



Summary of Comments

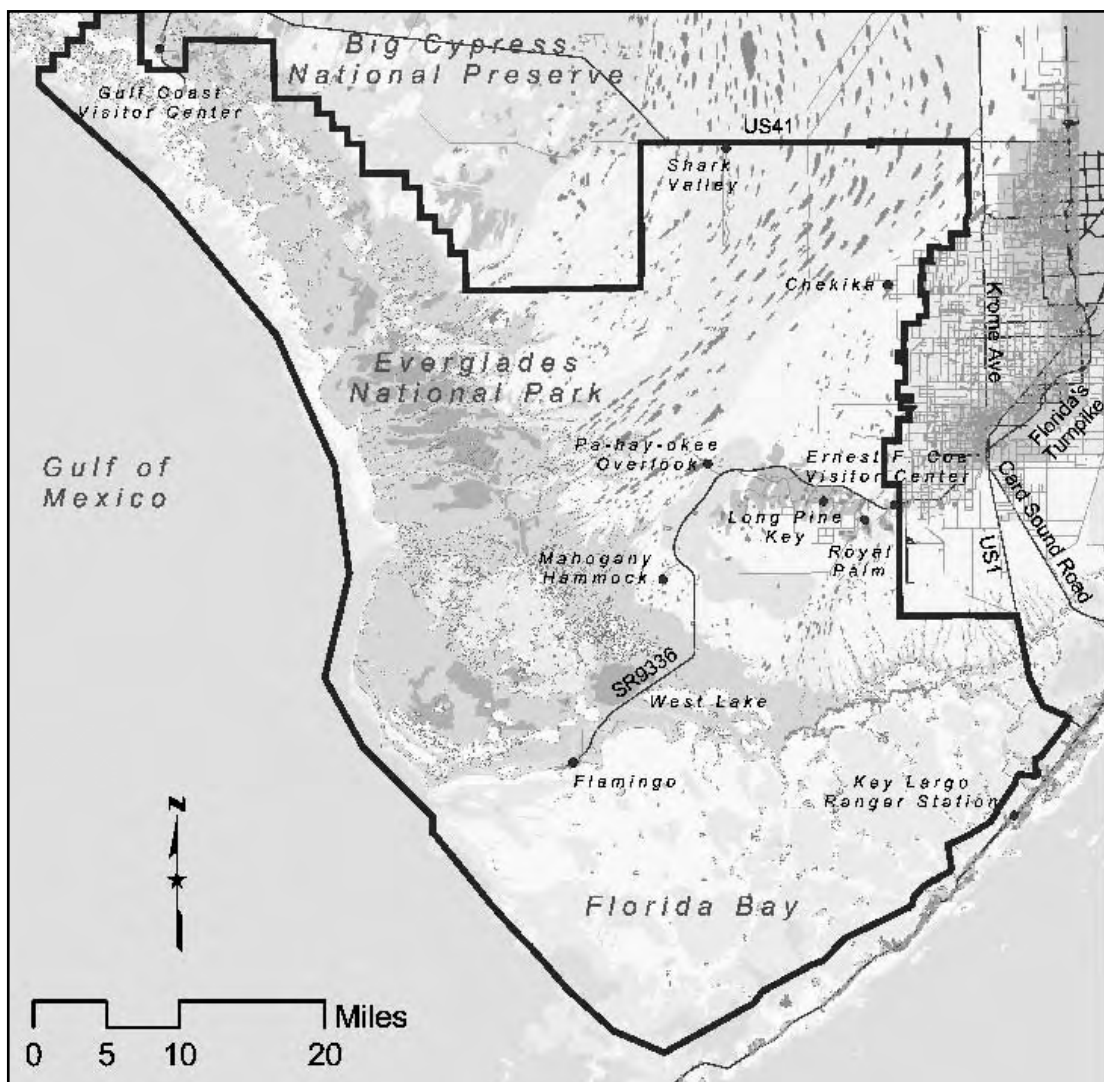
Dear Friends,

Everglades National Park is in the early stages of a process to develop a general management plan, a 20-year vision for the park's protection and management. As part of the process, information is collected from the general public and interested parties regarding future management concerns. In January 2003 we started the process by asking you what you valued most about the park and what concerns you had. We sent out a newsletter, and then held six public meetings, three meetings for area agencies, and several more meetings with other groups with a strong interest in the future of the park. As a result we heard from hundreds of people — in person, by mail, by phone, and over the Internet!

