

Mangroves

Mangroves are trees that thrive in salty environments along the water's edge. Like seagrasses, they provide food and cover for a vast array of small fish and other animals. Their roots anchor shorelines, and their branches serve as nesting sites for a wide variety of birds.

Many of the mangrove swamps that once ringed the Central Embayment have been destroyed by development. Loss of this important habitat has contributed to a decline in fishing. State and local regulations now strictly regulate mangrove removal and pruning.



Forks of the Loxahatchee River



(Partial Funding Provided by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission)

Data Sources
Bathymetry: Morgan & Eklund, Inc., 2000 field survey (mlw datum)
Seagrass: Applied Technology & Management, 2000 field survey
Aids to navigation: Law Environmental, Inc. (1993 source updated by Jupiter Inlet District in 2000)
Manatee signs: Florida Inland Navigation District

This photomap (SGEF-136) was prepared in November 2000 by the Florida Sea Grant College Program. Its purpose is to help boaters identify sensitive marine habitats and shoal areas where traffic and anchoring should be avoided.

All sea grass beds should be considered non-navigable and not suitable for boating activities. Mariners must bear all responsibility for seamanship, piloting, and navigation.

Seagrasses

Seagrasses are flowering, underwater plants found in shallow, protected bays, estuaries, and lagoons. As a nursery environment, seagrasses support small fish, shrimp, crabs, and other animals that hide among the blades and feast upon decaying grass particles. Seagrasses also help stabilize shifting sands on the bed of the Central Embayment and improve water clarity by trapping fine sediment particles.

Once plentiful in Palm Beach County, seagrasses now cover less than half their original area, a loss caused by dredge-and-fill activity and declines in water quality. Damage from motor-boats is severe in some areas. As boats carve through shallow grass flats, their propellers leave sandy trenches that may remain barren for years.

To help preserve remaining seagrasses, stay within marked channels and avoid grass beds. If you run aground in seagrass or enter flats to fish, stop your motor, tilt it up, and pole, row, or push your boat.

Loxahatchee River-Lake Worth Creek Aquatic Preserve

Responding to citizen concerns with the dredge-and-fill activities widespread in the 1960s, the Florida legislature created a system of 34 coastal aquatic preserves, most of which are state owned.

The Loxahatchee River-Lake Worth Creek Aquatic Preserve, created in 1970, is designated and managed in two sections. The larger section-including the Central Embayment of the Loxahatchee River, the North Fork, the Northwest Fork upstream 5.5 miles, and the Southwest Fork, as well as Lake Worth Creek-is designated an urban preserve. The remaining area on the upper Northwest Fork is a wilderness preserve. The management emphasis in the urban section is aimed at restoring and enhancing the natural condition of the resources. The wilderness preserve is managed to maintain and enhance its existing wilderness condition.

Loxahatchee River Central Embayment



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Manatees

Manatees are gentle, whiskered giants, found in the Southeastern US and in the Caribbean Sea as far south as Brazil. They live year-round in Florida. Manatees have a grayish, seal-like body that tapers to a flat, paddle shaped tail. They grow to an average length of 10 feet, and adults can weigh as much as 3000 pounds.

