



HELP PROTECT THIS ENVIRONMENTAL TREASURE

ALLIGATOR HARBOR AQUATIC PRESERVE



Alligator Harbor Aquatic Preserve – covering 14,184 acres of sovereign submerged lands – is a shallow 4-mile-long estuary, where fresh and saltwater meet. It is one of four aquatic preserves that make up the Central Panhandle Aquatic Preserves, all managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

The aquatic preserve lies just east of the Apalachicola estuary and is enclosed by the Alligator Point peninsula. Alligator Harbor Aquatic Preserve is a designated Outstanding Florida Water, worthy of special protection because of its natural attributes.



The area protects many ecologically important natural communities that provide nursery grounds for multiple species of juvenile fish and invertebrates. It also serves as forage and resting spots for shorebirds and migratory birds. Alligator Harbor is one of the world's largest feeding grounds

for the endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle.

Nearly 650 acres of seagrass beds provide habitat for animals and improve water quality by stabilizing sediments. Oyster bars cover about 290 acres within the harbor, serving as essential wildlife habitat and improving water quality through filtration.



On Alligator Point's west end, the John S. Phipps Preserve is a Critical Wildlife Area that serves as an important stopover for migrating birds. Clam aquaculture sites were established in 2002 in Alligator Harbor. In 2013, the state approved additional oyster harvesting, which provides a valuable product for the local economy.



Recreational activities include fishing, boating, hiking (at Bald Point State Park), birding, and beach-oriented activities such as surf-fishing, swimming and sunbathing. The harbor's protected waters and numerous offshore reefs and channels provide high-quality saltwater fishing opportunities.

Bald Point State Park borders a portion of the aquatic preserve but does not grant public access within the harbor. There is beach access and a boat ramp in St. Teresa on St. James Island and boat ramps on Alligator Point.

DEP's Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection manages Florida's 42 aquatic preserves with the goal of ensuring resource protection and public access. Managers consider local issues and interests as they work to restore areas to their natural conditions and improve ecological functions.

