

Dutton Island Preserve Historical Background

Dutton Island Preserve, formerly known as Pine Island, was owned by Walter “Wally” E. Dutton before he sold the land to the City of Atlantic Beach to be used as a natural preserve in 1998. Prior to the sale, Dutton Island was planned for the development of single family homes, threatening the natural beauty of the island. The pending development prompted several organizations, administrations, and citizens to begin efforts to preserve the island. Although the island was located within the City of Jacksonville’s jurisdiction at the time, Atlantic Beach mayor Lyman Fletcher contacted Mr. Dutton in 1994 to discuss the possibility of the City of Atlantic Beach acquiring the island. For the next four years, the City of Atlantic Beach, the City of Jacksonville, the Florida Communities Trust, and numerous other dedicated organizations and citizens worked to preserve Dutton Island. The City of Atlantic Beach’s portion of the island was purchased using Florida Barge Canal funds with no Atlantic Beach tax money being used.

For the next couple of years following the purchase, discussion was held on what to name the new preserve. After considering naming the island after Bartolome de Castro y Ferrer, the owner of a large Spanish land grant that included the island, the City Commission chose to name the island after Walter Dutton in 2000. After developing the island into a beautiful park with trails, kayak launches, fishing piers, pavilions, and more, the Dutton Island Preserve was officially opened in October, 2002. One month later, the City Commission officially named a pavilion “The Lyman T. Fletcher Pavilion” for Mr. Fletcher’s valuable contributions to acquiring and preserving the island.