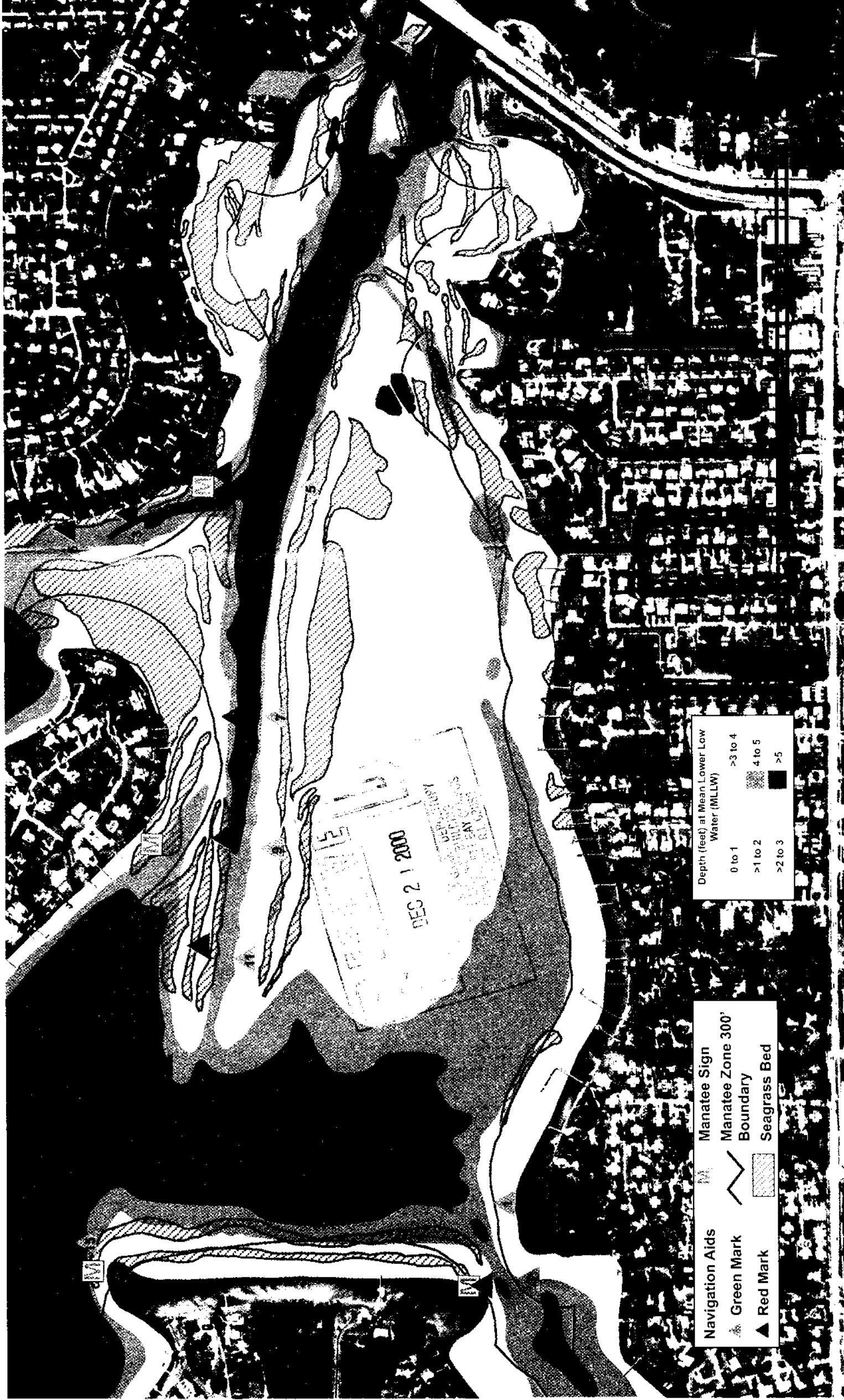
Manatees make their home in shallow coastal waters, bays, and springs. Sightings are more common in winter, when cold temperatures drive these mammals inland to warmer waters. Collisions with boat hulls and propellers, which easily slice their thick skins, injure and kill countless manatees each year. Most adult manatees in Florida bear the telltale scars of encounters with boats. So, watch for manatees, especially in winter. Polarized sunglasses reduce surface glare and allow better visibility through the water. When a manatee surfaces to breathe, the tip of its snout will be visible.

- Obey posted speed limit and manatee caution signs. Manatees move slowly and rarely can evade approaching boats.

- Stow trash and properly dispose of fishing line on land. Manatees may swallow or become entrapped in lines and the other plastic debris that litters our waters.

- Obey state and Federal laws that make it illegal to harass, capture, hunt, or kill a manatee.

- Report violations or manatee injuries or deaths; 1-800-DIAL-FMP.



About this Boater Guide

The Jupiter Inlet District (JID), an independent special taxing district, encompasses 92 square miles in northern Palm Beach County. The JID provides for maintenance and preservation of (1) the Jupiter Inlet; (2) the Loxahatchee River, downstream of Jonathan Dickinson State Park; and (3) northernmost Jupiter Beach.

This guide originated in the Loxahatchee River Management Plan (1993), which states: "The bathymetric charts, aerial photographs, and additional information collected during the preparation of the plan could be used by the JID to develop a navigation chart of the Loxahatchee River for public distribution. The chart would make boaters aware of important natural resources in the river, help protect these resources, and provide for a generally safer boating environment."

This guide builds upon a 1998 University of Florida Sea Grant College Program study of the Loxahatchee River Central Embayment, which yielded a "resource inventory" photomap. That map generated strong interest among local recreational boaters for a guide covering more of the vicinity and including additional information.

Loxahatchee River Central Embayment

The Loxahatchee River Central Embayment is a dynamic estuary that is important to fishing and boating and vital to the region's quality of life. Located in a rapidly growing urban area, most of the estuary's shore has been developed for single-family residences. The Central Embayment is an important nursery and home for fish and other wildlife.

The major problems affecting the health of the system are massive freshwater releases into the Loxahatchee River Basin by extensive man-made drainage systems (especially the C-18 Canal), the water quality degradation associated with the surrounding urban environment, and runoff from agricultural areas.