I want to thank you for your time, thoughtful comments, and continued interest in Everglades National Park. With your help we have updated the park's purpose and significance statements that will serve as a foundation for the rest of the planning process. We also asked you for comments on the many issues facing Everglades National Park. These comments, summarized in this newsletter, will set the stage for the major topics this general management plan will address. Many of you expressed very specific ideas and concerns about the park and its future. Your input has been, and will continue to be, invaluable in helping us develop a management plan that will make a lasting difference in the long-term management of Everglades National Park.

I hope you will continue to participate — your contributions are essential.

Maureen Finnerty
 Superintendent



In This Issue:

Comments from Meetings and Newsletter2
Comments about boating activities ...2
Comments about access to resources ...3
Comments about park facilities3
Comments about partnering4
Comments about restoration efforts ...4
Comments about education5
Comments about related topics5
General Management Plan "Givens" ..6
Some Issues of Special Note7
What's next?Back Cover
Planning ScheduleBack Cover



WHAT WE HAVE HEARD SO FAR — A SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM MEETINGS AND NEWSLETTER #1

In January 2003 more than 5,000 newsletters were distributed to the public to announce the beginning of a new general management plan (GMP) for Everglades National Park. The newsletter discussed the planning process and how the public might participate. The public was invited to attend and give comments at six public meetings during January and February in Everglades City, Naples, Islamorada, Miami, Key Colony Beach, and Homestead. About 230 people attended the meetings. Also, meetings were held in Collier, Miami-Dade, and Monroe Counties with local, state, federal agencies, and Indian tribes. Park staff discussions and sessions with several interest groups concerned about the long-term future of Everglades National Park rounded out the initial meetings.

At the public meetings and through newsletter comment forms, the planning team asked for input on three basic questions:

- *What do you particularly value about Everglades National Park?*
- *Do you agree with the purpose and significance statements for the park?*

- *What concerns do you have about Everglades National Park that you believe the general management plan should address?*

More than 1,800 comments were submitted by mailing back the comment forms, discussions with park staff at the public meetings, or by electronic mail. The comments are available for public review at park headquarters at 40001 State Rd. 9336, Homestead, FL.

In general, we heard that you value the park's natural resources and the opportunities to learn about the park's special environment and history. You also value the many recreational opportunities the park provides, including boating, camping, fishing, and the land and water trails. In addition, you appreciate that the park offers a refuge of serenity, beauty, and peacefulness in natural surroundings away from the busy pace of nearby urban development.

In response to comments, we clarified the purpose statement in accord with the park's enabling legislation. We also refined and consolidated the signifi-

cance statements to better reflect the distinctiveness of the park's resources and history. (See the revised statements on page 6.)

An overwhelming majority of the comments involved your concerns for the park and what you hoped to see and experience in the next 20 years. The comments have been grouped into six categories and will be the topics of focus for the general management plan. The six main categories are

- boating
- access
- facilities
- partnering
- ecosystem restoration
- education and interpretation

The following ideas capture many of the comments received and show a wide diversity of viewpoints about what Everglades National Park should be. Some are direct quotes while others are paraphrased.



(The) "majority of boaters respect the 'rules of the road' . . . we are not a crazy bunch of manatee killers" (comment form dated 2/28/03).

Comments about Boating Activities in Everglades National Park

- Do not restrict motorboat use.
- Designate some areas off-limits to motorized boats.
- Set clearly posted speed limits where necessary for safety and resource protection.
- Speed zones and speed limits should not be allowed in the park other than those already designated.
- Do not limit boat horsepower so that areas further offshore can be reached and safely navigated.
- Restrict boaters to marked channels to reduce impacts.
- Require recreational boaters to have a permit to enter park waters.
- Increasing boat use is contributing to resource pressures on the backcountry.
- Motorboats allow a means for some elderly and mobility impaired park users who cannot paddle canoes or undertake more strenuous activities to fish and visit the park.
- Boating and fishing remain essential for the economic health of the area.
- The National Park Service (NPS) needs to enforce no-wake zones.
- Allow private airboat use in East Everglades. Airboats don't produce lasting environmental harm.
- Airboats are incompatible with the NPS mission — [they] damage natural resources and degrade the visitor experience.
- Continue to allow commercial airboat tours in East Everglades
- The use of motorboats is required if fishing is to remain an important activity.
- Canoes and motorboats give people a chance to see and use the park in places they could not get to any other way.
- Boaters are the eyes and ears of the park — they can witness injured animals and birds, fish kills, and illegal activities.
- Ban loud airboats and other engines in the park.
- Require poling or small electric motor use in shallow waters rather than designating no-motor zones.
- Uninformed boaters (particularly those with large boats) often damage seagrass flats because they are unaware of how to properly enter and exit waters through established channels.
- Powerboats speeding along the Wilderness Waterway are incompatible with a primitive wilderness experience.



