

# **Guidelines Regarding Horse Riding In Aquatic Preserves**

## **Guidelines to reduce or eliminate potential damage of horse riding to resources of the aquatic preserves**

1. Aquatic preserves which are described in Part II of Chapter 258, F.S., were established for the purpose of being preserved in an essentially natural or existing condition so that their aesthetic, biological and scientific values may endure for the enjoyment of future generations.

The preserves shall be administered and managed in accordance with the following goals:

- a. To preserve, protect, and enhance these exceptional areas of sovereignty submerged lands by reasonable regulation of human activity within the preserves through the development and implementation of a comprehensive management program;
  - b. To protect and enhance the waters of the preserves so that the public may continue to enjoy the traditional recreational uses of those waters such as swimming, boating, and fishing;
  - c. To coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies to aid in carrying out the intent of the Legislature in creating the preserves;
  - d. To use applicable federal, state, and local management programs, which are compatible with the intent and provisions of the act and these rules, and to assist in managing the preserves;
  - e. To encourage the protection, enhancement or restoration of the biological, aesthetic, or scientific values of the preserves, including but not limited to the modification of existing manmade conditions toward their natural condition, and discourage activities which would degrade the aesthetic, biological, or scientific values, or the quality, or utility of a preserve, when reviewing applications; or when developing and implementing management plans for the preserves;
  - f. To preserve, promote, and utilize indigenous life forms and habitats, including but not limited to: sponges, soft coral, hard corals, submerged grasses, mangroves, salt water marshes, fresh water marshes, mud flats, estuarine, aquatic, and marine reptiles, game and non-game fish species, estuarine, aquatic and marine invertebrates, estuarine, aquatic and marine mammals, birds, shellfish and mollusks;
  - g. To acquire additional title interests in lands wherever such acquisitions would serve to protect or enhance the biological, aesthetic, or scientific values of the preserves;
  - h. To maintain those beneficial hydrologic and biologic functions, the benefits of which accrue to the public at large.
2. Horses walking in the water at aquatic preserves can impact the seagrass beds that are within the preserves through the impact to the seagrass rhizome root system and the repetition of path through the seagrass beds. Horseback riding in aquatic preserves must therefore avoid riding in or through seagrass beds.
  3. Increases in nutrients from horse manure in a marine system can degrade water quality and can increase the algal growth both in the water column and on the seagrass blades, thus potentially decreasing light levels to the seagrass. Nutrients' impacts could potentially impact

habitat, fish and wildlife.

4. Increases in fecal coliforms bacteria in a marine system can pose a health hazard to animals and humans.

5. Aquatic preserves have high recreational use by a variety of user groups, e.g. boaters, swimmers, kiteboarders and paddleboarders.

6. The equestrian use must not alter or damage natural or cultural resources of the aquatic preserve in any way.

7. Horse waste is not allowed in water nor on adjacent land where the waste can enter the water. Horse BMPs in Florida, as listed in the document "Water Quality/Quantity Best Management Practices for Florida Equine Operations" (DACS-P-01531) (

<https://www.freshfromflorida.com/content/download/30687/760953/equineBMP-lores.pdf> ),

require a buffer of vegetation along the shore to filter water quality impacts. Since there is no vegetative filter of waste runoff before it enters the water, the waste should be directly removed.

8. For the safety of all the horses utilizing the area a negative Coggins test is required for horses utilizing this area. For more information on Coggins please see:

<https://www.freshfromflorida.com/Business-Services/Animals/Animal-Movement/Equine-Movement-Requirements>

9. Horseback riding in aquatic preserves shall comply with local government's pertinent Codes and Ordinances.

10. Horseback riding vendors, when possible, shall coordinate with the applicable aquatic preserve manager on impacts of horse riding on the aquatic preserve, water quality and opportunities for education/outreach.