

Picnic Island Park and Preserve/Tappan Restoration

General Description

Size: Picnic Island Park= 96 acres, Preserve= 405 acres, Tappan Restoration= 24 acres. The area known as Picnic Island Park is a City of Tampa Park located on a peninsula and featuring a swimming beach on Tampa Bay. The area to the east is the preserve, and consists of a sheltered bay with mangrove islands between the park and MacDill Air Force Base. The Tappan Restoration Site, located about 1/2 mile north of the preserve, was purchased by the Hillsborough County ELAP Program in 1998 and conveyed to the City for restoration and management.

Location and Access

To reach the Picnic Island Park go south on Westshore Blvd. and bear right onto Commerce Street, which becomes Port Tampa Drive. Turn left onto Picnic Island Road. A canoe launch inside the park provides access to the adjacent preserve. To reach the Tappan site, turn west from Westshore Blvd. onto Prescott Avenue, and the site is at the northwest corner of Prescott and Sherill Street.

Environmental Significance

The Picnic Island Park is of historical interest as the point of embarkation for troops during the Spanish American War in 1898. The park provides public access to Tampa Bay for swimming, fishing and boating. The eastern shoreline of the park is naturally vegetated with salt marsh and mangroves, and borders the Picnic Island Preserve, a large area of open water and wetlands located in a sheltered area between the small peninsula that forms the park and the southern tip of the main Interbay Peninsula, home of the MacDill Air Force Base. A tidal creek called Picnic Island Creek flows into the head of the small estuary. The smaller parcel known as the Tappan Restoration site was purchased to enable a project to be completed by the Water Management District's SWIM Department. An area of disturbed uplands was cleared and partially excavated to create tidal wetlands to provide habitat for marine species and to improve the quality of runoff water before reaching the bay. The uplands have also been planted and will provide greenspace for the local community.

Recreational Opportunities

The park provides picnic shelters, restroom buildings, a boat ramp, fishing pier, separate launching areas for jet skis and canoes and a swimming beach. The adjacent preserve, accessible only from the water, provides an excellent area for canoeing and nature appreciation. The park is featured in the State of Florida's Great Florida Birding Trail booklet.

Volunteer Opportunities

The City of Tampa manages the resources, and needs volunteers to help with exotic plant removal and shoreline cleanups.

Contact Information

City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Department, 7525 North Boulevard, Tampa, FL 33604, (813) 274-8615.

Mayor's Beautification Program, (813) 221-8733. (www.mbp.tree.org)

