



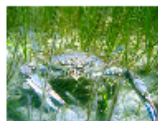
## Seagrasses offer food and protection

**Here's a riddle for you:**

What kind of grass doesn't need to be mowed?

**Answer:** Seagrass!

Gently swaying below the water's surface, thousands of acres of seagrasses provide food and shelter for many of my friends and neighbors and are one of the Indian River Lagoon's most important habitats. Some creatures, like manatees, think that seagrasses are a pretty tasty meal and graze on seagrasses just like cows on land graze on grass.... I wonder if that's why people call them sea cows?



There are some species that make their homes on blades of seagrass. Some of these creatures are so tiny you would need a microscope to see them. Many species of fish, including snook like me, come to seagrass habitats as babies, feeding and sheltering in the protection of the grasses until we are large enough to fend off predators and move into other areas. Some species, like my pals the seahorse, spider crab and horse conch, live their whole lives in seagrass beds. (Horse conch is kind of famous by the way.... Did you know he is the state shell of Florida?)

Like grass on land, seagrasses need plenty of sunlight and good water quality to grow. Sometimes nature can affect the growth of seagrasses. Cold weather in winter causes seagrass beds to die off until the warm weather returns in early spring. Hurricanes and severe storms can also churn the lagoon like a washing machine and scour seagrass from the sandy bottom. When this happens, it can take seagrass beds a long time to recover.

Pollution entering the lagoon can block sunlight and prevent seagrasses from growing. Most pollution enters the lagoon as runoff from the land. This happens after rainstorms, when dirt, debris, oils, pet wastes and even garbage are carried in rain to storm drains that flow directly into my home. Runoff clouds the water, blocking sunlight from reaching seagrass blades and smothering seagrasses with dirt and silt. That's bad for all of us who depend on seagrasses for food and shelter.

You can help protect my lagoon home. Please make sure that you and your parents don't dump oils, pet wastes, paint or chemicals down the storm drain. Remember, let only rain down the storm drain!

When helping with chores around the house, use outdoor chemicals properly. When fertilizers or pesticides fall on your driveway or on the street, be sure to sweep them back onto the lawn to prevent them from running off into the lagoon where they could cause nasty algal blooms and steal the oxygen from the water that my friends and I need to breathe.

Did you know that there are found in the lagoon? Scientists give every species a unique Latin name, which is the formal name for that species. Most people find it easier to just use a nickname based on how the species looks, how it lives, or by some other characteristic. Florida's seven seagrass species each have nicknames that are simple to remember.

When you visit the lagoon, please respect the seagrass. It is so very important to all of us who live here. Remember, seagrasses are one of the most important habitats in the lagoon. They are important nursery areas for baby fishes, they provide food and protection from predators, and they need your help to stay healthy.



Shoal grass (*Halodule wrightii*)



Manatee grass (*Syringodium filiforme*)



Turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*)



Johnson's seagrass (*Halophila johnsonii*)