“It is very important that access by water is forever maintained so that canoes and motorboats can be used to visit the more remote areas of the park” (comment form postmarked 2/27/03).

“Visitor access must not harm the ecosystem or environment, but rather be consistent with the principles of ecotourism” (letter dated 1/24/03).

Comments about Access to Park Resources

- Everglades National Park belongs to the public to freely use and enjoy. Access restrictions or closures should not be imposed.
- With proper and responsible use, sportsmen and residents should retain the right to access recreational areas in the park, including the use of motorboats, fishing, and camping.
- Boat launch access is limited at Everglades City.
- Restrict access to areas only when scientific evidence proves a need.
- Seasonally close sensitive areas to protect wildlife.
- Public access should be carefully monitored to limit misuse and impacts.
- Limit auto use, but increase bike, walking, and canoe trails.
- Restricting motorboat use would unfairly limit access for elderly and mobility impaired visitors.
- The use of motorized vehicles within the park should be severely limited so as to have as little impact on park ecosystems as possible.
- Designate wildlife sanctuaries and refuges off-limits to humans in motorized watercraft. Some sensitive areas should be off-limits to all human activities.
- Do not make parts of the park off-limits. It's not worth having something unless you can use it.
- Allow increased access to Florida Bay islands by small boats.
- Don't close areas to fishing/boating, because it increases environmental pressure on remaining areas.
- Don't make the park too accessible — could lessen visitor appreciation.
- The plan should strike a balance between preservation and public access and enjoyment.
- Provide more access to the interior of the park.
- Control access in East Everglades.



“America needs to find a delicate balance between allowing the public to experience our parks and turning them into Theme Parks” (comment form of Feb 2003).

Comments about Park Facilities

- Everglades and Big Cypress should provide more wildlife and scenic viewing areas along the Tamiami Trail, including pullovers, parking areas, and elevated platforms like Shark Valley.
- Raise Tamiami Trail to a skyway.
- We should not be building roads for automobiles to tour all natural beauties. Many park attractions can be seen from existing roadways or walking trails and boardwalks. Walk on the earth; no new trail development.
- The old Nike Missile Base could provide an interesting opportunity for visitors to learn about Florida's link to the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- Visitor services and facilities are not adequate, particularly at Flamingo. The park's needs to include new or improved facilities for a visitor center, lodging and boat slips, restaurant, and gift store.
- Other needs throughout the park (Shark Valley, Gulf Coast, Chekika) include more restrooms, more interpretive signs and emergency information, and more campsites, chickees (primitive shelters), and biking facilities.
- Remove hunting camps from Native American burial ground areas.
- Retain hunting camps for environmental education and camping.
- Consider lease-back of East Everglades hunting camps to former owners.
- Public access for boats is needed in the western part of the park. Private marinas overcharge for the use of their ramps.
- More channel markers would help keep novice boaters from damaging sea grass beds.
- A blueways paddling trail throughout the Florida Keys with launch sites, rest stops and overnight sites would provide a low-impact recreational opportunity for visitors.



“Real progress in the recovery of Everglades National Park will not go forward until regional problems are addressed as a whole. Polarizing user groups in management efforts is counter productive. Working together will accomplish great and lasting changes” (comment form dated 1/29/03).

Comments about Partnering Opportunities

- Partner with public transportation companies to provide access to the park for the economically disadvantaged in South Florida or for other visitors who do not want to drive or rent a vehicle.
- A volunteer speaker’s bureau could educate the public at schools, clubs, etc. about NPS and Everglades issues.
- Use more local resources (universities, volunteers, etc.) for wildlife preservation projects, to assist park researchers, and to help present education programs, especially in areas like Gulf Coast that seem understaffed.
- Work in partnership with Big Cypress Preserve to provide more wildlife and scenic viewing areas along the Tamiami Trail.
- Partner with hikers, campers, photographers, canoers, kayakers, and all stakeholders, including educational institutions.
- Partner with public and private entities for boater education and resource protection — e.g., municipalities, Florida guide associations, homeowners associations, and various parks. Use volunteer services of guide associations to educate boaters about proper ways to navigate park waters.
- Build a relationship between IBP (incidental business permit) holders and field rangers for possible volunteer programs and enforcement assistance.
- Partner with local businesses to provide interpretation to visitors and customers. Help keep visitors in the area longer.
- The international community is a stakeholder in the park. Partner with other sites that have the same international designations.
- Establish a partnership to maintain the camps.
- Work with clubs on cleanup day; sponsor local events in the community.
- Establish a citizen’s committee to receive ongoing input.
- Partner with Big Cypress Preserve, Biscayne National Park, state and local agencies for visitor facilities on I75/US41 and near Homestead/Florida City.



