

Manasota Key Offshore: Submerged Inundated Landscapes and the Underwater Archaeology of the Gulf of Mexico.

Ryan M. Duggins, Ph.D.

Bureau of Archaeological Research, Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State

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Abstract

Delicate precontact archaeological materials located within stratified sediments withstood Holocene sea-level rise and survived thousands of years in the Gulf of Mexico. Manasota Key Offshore (8SO7030) is a Middle Archaic mortuary pond that rests in the nearshore waters of Sarasota County, Florida. Archaeological investigations documented the preservation of precontact organic materials including worked wood, cordage, and the remains of at least 11 individuals (including prenatal, juvenile, adult, and geriatric adults). Research at Manasota Key Offshore has focused on mapping the inundated paleolandscape and identifying the boundaries of the inundated paleopond while also determining the extent and preservation of archaeological material embedded therein.

This unique site provides tangible evidence of Florida's changing landscape and irrefutable evidence of the unrealized archaeological potential of our continental shelves. The Manasota Key Offshore site contains an abundance of archaeological material that survived in-situ under the Gulf of Mexico despite the dramatic effect that Holocene sea level rise had on the region. Geophysical and archaeological investigations at this site have the potential to guide state and federal cultural resource managers in the identification and protection of inundated archaeological sites and drowned landscapes located on the country's continental shelves.