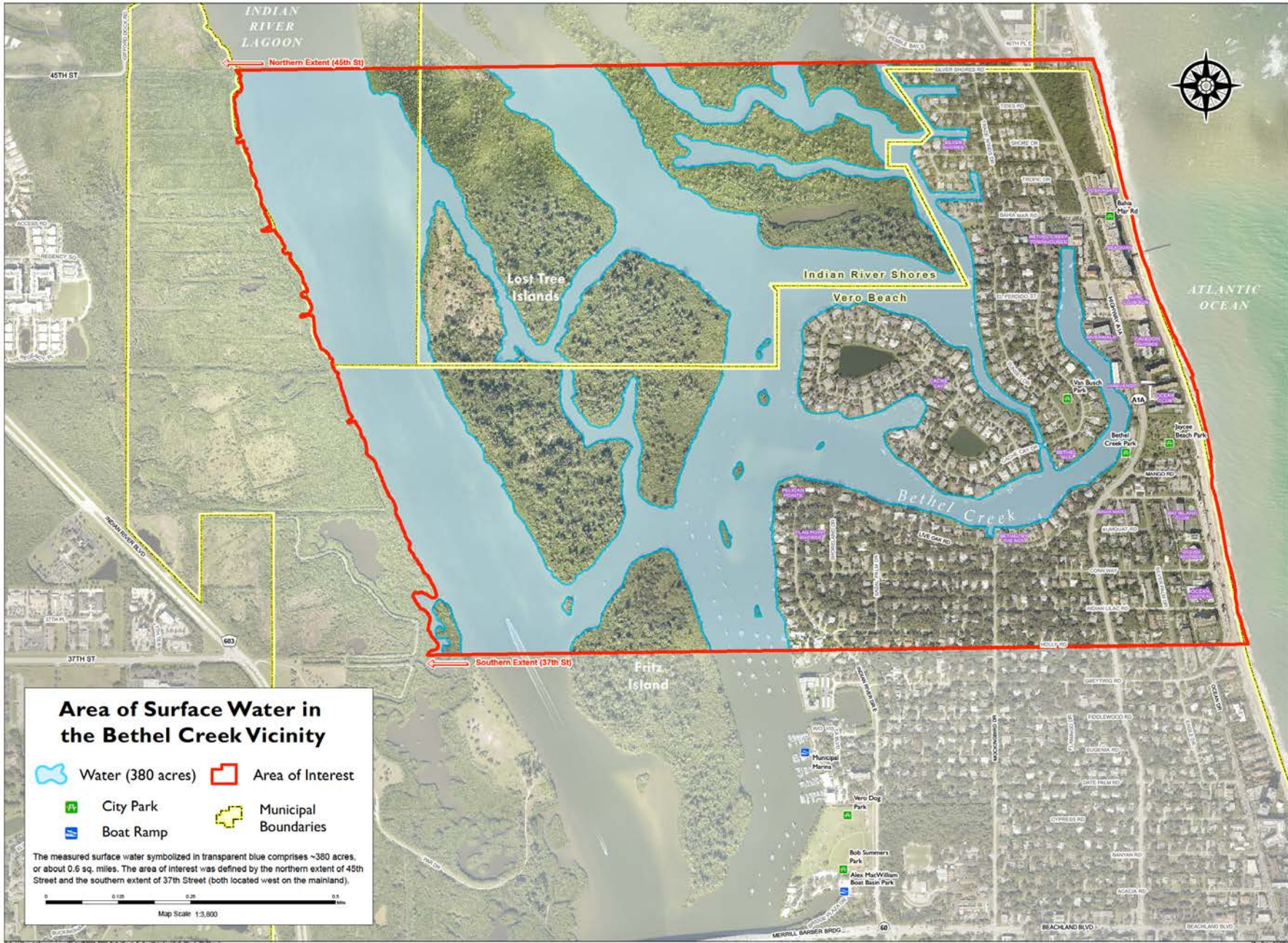
Star grass (*Halophila engelmannii*)