“The Everglades plan is the most important historic ecosystem restoration plan. The first priority is to ensure that all the park’s activities and operations are consistent with its goals to restoring a more natural ecology” (letter dated 1/24/03).

Comments about Linking this Plan with Ecosystem Restoration Efforts

- Will the restoration plan overcome the intense resistance of political and commercial interests (i.e., citrus, sugar, cattle, and building industries) in a timely manner?
- Involvement in the restoration process should be guided by facts.
- Decisions to let the Everglades regain its flow are long overdue.
- Water flow is the key to the park’s future.
- Maintain water quality, especially in Florida Bay. It is a commercially and recreationally important estuary for the Keys ecosystem and economy.
- Special emphasis should be given to the recovery of endangered, threatened, imperiled, and extirpated species.
- The overarching focus of the general management plan should be the protection and restoration of the park’s ecological integrity.
- Fresh water flow is important to nursery areas.
- Park resources are the very heart of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.
- Returning water to the original flow pattern is a little scary — you have no idea what it will do to water levels in places like Everglades City and Chokoloskee.
- Improve water management in WCA-3A to improve Tribal traditional uses and reduce tree island impacts.



“ . . . taking my classroom to special places such as the Everglades is the only way we can let our future generations understand and appreciate ‘wild places’ and how we must coexist to exist!” (comment form postmarked 3/7/03).

Comments about Education and Interpretive Opportunities

- More efforts are needed to educate the public about the importance of ecosystem protection and restoration efforts.
- South Florida residents and visitors should understand that the availability of fresh water for their use depends on the health of the Everglades.
- Conservation education is preferable to imposing regulations or limiting access.
- Informative airboat tours serve as open-air classrooms, providing a valuable means to experience and understand the northeast Everglades.
- Provide more interpretation of the park’s human history and cultural resources, including the 1960s Nike missile installation in the park.
- Involve the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida in interpretation at park sites.
- Educate the public about different government agency missions as they relate to the Everglades.
- Continue school outreach programs, as well as ongoing opportunities for schoolchildren to visit the park (e.g., to Shark Valley and Chekika), to experience its beauty, and learn about its significance and need for conservation.
- Interpretive signs would be useful where restoration and/or experimental projects are underway, and also along hiking trails.
- More interpretive rangers are needed to assist public understanding of the park and the Everglades ecosystem.
- Provide a kiosk with GMP information at which visitors could provide feedback.
- Provide more local media exposure for the park to increase public awareness of issues and the National Park Service.

Comments on Other Topics

Examples of comments that may not precisely fit in one of the above categories, but are no less important, were placed in this general category. Many of the comments dealt with visitor activities, concerns about overuse of park resources, and how the park manages those resources.

- Limit the number of people at one time in certain pristine areas. Prepare a carrying capacity plan so the Everglades will not become loved to death like so many other national parks in the system. The plan should recognize active and passive uses including places for hiking, canoeing, and nature observation.
- Visitors should be able to fish, hunt, and camp all over the park.
- Setting aside areas for fish replenishment should be done in a fair way through science and knowledge of local guides and anglers.
- Fishing is getting worse. Limiting the size and number of catches would ensure future fishing; implement ‘no live’ bait fishing, stop illegal netting; promote catch and release fishing.
- Stopping or curtailing boating and fishing in the Ten Thousand Islands area would have a devastating impact on the area’s economy.
- Everglades National Park should be expanded and protected from development of any kind inside the park and around its borders. Many of the park’s problems come from outside its boundaries.
- The Park Service overmanages with burdensome rules. Most are difficult to enforce, prioritize, and pursue with selectivity. Enforce current rules before establishing new ones.
- All management plans and direction should be focused on expanded recreational use of the park with restrictions only when scientific evidence proves need and never for the purpose of serving a political agenda.
- Keep Everglades National Park as a permanent wilderness preserving essential primitive conditions and not cave in to a motorized commercially-oriented generation to pervert through noise, air, and water pollution the possibilities of the park’s preservation.
- The park should not be kept primitive. How can we enjoy it if it is off-limits?
- Facilities: consider raising Tamiami Trail to a skyway, open and interpret the Nike missile site, and investigate means of public transportation between the park and gateway communities.
- Resource protection: loud engines should be prohibited in the park, protect manatees with an area of respite from boat threats, manage Ten Thousand Islands to retain wilderness characteristics, manage East Everglades to ensure successful restoration of water flows through Shark River slough.

