

Warm Mineral Springs Creek and Salt Creek

FISH, WILDLIFE, & HABITAT RESTORATION

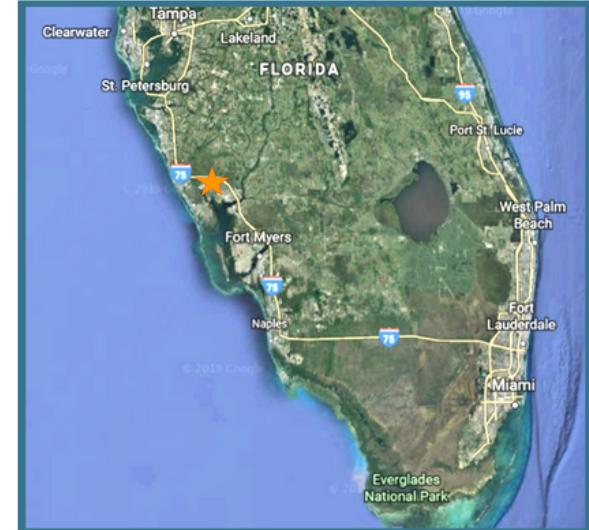


Summary

The mineral rich waters from Warm Mineral Springs travel to Warm Mineral Springs Creek and Salt Creek; the water that fills these creeks stays a relatively consistent temperature of 84 degrees Fahrenheit and serves as a critical sanctuary for Florida manatees. Unfortunately, due to historical and current land alterations, this area suffers from bank erosion, excessive sedimentation, and the rapid spreading of invasive species.

During Florida's winter months manatees travel to warm-water habitats to avoid the shock of cold waters which can result in emaciation, skin lesions, infection, and potentially death. It is necessary that warm-water sites like these are restored and protected from the dangers of man-made alterations and that manatees are left undisturbed when they enter the creek at this time of year. For this reason, the state has designated some creek sections as seasonal 'No Entry Zones' for recreation.

This area recently underwent restoration to provide a more natural and easily accessible habitat for manatees as well as for the many other aquatic species that utilize it. CHNEP provided funding during the engineering, design, and permitting of the project. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission leveraged \$3.8 million in funds, primarily from the state, to restore just over 6 acres of these creeks.



Location: Sarasota County, FL

Partners: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sarasota County, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, The City of North Port, The Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida, The Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Federation, and Gulf Coast Community Foundation

Implemented: 2019

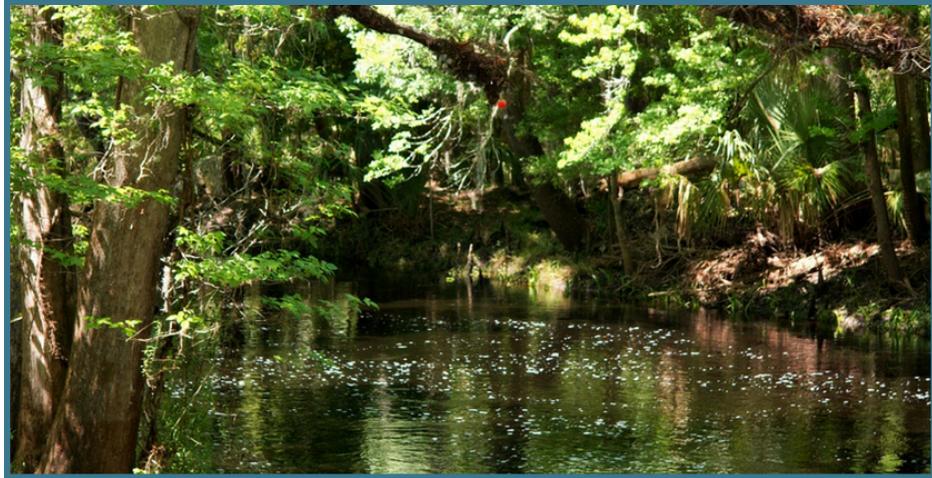
Status: Completed 2023

CHNEP Cost: \$64,990

2025 CHNEP Plan Activity:  Fish, Wildlife, & Habitat Restoration
1.2: Research and promote best management practices for tidal creeks, rivers, canals, dredged canals, and stormwater conveyances that support habitats and native aquatic life.



Cheryl McClure



Anticipated Results and Benefits

Improved Aquatic Habitat:

Creek-bottom sediment was removed in this area to increase the current volume of warm water habitat, making it more accessible to the manatee population. It will also result in better access for various fish species (Redear Sunfish, Pickerel, Spotted Sea Trout, Redfish, and Blue Catfish) as well as wading shore bird species (Great Blue Heron, Wood Stork, Great Egret, and White Ibis).

Decreased Bank Erosion:

This project stabilized the shoreline to decrease erosion and reduce the need for future maintenance work in the water system.

Research:

During Florida's winter months some creek sections are labeled as seasonal no entry zones and are off limits to recreation as human interaction may disturb manatees, alter their behavioral patterns, or cause abandonment to this creek altogether. However, these sections are valuable in other ways. Scientists visit these areas to perform photo identification studies on the Florida manatee. The research from these studies can be beneficial in estimating manatee survival rates, population dynamics, behavioral patterns, and reproductive parameters.

Improved Water Quality:

The restoration of these upstream areas has helped reduce sediment pollution and improve water clarity in Warm Mineral Springs Creek and Salt Creek. This restoration will also help improve water quality downstream in the Myakka River and Charlotte Harbor.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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CHNEP.org



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



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