

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

History of the Shiloh Area

Introduction

The Shiloh area is approximately two miles north of Haulover Canal. This area is within National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA's) Kennedy Space Center (KSC) and Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The refuge was established in 1963 by agreement between NASA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to manage the non-operational areas of the KSC. The Shiloh area became part of Merritt Island NWR in 1972.



Child's grave in Shiloh, credit USFWS

Prehistoric Settlement North of Haulover Canal

The higher ridges between the marshy areas were occupied repeatedly by aboriginal populations, as evident by shell middens and burial mounds. At the time of European contact, this area was occupied by two main groups of Native American Indians – the Timucua north of Haulover and the Ais to the south.

Multiple burial mounds associated with village sites exist in the Shiloh area. One village site includes a midden and two burial mounds believed to date to 800-900 A.D. Other artifacts in this area date back 2,000 years.



Elliott Plantation sugar mill ruins, credit USFWS

Sugar and Citrus

The Elliott Plantation provides a prime example of early colonial life in Florida. The site is the southernmost and earliest British Colonial period sugar plantation in North America. Dating to the late 1760s, it is unusually well preserved and contains rare remnants of two period slave villages, as well as the features of a sugar factory. Some of the features of the villages include the remains of the blacksmith's shop and the overseer's house. Further investigation is recommended for these sites.

In 1843, Douglas Dummitt settled south of the current Haulover Canal and planted extensive citrus groves. By 1867, his groves were the largest in the state. Dummitt is credited with beginning the well-known Indian River Citrus fruit industry. Remnants of his house foundation and chimney remain extant.

In 1872, Butler Campbell, a former slave, moved from South Carolina and established a homestead several miles north of the Old Haulover Canal on the edge of Mosquito Lagoon.



Historical marker - Clifton Colored School, credit USFWS

This homestead became the nucleus of Haulover, an African American community that changed its name to Clifton in 1889. The town's buildings were removed by NASA during the 1960s, however, the cemetery remains.

The Shiloh community was established during the post-Civil War period. Shiloh became a trade center for citrus in the 1880s. The Shiloh community included the Shiloh Fruit Packing Company, a school, church, store, and post office. Remnants of the Shiloh community continue to exist today.

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Refuge Management North of Haulover Canal

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The area of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) north of Haulover Canal consists of a variety of habitats. Cultivation of citrus and other agriculture, the development of residential communities, and the impoundment of marshes for mosquito control had a profound impact on refuge management. The hydrology of refuge lands and waters has been altered by the excavation of canals for citrus and residential communities. Some of these modifications further refuge management goals and objectives, while other modifications have been or will be restored to near natural conditions.

Control of Invasive Species

Past human activities have caused or enhanced problems with invasive non-native species. The refuge's feral hog population can also be traced to animals escaping or being abandoned by previous landowners. Permitted hog trappers work year-round removing feral hogs from the refuge. Non-native plants used for landscaping and windbreaks around human dwellings and croplands remained and spread after former residents moved. The Service utilizes fire, herbicides, and mechanical treatment to reduce invasive

non-native plant species. Shiloh has the lowest occurrence of non-native plants of any area on the refuge.

Restoration of Citrus Groves

The citrus groves in the Shiloh area were removed in the early 1980s and various species of oaks and pines were planted in the former groves. As scrub restoration techniques improve, the planted trees will be replaced with native scrub vegetation.

Impoundment Management

Approximately 23,000 acres of marsh were impounded to control mosquitos when NASA acquired KSC. Within the Shiloh area, 1,500 acres are managed for waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds. The Shiloh impoundments attract tens of thousands of wading birds, shorebirds, and wintering waterfowl.

Florida Scrub-Jay Management

The continued existence of the federally-threatened Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) depends upon proper management of the refuge's large tracts of relatively contiguous tracts of scrubland. The Shiloh Scrub Reserve Unit (SRU) is one of four recovery units for scrub jays on Merritt Island NWR. Based on recent surveys, 31 scrub-jay

families currently occupy this unit. Due to previous, ongoing, and planned habitat restoration and management, this core area has the potential to support 77 scrub-jay families. Prescribed fire is the refuge's most important tool for managing scrub habitat. During 2003-2013, 45 prescribed burns were conducted within the Shiloh



Florida scrub-jay being banded, credit USFWS

SRU. This SRU is the only unit not impacted by current launch operation burn restrictions by the U.S. Air Force or NASA. In addition to prescribed fire, mechanical cutting and shearing and use of herbicides are used to manage the habitat.

Visitor Services North of Haulover Canal

Approximately 200,000-300,000 visitors utilize Merritt Island NWR north of Haulover Canal each year. High quality waterfowl hunting is available within the Shiloh impoundments. Deer and hog hunting are proposed to open in 2015 on 6,000 acres north of Haulover Canal. Hiking is popular on the Pine Flatwoods Trail and Shiloh Marsh Road. The Manatee Observation Deck receives an estimated 70,000 visitors each year. Three refuge boat ramps provide access to the northern Indian River Lagoon and Mosquito Lagoon: Bair's Cove, Beacon 42, and WSEG. Fishing is the most popular activity in this area; wildlife observation and photography are also extremely popular.

<http://www.fws.gov/merrittisland>

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Planted oaks in former citrus grove, credit USFWS