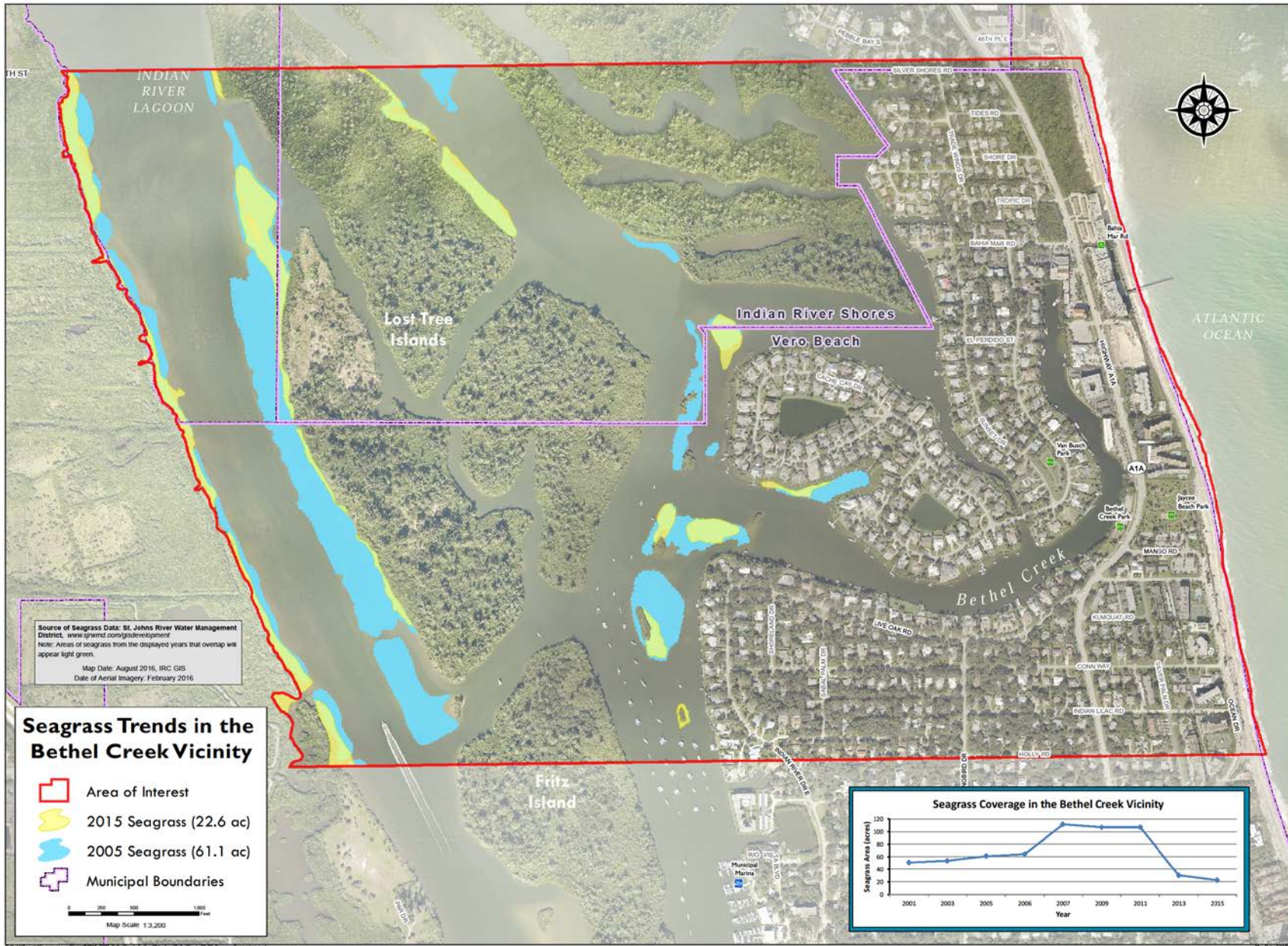


Puddle grass (*Halophila decipiens*)



Widgeon grass (*Ruppia maritima*)





