

RESOLUTION 07-06-34

A RESOLUTION OF THE VILLAGE COUNCIL OF ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS, FLORIDA, URGING THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE E FOR THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK; PROVIDING FOR TRANSMITTAL OF THIS RESOLUTION TO THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

WHEREAS, Everglades National Park is a public park for the benefit and enjoyment of the people and was set apart as a permanent wilderness, preserving essential primitive conditions including natural abundance, diversity, behavior and ecological integrity of the unique flora and fauna; and

WHEREAS, a six step process to develop a new 15-20 year General Management Plan ("GMP") for Everglades National Park was kicked off in January 2003; and

WHEREAS, the main function of the GMP is to clearly define the park's purpose and management direction and provide a foundation to guide and coordinate all subsequent planning and management; and

WHEREAS, four preliminary alternatives, Alternatives A, B, C and D, were submitted by the National Park Service (the "NPS") in May 2007; and

WHEREAS, the Village Council of Islamorada, Village of Islands (the "Village") does not believe that any of the four preliminary alternatives presented by the NPS are acceptable for the public benefit of Everglades National Park; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Bay portion of Everglades National Park provides enormous recreational and financial benefits to the residents and businesses of Islamorada; and

WHEREAS, these benefits will be severely limited by the enactment of any of the alternatives proposed by the NPS; and

WHEREAS, public awareness and mandatory boater education are the keys to preserving Everglades National Park while maintaining access to the public; and

WHEREAS, improved signage, buoys and markers would allow safe and harmless access to frequently visited areas; and

WHEREAS, the Islamorada Village Council supports the Alternative E “Everglades for the Educated” position paper as prepared by our local residents and backcountry guides and the recommendations contained therein as a guideline for the GMP for Everglades National Park; and

WHEREAS, implementation of Alternative E which supports boater education, improved channel marking and responsible access to the back country flats for both motorized and non-motorized vessels would provide outstanding resource protection and improve visitor experiences without significantly restricting access to educated and responsible park visitors.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE VILLAGE COUNCIL OF ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Recitals. The above recitals are true and correct and are incorporated herein by this reference.

Section 2. Proposed Plan. The Village Council of Islamorada, Village of Islands urges the National Park Service to consider the locally prepared Alternative E, attached as Exhibit 1, for the General Management Plan for Everglades National Park.

Section . Transmittal. A copy of this resolution accompanied by a copy of the Alternative E Plan shall be provided to the National Park Service.

Section . Effective Date. This resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption.

The foregoing Resolution was offered by Vice Mayor Cathi Hill, who moved for its adoption on first reading. This motion was seconded by Councilman Achenberg, and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

FINAL VOTE AT ADOPTION

VILLAGE COUNCIL OF ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS

Mayor Dave Boerner	YES
Vice Mayor Cathi Hill	YES
Councilman Don Achenberg	YES
Councilman Michael Reckwerdt	YES
Councilman Chris Sante	ABSENT

PASSED AND ADOPTED ON THIS 28th DAY OF JUNE, 2007.



DAVE BOERNER, MAYOR

ATTEST:



VILLAGE CLERK

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY
FOR THE USE AND BENEFIT OF ISLAMORADA,
VILLAGE OF ISLANDS ONLY



VILLAGE ATTORNEY

ALTERNATIVE E

Everglades for the Educated

A Position Paper on the GMP Preliminary Alternatives

**Prepared by leaders/members of: The Don Hawley Foundation,
The Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association,
Bonefish & Tarpon Unlimited,
Reef Rod and Gun Club,
The Islamorada Fishing Club,
and The Islamorada Fishing and Conservation Trust**

***Focused on Florida Bay and the Keys,
Royal Palm to Flamingo, and the Gulf Coast***

This draft comes from several GMP problem-solving workshops attended by Sandy Moret, Jack Curlett, Charlie Causey, Capt. Mike Ehlers, Capt. Tad Burke, Dianne Harbaugh and Jim Trice, with input from a large number of diverse and experienced users of the ENP.

Upon review of the Preliminary Alternatives for the Everglades National Park in May 2007, and not being satisfied, we have carefully crafted a fiscally responsible "Alternative E" that we are confident will provide outstanding resource protection, that will improve visitor experiences, and that will not restrict or limit access to educated and responsible park visitors.