In addition to comments from individuals, many comments were received from the organizations Everglades for Everyone (74 comments received) and from the National Parks and Conservation Association (581 comments received). Everglades for Everyone polled people on whether it “is important that the Everglades National Park remain open to the use of motorized watercraft for sightseeing, fishing and photography?” The overwhelming response was yes, the park should remain open to motorized watercraft for various activities.

NPCA members commented on the following topics:

- Everglades restoration plan: the park’s activities and operations should be consistent with its goals for restoring a more natural ecology.
- Invasive species: melaleuca, old world climbing fern, Brazilian pepper, Australian pine, and others must be carefully controlled and eradicated.
- Public enjoyment: the park and its treasures need to be more accessible to the public, but visitation must not harm the ecosystem or environment.



GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN “GIVENS”

Comments ranged from very specific recommendations to ideas that are beyond the scope of what can be done in a general management plan. Comments fell into one of the following categories:

- **Things that cannot be done** — Some suggestions, such as those involving fees, fines, and annual funding, are controlled by Congress and therefore fall outside the scope of the general management plan.
- **Things that must be done** — In all planning the National Park Service will do those things mandated by law, such as protect threatened and endangered species.

- **Things that will be considered in a general management plan** — The six categories listed above are those main areas that will be considered in this general management plan.

- **Things that might be done in other plans** — Some of the more detailed comments would be more appropriately considered in future detailed implementation plans. Those comments considered too detailed to be addressed by the general management plan will be considered by park staff for use in future plans and to improve current and future operations.

The general management plan will

- ensure the protection of the park’s wilderness character.

- consider alternative futures consistent with the park purpose and significance.
- address management of visitor use levels and access to the park (including motorized and non-motorized boat use, private and commercial airboating in East Everglades).

The general management plan will not

- reconsider the park’s wilderness designation.
- ban motorboat use.
- ban sport fishing.
- eliminate overnight camping.
- ensure additional funds or staffing for the park.
- reconsider prohibited park uses (such as hunting).

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENTS

In our first newsletter (January 2003) we presented a set of draft purpose and significance statements for your review and comment. These statements, based on the park’s legislation and analysis of its resources, capture the reasons that Congress established the park and why this park is special and distinctive. Purpose and significance statements form the foundation for general management planning because any proposals considered in the plan must be consistent with them.

We received many comments that generally agreed with the draft statements, but we also received ideas for improving the statements. The revised statements are presented below. Purpose and significance statements will not be finalized until the general management plan is approved, so some changes could still occur through the planning process.

Purpose

The park purpose statement is by definition based on the specific legislation and associated legislative history for each park.

Everglades National Park is a public park for the benefit and enjoyment of the people. It is

set apart as a permanent wilderness preserving essential primitive conditions, including the natural abundance, diversity, behavior, and ecological integrity of the unique flora and fauna.

Significance

Significance statements capture the essence of the park’s importance to our country’s natural and cultural heritage. Significance statements represent the park’s distinctiveness and help to place the park in its national and international context.

Everglades National Park is significant because

- It is the only place in the United States designated a World Heritage Site, an International Biosphere Reserve, and a Wetland of International Importance.
- It comprises the largest designated subtropical wilderness reserve on the North American continent (1,296,000 acres). The park contains vast subtropical upland and marine ecosystems, including freshwater marshes, tropical hardwood, rock pineland, and extensive mangroves and seagrass

ecosystems that support world-class fisheries. It serves as sanctuary for the protection of more than 20 federal and 70 state-listed rare, threatened, and endangered species.

- It provides important foraging and breeding habitat for more than 400 species of birds (including homeland to world-renowned wading bird populations), and functions as a major corridor for migratory bird populations.

- It includes archeological and historical resources spanning 3,000 years of human history. These resources range from prehistoric sites revealing a fishing-hunting-gathering adaptation to a tropical environment (unique in the continental United States), to surviving structures from South Florida’s Cold War defenses.

- It preserves natural and cultural resources associated with the past and present homeland of Native Americans of Florida (including the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, the Independent Traditional Seminole Nation of Florida, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma).

OTHER KEY LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although there is flexibility and creativity built into the process of developing the general management plan and identifying new approaches for park management and use, the underpinnings of the management plan focus on national and park-specific laws. It is helpful to keep these legal considerations in mind when thinking about what you might want Everglades National Park to look like in the future. Remembering that each of our ideas needs to be consistent with these requirements helps to refine our thinking about future options. As you review the sampling of scoping comments and issues raised (pages 2-5) and look at an abbreviated list of the laws and policies below that must be taken into account, you can begin to appreciate the relationship between the many ideas suggested and the potential legal considerations that must be considered.

