

## Coastal lagoons and bays

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Many lagoons and bays are found throughout rural and urban areas of south Florida where freshwater mixes with saltwater. Biscayne Bay and Florida Bay are two large embayments that are characterized as shallow inner-shelf lagoons. Biscayne Bay provides a natural playground for a large urban population. Florida Bay consists of shallow interconnected basins, seagrass meadows, mud banks, and mangrove islands. Each of these features provides habitat for

birds, reptiles, fish, plants, and a variety of benthic organisms. Bays along the southern portion of the Florida peninsula are mixing zones that link uplands and coastal nearshore areas to the Gulf of Mexico on the southwest coast and to the Atlantic Ocean on the southern and southeastern coasts. Bays and lagoons are important nursery habitats for many marine organisms and are susceptible to discharges of excess nutrients and other pollutants from land-based sources.



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Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park beach and lighthouse (left) attracts thousands of visitors each year to Biscayne Bay. View of Biscayne National Park from Elliott Key (right).