June 17, 2007

www.alternativeE.com

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OUR OBJECTIVES

- To provide a higher quality, land-based, boating, paddling and camping experience to park visitors
- To provide more protection to seagrass
- To designate ENP into several new, well-defined management zones
- To provide faster response protection to nesting/fledging sites for important bird species such as the roseate spoonbill, if deemed critical
- To provide a wider range of camp sites and chickees for a more diverse set of park visitors that does not preclude elderly and mobility-impaired from seeing remote areas of the park
- To provide more compliance to park regulations that are easier to enforce. We feel attracting and retaining long-term, experienced Rangers will be challenged by affordable housing, cost of living in South Florida, Ranger salary ranges, and the discomfort of working the Everglades during the summer
- To prepare for a population in South Florida that will continue to grow. However, past visitor numbers do not prove an increase in visitors is occurring and visitation numbers are actually down to flat
- To provide improved safety for resources, visitors, and staff
- To "trade off" no or few signs of human presence with more educational signage and markers allowing safe and harmless access to frequently visited areas
- To educate users about etiquette, navigation, current regulations, and wildlife in the Park with confidence that the VAST majority will comply if they are educated and know what is expected of them
- To not harm our local economy, customs, traditions, and values, and to value input from the professional guides, their clients from around the world, and avid recreational anglers in the Keys, Homestead, and South Florida that have been the leading change agents and stewards of the ENP for over three decades

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVE E

Alternative E focuses on Education & Compliance, Resource Protection, Access and Visitor Experience.

We do not support Alternative A, B, C, or D. We support and recommend Alternative E. While some new concepts were shared but not well defined in the preliminary alternatives, such as "management by water depth" zones have merit, our Alternative E will bring clarity and specificity to the proposed new zoning terminology. Furthermore, Alternative E is financially realistic, or at least approachable, especially with more focus on public/private financial support and park management reprioritizing budget allocations. More specifically:

1. Supports a mandatory boater education permit in order to operate a vessel in the Park and significantly more focus on educating all visitors on the water.
2. Better protection for seagrass and nesting/fledging birds.
3. Does not further limit fishing opportunities to responsible/educated users of motorized vessels, therefore no negative impact to local economies and no negative impact to areas that would receive more pressure through the closures/restricted access suggestions in alternatives B, C, and D.
4. Supports adding over 1,000 acres to an idle speed/no wake zone 300 feet from specific shorelines to help protect/preserve resources, and improve experiences and safety for paddlers and shoreline anglers.
5. Supports designation of Backcountry Zones (the old no-motor zones) to Joe and Little Madeira along with better experiences for paddlers in current no motor zones. Other than Joe and Little Madeira Bays, we do not support adding any additional no-motor or now called "backcountry zones" within ENP.
6. Supports more attention to teaching etiquette and other courtesies that need to be practiced by various visitors in the park.
7. Supports the concept of "Management by Water Depth Zones" but changes the definition to waters less than two feet to only poling, paddling, or using electric trolling motors in very specific areas. The zones must also allow motor vessel ingress and egress in all water two feet or greater in depth, and allow a motor on the transom of vessels in the zone as long as it is trimmed up and not in use. We support the implementation of this management zone in small, high traffic areas that also host large numbers of wading birds. Specifically, we recommend that Snake Bight and Keys in front of Flamingo surrounded by water less than two feet deep be designated a "Management by Water Depth" zone. We recognize that over time, other high-stressed, frequently visited areas may meet the criteria.
8. Supports the implementation of a regulation requiring idle speed/no-wake when within 300 feet of paddlers and anchored vessels.
9. Promotes significantly increasing and maintaining gated markers throughout the park. GPS only get visitors to the vicinity of marked channels and do not tell them exactly where to run in channels marked on charts.
10. Supports low-cost, high-impact visitor experiences between Royal Palm and Flamingo.
11. Encourages outside partnerships and public sponsors.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALTERNATIVE E

Everglades for the Educated

EDUCATION AND COMPLIANCE

- We enthusiastically embrace a mandatory boater certification permitting program. This would require all vessel operators in the Park to complete an online or traditional classroom study program and to pass a test to legally utilize park waters.
- We request a dramatic increase in focus on education. We must have ongoing focus on seminars and effective collaterals centered on user group etiquette, signage, park regulations, markers, navigation, wildlife, resource protection, the importance of catch and release, fish handling procedures, nesting facts, park history, and more.
- We value much stiffer penalties for people who repeatedly violate the park resources and regulations: to include mandatory education classes of which the time to attend hurts much more than a trivial fine, to as much as banning users from the Park for repeated and serious violations.
- We support significantly increasing signage, buoys, and markers to guide, educate, and warn users of safety to self and resources. This will not take away from the visitor experience; however, it will have a major impact on resource protection, safety, and quality of experience for all visitors.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

- We do not support limiting boat size or motor horse power in the Park, but we do recommend a "Park Recommended Travel Corridor Chart" indicating trouble areas and preferred routes by vessel size/draft.
- We urge an idle speed only lane 300 feet out from and parallel to the shoreline running from Crocodile Point to the Middle Cape. This zone consisting of over 1,000 acres will improve fishing and paddling visitor experiences as well as less shoreline erosion and less stress on birds and fish resting near the shorelines.
- We support designating Keys in ENP as a Wildlife Habitat Protection Zone (WLPZ) as long as the definition remains as it is now: *Except to effect a rescue, or unless otherwise officially authorized, no person shall land on keys of the Everglades except those marked by signs denoting the area is open to the public, and on a critical case by case basis, "seasonally" establishing a buffer area to keep visitors from spooking important bird species off their nests.* We could never support the definition of a WLPZ provided by a NPS biologist at a public workshop – that being a 500' buffer would exist around each Key.
- We support the zoning concept of "Management by Water Depth" zones allowing only "paddling, poling or use of electric trolling motors" in very critical strategic locations, starting with only Snake Bight in waters **less than two-feet deep**, and waters less than two feet surrounding Oyster, Murray, Catfish, Frank, Palm, Cormorant, Curlew Key back to Buoy Key to Porpoise Point. Boats operating in these water depth designations may have an engine attached but it shall be trimmed up and not in use. To be more specific:

- We recommend that the crown of flats with a depth of less than two feet (as indicated on Waterproof Chart #33E - Flamingo & Florida Bay) be set aside as "paddle & pole/electric troll only" areas inside the boundaries of the south entrance to the basin at Flamingo to the Headpin channel marker to the west tip of the north side of Conchie Channel, then easterly along the north side of Conchie Channel and the North side of Palm Lake to Curlew Key thence northerly to the southeast corner of Buoy Key, thence northerly to Porpoise Point, thence westerly along the shoreline of Florida to the point of beginning with the following exceptions: Snake Bight Channel and its fingers, Joe Kemp Channel, Tin Can Channel and other areas designated as two feet or more in depth including the channels and moats around the Keys within the boundaries should remain open to motor boat operation at normal safe speed. Lanes of access for normal safe speed operation running north and south from Tin Can Channel into Jimmy's Lake should be clearly marked providing access to motor boats. An explanatory, Exhibit 1 is attached for reference.
- Again for clarity, the channels, all run offs, Jimmy's Lake (which should be marked as an ingress/egress route into Snake Bight) and all other waters two feet or more should remain open to safe travel speeds within Snake Bight and the Keys in front of Flamingo.
- We feel Alternative E offers more seagrass protection for approximately the same amount of area as Alternative B and provides much more protection from boat wakes to large numbers wading birds that are feeding. Additionally, Alternative E does more to protect resources from a higher number of users, and very important, can be enforced by a single Ranger.
- We specifically recommend better located and maintained GATED (side-by-side) markers for channels and points, to include Nine Mile Bank and other western portions of the park, as well as preferred travel corridors from Islamorada, Key Largo, and the Gulf through the park. This will reduce groundings, seagrass damage, and help improve visitor experiences.

ACCESS

- We oppose eliminating access to any waters currently available to motorized vessels. The new backcountry zones marked in Alternative B that incorporates Hells Bay, parts of Tarpon Bay, and the waters north of the Wilderness Water Way near Chokoloskee are unacceptable.
- We support reopening Joe and Little Madeira Bay as no-motor "Backcountry" zones. This assumes current no-motor zones and Joe/Little Madeira would now be called Backcountry Zones and would continue to be used only by *vessels with no motor or vessels in which the motor(s) is (are) removed from the gunnels or transom and are stored to be inoperable.*
- We support more focus on keeping motorized skiffs out of Backcountry Zones via education, stiffer penalties, and where practical, barriers at entrances.
- We wish for the establishment and marking of an Alternate Wilderness Waterway for paddlers, but motor vessels that have no other route to reach their destinations (such as the Rookery Branch or Rogers Creek), or where it overlaps the current wilderness waterway must be allowed access at safe speeds. Also, keep in mind that disoriented and distressed paddlers often need and seek help from motorized vessel users.

- We oppose prohibiting motor vessel users from camping and fishing experiences in Hells Bay, Lane Bay, North River and Tarpon Bay, for example. Joe/Little Madeira Bay should be newly designated as Backcountry Zones. No additional new waters should be designated under the new "back country" zone.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

- We support better maintenance of existing camp sites.
- We support building new camp sites when ENP budget or public funding/contributions become available. Priority being new campsites in the old no-motor zones and Joe/Little Madeira Bay, because over a half-day's travel by paddle to or in no motor/paddle-only zones is pointless.
- We suggest establishing a regulation that requires all vessels to be at idle speed when within 300 feet of paddled vessels or anchored/staked up vessels.
- We support increased activities for land-based visitors between Royal Palm and Flamingo during peak visitor times.
 - Dedicated bike path with more land-based fishing opportunities and more paddle launch areas also provided between Coe Center and Flamingo
 - Regular and expanded programs to include Nike missile site
 - Bus service with stops and for interpretations along the route

Our intentions are to bring as much consensus as possible from the South Florida business community, local and state government, and anglers, wildlife viewers, paddlers, and campers from across the globe.

Please telephone, write, or e-mail your support for Alternative E to those listed below, or others that you feel might help protect the Everglades from major restrictions, reduced access to motor vessels, and reduced number of visitors.

The public comment period ends July 30, 2007, so please don't delay your support.

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Or to make online comments directly to NPS go to:
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkId=374&projectId=11170&documentID=19058>

***For more information,
please visit our Web site:
www.alternativeE.com***

EXHIBIT 1

Yellow equals safe travel speeds