Laws and Policies That Apply to All Units of the National Park System

1916 National Park Service Organic Act

“To conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

Some Laws That Apply to Areas Across the Nation Including All National Park System Units

Clean Water Act

Endangered Species Act

National Historic Preservation Act

Executive Orders to protect Wetlands, Floodplains, and Marine Protected Areas

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

Park-Specific Laws

Based on the GMP requirements and the results of the public scoping process recently completed, the following park legislation excerpts will be an ongoing point of reference as the GMP process evolves.

Everglades National Park was authorized by Congress in 1934. A fundamental purpose for the park’s establishment was provided in the enabling legislation:

“The said area or areas shall be permanently reserved as a wilderness, and no development of the project or plan for the entertainment of visitors shall be undertaken which will interfere with the preservation intact of the unique flora and fauna and the essential primitive natural conditions now prevailing in this area.”

Everglades National Park Protection and Expansion Act of 1989 (Public Law 101-229) added 109,506 acres to the East Everglades portion of the park and brought the Northeast Shark River Slough into the park. In addition, it further described management of Everglades National Park. The purposes of this law are to

“Increase the level of protection of the outstanding natural values of Everglades National Park and to enhance and restore the ecological values, natural hydrologic conditions, and public enjoyment of such area. . . .” and to “Assure that the park is managed in order to maintain the natural abundance, diversity, and ecological integrity of native plants and animals, as well as the behavior of native animals, as part of their ecosystem.”

PL 101-229 also addressed airboats.

“The park shall be closed to the operation of airboats except . . . The Secretary is authorized to negotiate and enter into concession

contracts with the owners of commercial airboat and tour facilities in existence on or before January 1, 1989, located within the addition for the provision of such services at their current locations under such rules and conditions as he may deem necessary for the accommodation of visitors and protection of biological resources of the area.”

“The park shall be closed to the operation of airboats . . . except that within a limited capacity and on designated routes within the addition, owners of record of registered airboats in use within the addition as of January 1, 1989, shall be issued nontransferable, nonrenewable permits, for their individual lifetimes, to operate personally-owned airboats for non-commercial use in accordance with rules prescribed by the Secretary to determine ownership and registration, establish uses, permit conditions, and penalties, and to protect the biological resources of the area.”

P.L. 101-229 also authorized the Modified Water Deliveries (MWD) project, and further refined the goals of the C-111 Basin project (originally authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1968). These two projects precede implementation of CERP projects affecting the park. The Modified Water Deliveries Project is to

“construct modifications to the Central and South Florida Project to improve water deliveries into the park and shall, to the extent practicable, take steps to restore the natural hydrologic conditions within the park.”

C-111 project goals include the restoration of Taylor Slough, the park’s Eastern Panhandle, and northeast Florida Bay.

SOME ISSUES OF SPECIAL NOTE

There are always issues that arise in the early stages of a general management plan that need some clarification. For Everglades National Park, four such issues have surfaced: wilderness, the relationship of the general management plan to the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), rumors that have been circulating about closures of certain areas in the park to boats, and separation of motorized and nonmotorized boating.

Wilderness in Everglades National Park

In 1978 Congress designated 1.3 million acres of Everglades National Park as wilderness under the terms of the Wilderness Act of 1964. This act defines wilderness as follows:

