

**Progress Report on Subcommittee Recommendation No. 30
Improve Water Access to Ft. George/Alimacani**

**April 11, 2018
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The genesis of this task relates to the decline in water access to the Ft. George River/Alimacani area. This area has historically been a popular boating destination and is very rich in cultural and ecological resources. Alimacani Park includes a floating water taxi dock, boardwalk and unimproved boat ramp used for launching of kayaks, small boats and personal watercraft.

Publicly managed properties along the Ft. George River include:

City of Jacksonville

Alimacani Park
Ribault Club
Huguenot Park

FDEP - Florida Park Service

Little Talbot Island State Park
Big Talbot Island State Park
Ft. George Island Cultural State Park

FDOT

Ft. George River Bridge
Timucuan Trail

National Park Service

Kingsley Plantation
Timucuan Preserver

US Army Corps of Engineers

North Jetty
Huguenot Park Landowner

FDEP - Florida Coastal Office

Nassau River - St. Johns River
Marshes Aquatic Preserve

This river and inlet system is very dynamic and over the years has been steadily filling in with sand, resulting in the channel position, depth and width changing considerably. The current configuration of the inlet allows more water to enter the river during flood tides than can exit during ebb tides. This results in more sand being carried into the river through the inlet than what leaves. This condition is ultimately in response to the North Jetty preventing bypassing of sand to the south. The long-term effect may be that the inlet closes completely.

Three points to consider with respect to the management of Alimacani and the river:

1. **Vehicular Traffic** – The water taxi was intended to reduce traffic through Batten Island and Ft. George Island by providing an alternate means of access to Kingsley Plantation
2. **Recreational Use** – The Ft. George River has historically been a very popular boating destination
3. **Ecology** – Changes due to water flow and sediment transport may result in irreversible loss of unique and valuable habitat

The following observations are based on review of available studies of the river/inlet and conversations with stakeholders:

- The floating dock at Alimacani was intended to serve as a water taxi stop for transportation to Kingsley Plantation. There is adequate water depth at the dock but the channel between Alimacani and Kingsley Plantation is impassable
- The main river channel has shifted to the south on the west side of the bridge resulting in shoreline erosion and swift currents at peak tides at Alimacani
- The Parks Department is stabilizing the shoreline surrounding the floating dock access to protect against further erosion

- The unimproved boat ramp currently works adequately for small craft despite the currents and is somewhat protected by small groins on either side of the ramp
- The parking lot and upper boat ramp areas at Alimacani are unimproved and could be enhanced via stabilization with materials native to the area
- Utilizing Ft. George Inlet for boater access to the ocean is problematic due to the shifting channel and ebb shoaling east of the bridge
- Inlet dynamics and potential solutions to sedimentation problems in the Ft. George River have been studied extensively. Restoration ideas have been regional in nature and involve altering the inlet via large-scale dredging requiring significant funding and stringent regulatory requirements
- A project to reduce sedimentation in the Ft. George River will likely help protect Talbot Island and the bridge from further erosion

Conditions in the Ft. George River are not likely to improve via implementation of small-scale projects, e.g. limited channel dredging. In addition, such projects cannot be expected to last for any extended period of time. A more regional approach addressing the numerous issues associated with this area is required.

The numerous management entities and stakeholders must be brought in to alignment to successfully develop the goals, strategies, and funding sources needed to address the long-term sustainability and management of the Ft. George River and Inlet.

Suggestion for next steps – Establish WWC subcommittee charged with:

- *Identifying stakeholders & associated area of interest/responsibility*
- *Developing strategy to bring stakeholders together to reinitiate discussions regarding long-term management strategies for the area.*