**Aerial Photo, 1951**  
**Bethel Creek Vicinity**

*ATLANTIC  
OCEAN*

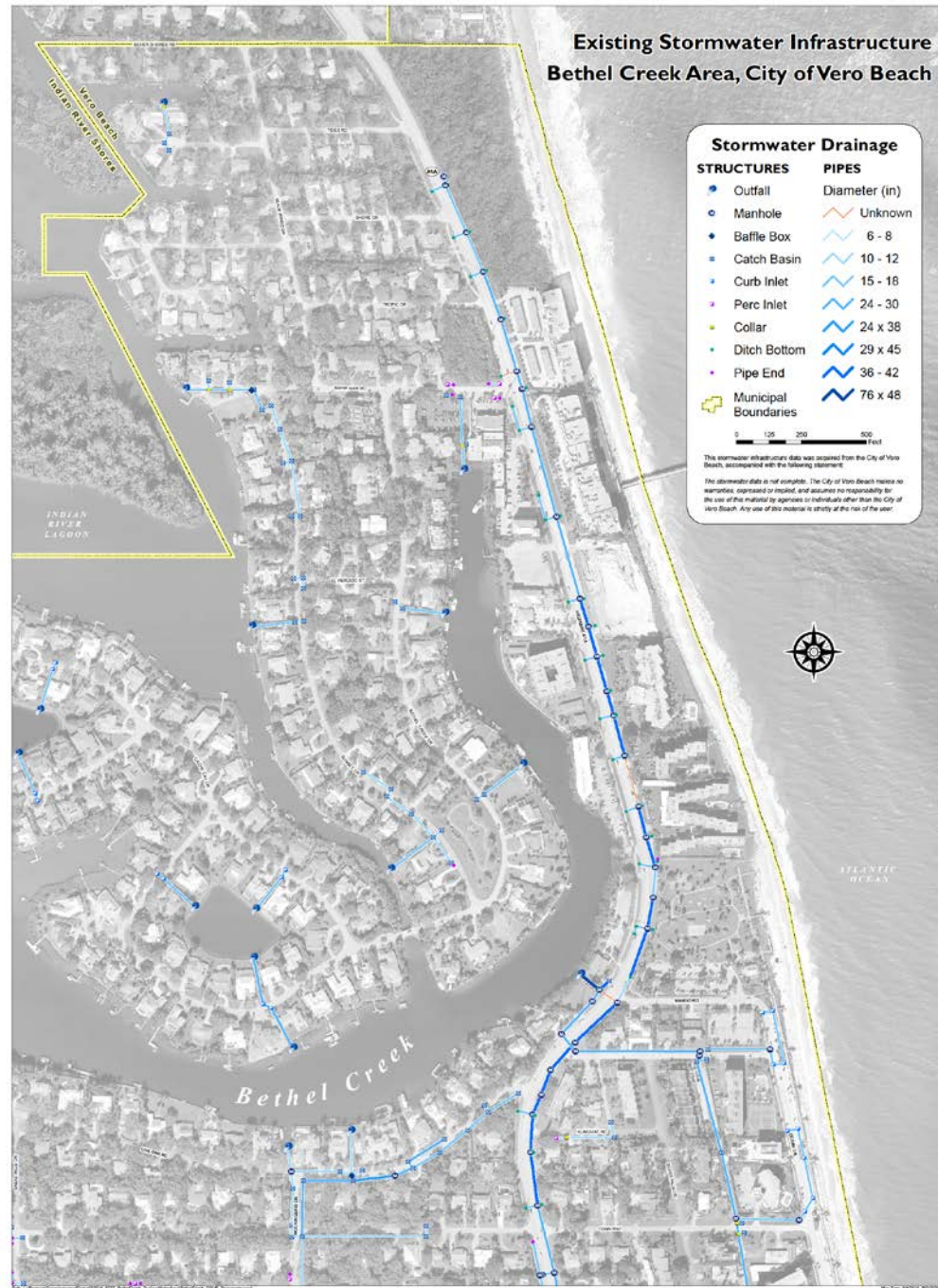
*INDIAN  
RIVER  
LAGOON*



**Source: USDA 1951**



# Existing Stormwater Infrastructure Bethel Creek Area, City of Vero Beach



## BETHEL CREEK HOUSE OF REFUGE COLLECTION

### **23 April 1915 - Vero, *The Modern City - Make Big Catches in Outside Fishing***

Walter Kitching and W. F. Kemper have gone into the fish business at the Coast Guard station opposite Vero and are having big success in deep sea fishing. One-night last week they brought in 1,000 pounds of mackerel and bluefish. They have provided themselves with a complete outfit of boats and nets and intend to fish regularly on the outside.

With an inlet here Vero would undoubtedly become one of the biggest fishing points on the East Coast as well as headquarters for pleasure fishermen. It has been estimated that an inlet could be cut from Bethel Creek to the ocean at less expense than at any other point along this part of the Coast. There has been much talk lately of trying to have the inlet opened and it is possible that some action in the matter will be started soon.

### **June 1915 – *More Possibilities of the Vero Section***

Long article. ...Engineers who have looked into the matter say that just north of Vero near the U.S. Coast Guard Station, formerly known as the House of Refuge is the most favorable location for an inlet on the Indian River.

### **21 January 1916 – *Permit to Dig Inlet at Vero Denied***

Following closely the announcement of adverse action on the application for permission to dig an inlet opposite Sebastian, the War department also announces its refusal to act favorably on the application of the Vero Inlet Committee for permission to dig an inlet at or near Bethel Creek to connect the waters of Indian river with the ocean. It will be recalled that a committee of Vero citizens informally presented the proposition to Major W. B. Ladue at the time of the recent inlet hearing in this city, following which profiles were prepared and formal application made.

Cause for the refusal of the War Department to grant the permits asked for is not given in either case. It is probable that the strenuous opposition offered by some of the property holders on the island opposite Sebastian was a contributing cause of adverse action in that case.

The official notice relative to denial of the Vero application, addressed to the Vero Inlet Committee, follows:

Jacksonville, Jan. 15, 1916

"Referring to the application of the Vero Inlet Committee for permission to construct a canal or inlet from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian River at a point of immediately south of the Bethel Creek Coast Guard Reservation, I am directed by the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, to advise you that at present, the Department is not willing to give favorable consideration to the application of the Vero Inlet committee for permission to cut an inlet to the sea at or near Bethel creek. "Please take notice that under the provisions of the Act of March 3, 1899, the cutting of such a canal or inlet without the permission of the War Department is unlawful.

W. B. Ladue,  
Major, Corps of Engineers."

