

With the exception of the narrow creeks, the entire St. Johns River and its tributaries within St. Johns County are manatee habitat.

2. Public Lands within or adjacent to Manatee Habitat and Public Acquisition Initiatives

Over the years, many sites within St. Johns County have been acquired by local, state, and/or federal agencies for the purposes of conservation, preservation and/or public recreation (Figure 5).

Several of these tracts are situated adjacent to waterways that serve as habitat for manatees. The most substantive tracts of these public lands are shown on Table 1, below:

Table 1.

Public Lands That Contain and/or Are Located Adjacent to Manatee Habitat Areas		
Site	Waterfront	Acres
Guana-Tolomato-Matanzas Nat'l Estuarine Research Reserve	Yes	55,000 acres
Anastasia State Park	Yes	1,372 acres
Fort Matanzas National Monument	Yes	300 acres
Faver-Dykes State Park	Yes	1,450 acres

Although there is presently no locally sponsored public land acquisition program, St. Johns County staff actively work with other local, state and/or federal agencies to acquire and preserve notable lands within the County which are worthy of preservation.

The County has been successful in partnering with the State of Florida (e.g., Conservation and Recreational Lands, Florida Forever), and the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) on land acquisition projects. Through their Comprehensive Plan, the County has committed to continue working with these and other partners (including the Florida Communities Trust, the Trust for Public Lands, the North Florida Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy) to continue acquiring environmentally sensitive parcels for preservation.

3. Water Quality and Vegetation

Estuaries are water bodies where saline ocean waters and fresh waters mix. The distribution and abundance of submerged vegetation (seagrasses and other macroscopic marine plants attached to the bottom), oysters, and other aquatic organisms are related to salinity and other water quality patterns within the estuary. In turn, water quality is largely affected by upland land-use activities. Fertilizers, pesticides and other pollutants often find their way into estuaries via freshwater tributaries, canals, and upland run-off, including storm-water discharges.

Although water quality in the nearshore areas of the Atlantic Ocean is excellent, water quality in manatee habitat in inland St. Johns County waterways is highly variable. Fluctuations occur daily, based primarily on tidal cycles, and seasonally, in response to Florida's annual cycle of summer-time wet season and wintertime dry season. Diurnal tides affect the Tolomato and