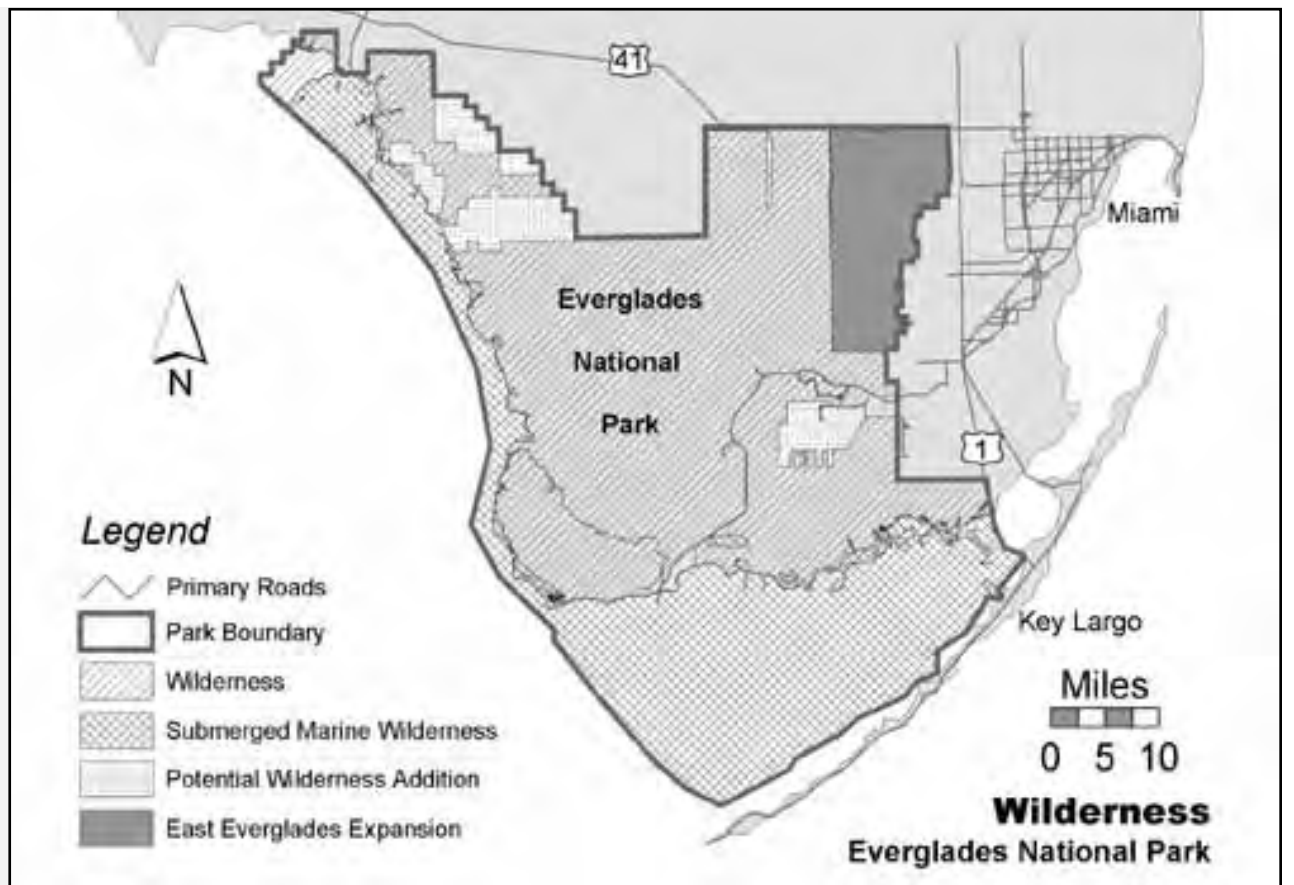
A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is . . . an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. [A wilderness is an area that] . . . generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; . . . has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation . . ." (16 U.S.C. 1131).

At this same time, 81,900 additional acres in the park were designated "potential wilderness" — land that could become wilderness when nonfederal mineral rights are acquired or other non-conforming uses are discontinued. In the interim, these lands are managed as if they were wilderness to the extent that is legal and practical to do so. Road corridors and developed areas were excluded.

Few, if any, national park system areas in the lower 48 states can approach the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness of Everglades National Park in terms of its pristine nature and immensity. Generally, the wilderness includes most of the park's undeveloped lands and marine waters to include its bottomland and upland areas (see map on right). Wilderness designation is not a "closure" of parklands; it just affects how they may be accessed by the public. The Everglades wilderness legislation only included the land, submerged land, and freshwater areas; it did not include the water column of salt and brackish waters. Therefore, motorized watercraft is allowed on marine waters within wilderness. Airboats are prohibited in all national park system units, with limited exceptions in Big Cypress National Preserve and the East Everglades Expansion area (see Other Key Legal Considerations on page 6). No motorized vehicles or mechanized equipment are allowed on wilderness lands. This includes bicycles. The National Park Service has provided some channel markers, signs, and primitive shelters (chickees) in the wilderness.

By NPS policy, lands included in the East Everglades Expansion will be assessed to determine if they are suitable for possible wilderness designation. This process will include open public involvement and developing a clear rationale for the suitability/non-suitability determination.

If some or all of the expansion lands are found to be suitable, the National Park Service will conduct a wilderness study following completion of the general management plan. The study would provide wilderness designation recommendations for consideration



by the President and Congress. A parkwide wilderness management plan would also occur after the general management plan is completed.

The General Management Plan and the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is the largest ecosystem restoration program ever undertaken in the world. It is a partnership project of federal, state, local, and tribal governments, as well as numerous other interest groups in the region, including the environmental community, agriculture, developers, tourism interests, and private industry. The restoration plan is intended to accomplish several things:

- change surface structures to begin to replicate the historic sheet of water that once flowed from north to south in Florida
- create increased capacity to store water
- continue to provide flood protection and water supply for South Florida communities
- create and test pilot projects to determine the effectiveness of new and developing technologies for possible future use
- improve water quality

Park scientists and managers will have a continuing major role in implementing the CERP, along with interagency teams of scientists, planners, and other specialists. An important aspect of the CERP is adaptive management, which will allow flexibility throughout the process so that projects can be refined to achieve the desired or highest levels of natural system recovery.

