



## The Kitchen/Schultz Preserve/Lower Bullfrog Creek Restoration Area

### General Description

Size: 588 acres. The area of Hillsborough Bay known as The Kitchen is a natural haven that lies between two massive industrial complexes. To the south is Tampa Electric's Big Bend power plant, with adjacent port facilities, and to the north lies the Cargill phosphate processing plant and other heavy industrial development. Both facilities have deep ship channels and large areas of filled land that displace the natural shoreline and shallow water habitat of the bay. But for about three miles, mangrove islands and seagrasses prevail, along with shorebirds, wading birds, fish, horseshoe crabs and other wildlife. The mouth of Bullfrog Creek and the original channel of the Alafia River, bypassed long ago by the man-made shipping channel, add to the complexity of the shoreline. Hillsborough County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District have teamed up to acquire, protect and restore key parcels in this often overlooked corner of the bay. Four separate parcels have been purchased to date, one has already undergone restoration, a second is underway at the time of this writing, and a third is in the design phase. The end result will be a significant increase in the amount and variety of coastal wetlands, and improved water quality for this important section of the Tampa Bay Estuary. One of the prime beneficiaries will be the bird nesting colonies on the nearby Alafia Banks, one of the largest bird colonies in the State. Another will be the people who come to the area to fish, birdwatch or just enjoy the natural setting.

### Location and Access

The site is located on the shoreline of Hillsborough Bay in Gibsonton. The parcel known as the Lower Bullfrog Creek Restoration site, located on the north side of Symmes Road, 1-1/4 miles east of US 41, is not currently open to the public, pending restoration. The largest parcel (357 acres) has already undergone restoration, and is located at the end of Isabel Avenue, west of US 41 about 1/2 mile south of Symmes Road. A separate small section is accessible via a walk-through next to a metal gate just south of Adams Street on the west side of US 41. The last parcel is the Fred and Ida Schultz Preserve, named after the first Audubon warden to guard nesting colonies of wading birds in the area. This parcel is located on the north half of a dredged peninsula known as Port Redwing, and is currently undergoing habitat restoration. The best way to access the entire area of The Kitchen is by small boat, and the closest launch site is at the bait shop located on US 41 at the Bullfrog Creek bridge.

### Environmental Significance

This area contains extremely valuable shallow water estuarine habitat, including mangrove swamp, salt marsh, seagrass beds, mud flats, oyster bars and coastal hammock. Along with preservation of existing natural resources, the project will result in creation and restoration of large amounts of both wetland and upland habitat in this system. The small ponds from the abandoned fish farm on Bullfrog Creek will be transformed into a large wetland system to collect and cleanse stormwater before it flows into the Creek. The largest parcel contained an old landfill, that had become overgrown with invasive exotic vegetation. The nuisance exotics have been removed and replaced with native plants, and a roadway has been vacated and transformed into a tidal creek. The Schultz/Port Redwing parcel is being transformed from a spoil area into a mosaic of tidal wetlands and native uplands.

### Recreational Opportunities

Fishing and boating in the shallow waters of The Kitchen provides a high quality experience in a beautiful natural setting. Hikers can explore the newly restored former landfill, which features an elevated mound with a view of the bay. Future plans call for a small park on the Schultz Preserve, with picnicking, nature trails and a canoe/kayak launch.

### Volunteer Opportunities

The Southwest Florida Water Management District relies on volunteers to help with habitat restoration. Planting days are usually scheduled with the assistance of groups from Tampa Bay Watch and the Tampa Bay Estuary Program. The County manages the sites once restoration is completed, and will need volunteers to help develop trails, control exotics and monitor wildlife utilization.

### Contact Information

Hillsborough County Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department, Conservation Services Office, 10940 McMullen Road, Riverview, FL 33569. (813) 672-7876.  
Tampa Bay Estuary Program ([www.tbep.org](http://www.tbep.org))  
Tampa Bay Watch ([www.tampabaywatch.org](http://www.tampabaywatch.org))