



## A New Nature Coast Aquatic Preserve Supports Recreational Fishing

The coastal waters of Citrus, Hernando, and Pasco counties are home to over 400,000 acres of seagrass. These lush meadows work in concert with mangrove islands, saltmarsh, oyster reef, sponge and hard bottom habitats to provide the foundation for time-honored family traditions, fishing and boating related businesses, and a way of life along Florida’s Nature Coast.

**As recreational fishing organizations and marine industry representatives, we support state legislation to create a new aquatic preserve and close the gap in protection for this valuable marine coastline.**

Healthy coastal habitats foster fishing, boating, and tourism. 70 percent of Florida’s recreationally renowned sport fish, such as gag grouper, spotted seatrout, snook, redfish, tarpon, and gray snapper spend at least part of their life cycle within seagrass communities. So too do valuable stone crab, bay scallop, and forage species like pinfish and shrimp. These in turn support valuable recreational fisheries, bait production, tackle shops, marinas, boat builders, and fishing-related tourism that contribute to the more than \$600,000,000 generated annually by the Nature Coast region’s ocean-related economy.<sup>1</sup>

The aquatic preserve would span the entire coast of Citrus, Hernando, and Pasco counties, providing important safeguards for valuable habitats, water quality, and local economies. Most importantly, this designation supports traditional public uses of the preserve, including recreational fishing, boating, and swimming that are critical for our members and industries and to keep Florida the *Fishing Capital of the World* for future generations.

**Please support House Bill 1061 & Senate Bill 1042  
to create a new aquatic preserve for Florida’s Nature Coast.**

Sincerely,

Jason Schratwieser, President  
*The International Game Fish Association*

Rob Kramer, President  
*Wild Oceans*

David Dickerson, VP State Gov. Relations  
*National Marine Manufacturers Assoc.*

Brett Fitzgerald, Executive Director  
*Anglers Action Foundation*

Brian Gorski, Executive Director  
*Coastal Conservation Association Florida*

Scott Deal, President  
*Maverick Boat Group*

Hal Chittum, Founder  
*Chittum Skiffs*

Daniel Andrews and Chris Whittman, Co-Founders  
*Captains for Clean Water*

Kellie Ralston, S.E. Fisheries Policy Director  
*American Sportfishing Association*

<sup>1</sup> <https://coast.noaa.gov/enowexplorer/#/>