Restoring Everglades National Park is one part of the Everglades restoration plan. The park represents about 15% of the original everglades. About one third of CERP projects will benefit the park and other federal lands. The general management plan will establish desired future conditions for areas in the park. Those desired future conditions will include changes anticipated as a result of the restoration plan. Consistency between CERP projects and the park's goals as defined in the general management plan will require close coordination as both efforts proceed over the next 30 years and change hydrological and biological conditions throughout

the ecosystem and within the park. Everglades restoration has elevated public awareness of issues in and around the park and changed the framework for discussion of nearly all issues affecting the park. The general management plan will consider these interrelated issues and their potential affects on park resources and conditions. More information on the restoration plan can be found at <http://everglades-plan.org/>.

Closure Rumors

We received quite a few comments expressing the same concerns:

- Don't close areas of the park as "sanctuaries" or "refuges."
- Don't close areas to boating, fishing, or camping.
- Don't close specific areas such as Snake Bight and Tin Can Channel.

Currently, less than 1% of the park is closed to the public to protect endangered American crocodile nesting habitat. The National Park Service is charged with the protection of resources for future generations. If resources are threatened, we are legally bound to take action. As part of the general management plan process, we would consider a range of actions that could be taken to protect particular resources. Decisions regarding access to areas of the park will be presented to the public for review and comment through the GMP process.

Separation of Motorized and Nonmotorized Boating

Many of you expressed a desire for separation of motorized and nonmotorized boating. Canoe and kayak paddlers prefer areas and trails without the noise and potential conflict of motorboats. They also are more limited on distances they can travel between campsites. Except for a few canoe trails, ponds, and the closed areas mentioned above, park waters are open to motorized boats. Again, the planning process will decide if this situation is desirable or if providing more nonmotorized opportunities is in the best interest of the park's resources and visitors. Your continued input to the planning process will be used to help make these decisions.



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WHAT'S NEXT

NPS policy requires that general management plans describe specific “management prescriptions” for each particular area of a park. Management prescriptions (or zones) describe desired resource conditions and visitor experiences and include statements about the appropriate kinds and levels of management, use, and development. These management prescriptions provide the foundation for all subsequent decision making in the park and are a core element of the general management plan. To allow for a meaningful level of specificity, management prescriptions are applied either to different geographic areas in the park or parkwide. Most parks have both kinds of prescriptions.

The planning team will be working on developing draft management prescriptions for Everglades National Park during the next several months. You

will have an opportunity to review and comment on them. We anticipate sending those in a newsletter in early winter. The planning team will then develop a range of possible future scenarios — management paths that could be taken for managing the park — by applying the prescriptions to different areas of the park. These scenarios (called alternatives) will be used to compare and contrast the consequences of making different decisions about how the park might be operated and managed. The alternatives will be evaluated and a “preferred alternative” — the National Park Service’s preferred course of action for the park — will be developed. The preferred alternative could be one of the alternatives or could be a combination of several alternatives. You will have opportunities to comment and contribute ideas at each step along the way.

We are always interested in your ideas. If you have comments about the planning process, you can contact the park at

Everglades National Park
 General Management Plan
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Or, log onto the Everglades National Park home page at <www.nps.gov/ever> and click on “general management plan” for the latest information.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN SCHEDULE

Step	Planning Activity	Dates	Public Involvement Opportunities
1	Set the stage for planning: Reaffirm purpose, significance, and mission of the park; determine issues and concerns.	Summer 2002 to Winter 2003	Attend public meetings and voice your concerns using a response form.
<i>where we are now</i> 2	Develop management prescriptions and preliminary management alternatives: Identify a range of reasonable alternatives for the park’s future, assess their effects, analyze public reactions, and select a preferred alternative.	Winter 2003 to Fall 2004	Read alternatives newsletter and send in your comments. Attend public meetings and provide comments.
3	Prepare and publish <i>Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement</i> : Prepare draft describing the planning, alternatives, and impacts; distribute to the public.	Fall 2004 to Fall 2005	Provide written comments on the draft document. Attend public meetings and provide comments.
4	Revise and publish <i>Final General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement</i> : Analyze comments, prepare responses to comments, revise draft document, distribute to the public.	Fall 2005 to Summer 2006	
5	Implement the approved plan: Prepare and issue Record of Decision and implement plan as funding allows.	Summer 2006 and beyond	Stay involved throughout the implementation of the approved plan.



Thank you for your interest in Everglades National Park!