



Alternative E, Everglades for the Educated, Version 2.5 Executive Summary

Background

Aggregately, the individuals of our committee have spent over 200 years providing park stewardship and experiencing the park as users. In addition between us we spend all or part of approximately 300 days a year fishing waters of the Everglades National Park.

We were initially drawn together as concerned individuals with a common bond when the initial Preliminary Alternatives B and C were released. That common bond consisted firstly of a burning desire to see the park service create management options that would protect one of our nation's most precious natural resources. And secondly we shared a fierce need to maintain full boating and fishing access to the vast waters of the park.

After all the main stated purpose of the park opens with the line; "Everglades National Park is a public park for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." We believe these two objectives are unequivocally compatible and mutually obtainable.

Current Status

We feel the revised Preliminary Alternatives 2 and 3 as presented by the Everglades National Park are in many ways an improvement over the original Alternatives B and C. The revised alternatives are backed by more science and indicate the public was heard regarding educating park users and confirming that pole/troll zones could be a valid management tool.

On the other hand, they fall dismally short of assuring that access to educated anglers will not be grossly prohibited. The charts and language regarding access in the revised alternatives seem confusing and inconsistent at best. The key issue is access and access does not clearly exist in Alternatives 2 through 4 as written or charted. We need clarity and we deserve clarity!

Realistically, Everglades National Parks vast waters can only be accessed by using motorboats. Without unequivocal and on-going access for the public using motorboats the governments pledged benefits and enjoyment are in effect confiscated.

If implemented as currently written, the effects of Alternative 3 and certainly Alternative 4 would be devastating to our local economy. It would increase unemployment; hinder tourism from Homestead through Marathon and on up to Everglades City.

The rights of recreational anglers and the fragile trust in the National Park Service and Everglades National Park would be broken forever.

Recommendations

Having said all of that, we are cautiously hopeful that the new Alternative 3 can serve as a foundation for a meaningful final draft alternative. But, it can serve as a foundation only with very substantial modifications.

- 1) Mandatory education needs to be thorough and comprehensive.
- 2) Alternative 3 must vastly improve its explanation and assurance of access to and in pole/troll zones. Motorboats should be allowed to operate in all waters 2' or deeper thereby providing access and still protecting the crown of the flats. We also recommend that the pole/troll zones be phased in over several years, allowing Adaptive Management to improve the success of future pole/troll zones through education and public acclimation.
- 3) We suggest starting a pilot pole/troll area with reasonable access corridors through waters 2' or deeper in Snake Bight north of Tin Can Channel as soon as possible.
- 4) We offer that channels officially marked and maintained by the Everglades National Park Service should use markers as small as practical in order to provide essential navigational aids, yet preserve the natural beauty of the park. These markers need to be placed farther out from channel mouths and damaged areas should be treated with bird stake technology.... Private funding has been available for several years.
- 5) After decades of unnecessary closure, we recommend Joe and Little Madeira Bay be reopened to the public, as pole/troll zones with only catch and release fishing allowed.

These recommendations come, from untold hours of dialog by the Alternative E team who actively gathered council, input and overwhelming support from many diverse user groups.

We feel strongly that our recommendations will dramatically improve resource and especially seagrass protection while providing solid access for bird watching, paddling and recreational fishing experiences.

The Alternative E, Everglades for the Educated Committee

Capt. Tad Burke, Charles Causey, Jack Curlett, Capt. Mike Ehlers, Diane Harbaugh, Sandy Moret and Jim Trice

**For more information or to make public comment directly to the
National Park Service - go to www.alternativee.com**