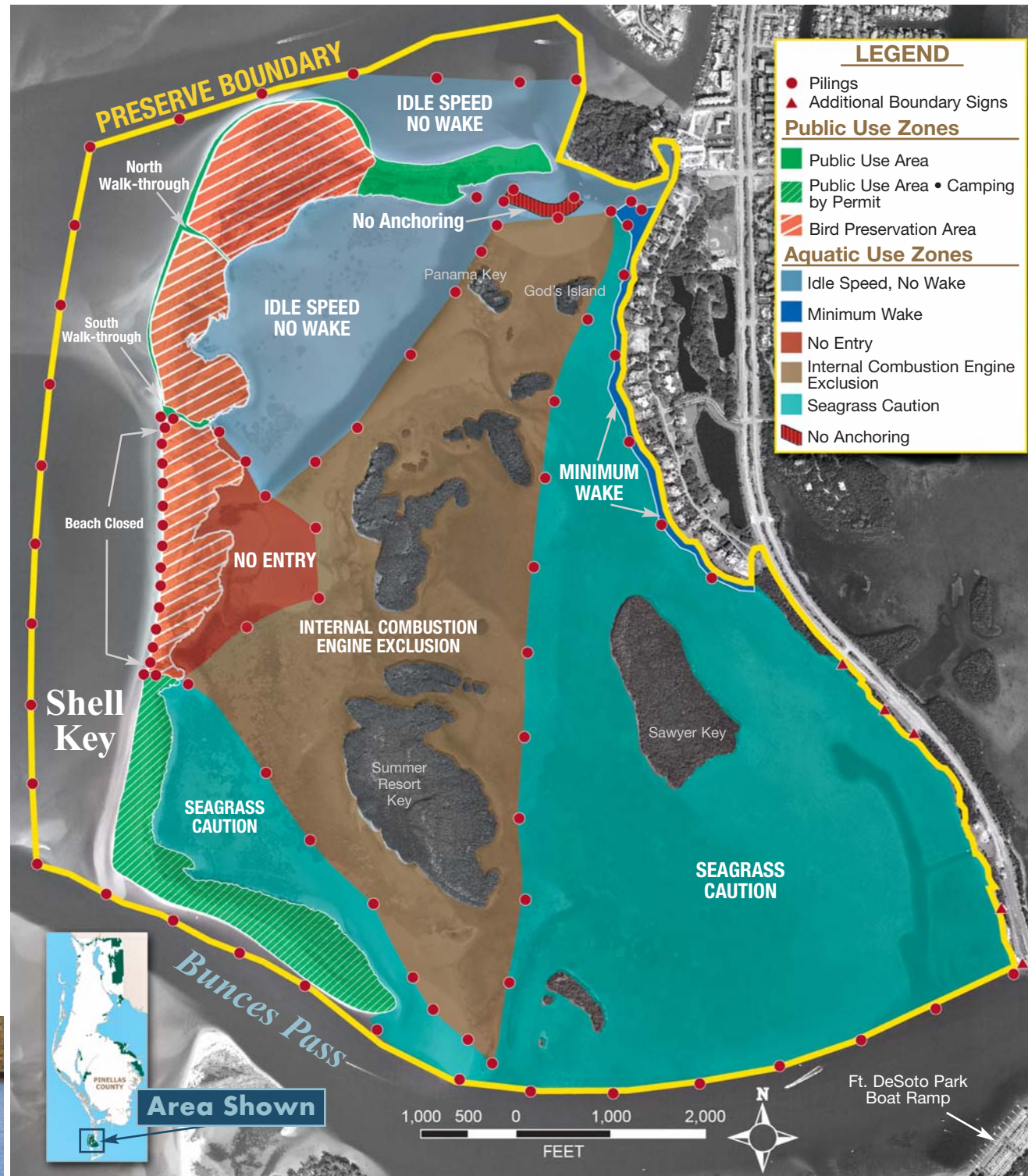
- Adhere to all State and Federal fishing regulations.

Alcohol

- Alcohol is prohibited within Shell Key Preserve.

Pets

- Pets are not allowed in Shell Key Preserve.



© John Sagert

Camping

- Camping by permit is allowed in the Southern Public Use Area only. Call (727) 453-6900 or visit our website for more information.
- Campfires must be extinguished and the site cleaned up before you leave.
- Bring your own sanitary facilities with you; none are available on the island.

Hiking

- Hiking is allowed on Shell Key except in the Bird Preservation Area, which is clearly posted.
- Beach Closed area where the Bird Preservation Area extends to the waterline is denoted by pilings. Please do not walk on the beach in this area.
- Two walk-throughs, which allow access from the east side of Shell Key to the Gulf side, are clearly marked.

Boating

- Please follow signage in shallow areas.
- Respect the posted aquatic use zones.
- Do not block navigational routes in the flats, especially in the posted area on the north end.
- Do not enter the No Entry Zone located on the east side of Shell Key.