

## S1 Day Paddles - Intracoastal Waterway

### Ft McRee Paddle Information Sheet

**Description:** : This 14.1-mile open water, intracoastal paddle follows the northern shore of the Gulf Islands National Seashore to historic Ft. McRee. In 1834, work began on a three-story brick fortification along the eastern end of sandy Foster's Bank (Perdido Key). Part of the Third System of United States' coastal defenses, the fort was completed in 1839. Named for a distinguished officer, Brevet Colonel William McRee (War of 1812). Fort McRee and its associated water-battery helped complete the defenses of Pensacola Bay and naval yard. Paddlers will be able to explore the Fort (max 1 hour) before returning to Big Lagoon State Park. Paddlers will also experience the same initial paddle route as Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trails (CT) paddlers use.

**Skill Level:** Advanced

**Distance/Approximate Time:** 14.1 Miles/7 Hours

**Launch Site:** Big Lagoon State Park Boat Ramp

**Special Considerations:** State Park entry fee. Please let them know your itinerary if leaving your vehicle there overnight. Be careful of currents around the breached areas and in the ICW in general. Please practice "Leave No Trace" principles. Heavy powerboat traffic on weekends and holidays.

#### Skill Level Definitions

**Beginner:** New to paddling and may need tips and or instructions about paddling strokes, safety procedures, and entering/exiting kayaks. Comfortable on short trips of 1 to 3 miles on protected waters, when wind does not exceed 5 mph.

**Novice:** Paddlers acquainted with basic paddle strokes and can manage kayak handling independently in winds not exceeding 10 mph on protected waters. Comfortable on trips up to 6 miles.

**Intermediate:** Paddlers with experience in basic strokes and some experience on different venues, including some open water. Comfortable on trip distances of 6 to 10 miles, winds not exceeding 15 mph.

**Advanced:** Seasoned paddlers who possess skills and experience to paddle all venues and conditions. Experienced in self-rescues. Should be comfortable paddling more than 10 miles in a day.

**NOTE:** Great care has been taken to ensure this guides accuracy, but weather, tides, and water conditions can change rapidly and create hazardous conditions. These maps are for visual reference only, please consult NOAA Charts for navigation. Paddlers should have all proper safety equipment and check conditions before departure. All paddlers should always wear PFDs while on the water, and leave a float plan. There are inherent dangers in any paddle sport. There are special hazards along the Florida coast due to shifting tides, changing wind and weather, shallow waters, and treacherous bottoms with soft mud, rocks, and oyster bars. It is up to each paddler to be aware of these dangers, to accept and be prepared for the risks involved, and to be certain they have the skills to safely paddle in these conditions.