



Preliminary Alternatives

Dear Friends:

As most of you know, we have been working on a general management plan (GMP) for the Addition Lands to Big Cypress National Preserve. This plan will establish the management direction for the next 15 to 20 years for this new portion of the preserve. The planning team appreciated hearing and reading your thoughts, ideas, hopes, and concerns for the future of these lands. We have learned a great deal and have been challenged and inspired by your thoughtful comments and willingness to share your feelings about this special place.

Through initial scoping the planning team has conducted extensive public involvement activities while simultaneously gathering data and conducting additional research. Using the foundation provided in the legislation that expanded the preserve, the preserve's purpose for being created, the significant resources in the preserve, the information provided by the public, and the preliminary results of data gathering, the team developed five preliminary draft alternatives of how the Addition might look in the future. An important part of the alternatives are the management zones that have been developed and applied to each alternative in different ways. This newsletter presents a range of preliminary draft alternatives for your review and includes a form that can be returned to us with your comments. Eventually, a preferred alternative for the future of the Addition will be designated, but there will be ample opportunity for you to provide us input throughout the planning process.

In 1991 the National Park Service finalized the *I-75 Recreational Access Plan / Environment Assessment*. This plan identified the locations for development of the three recreational access points in the preserve called for in Public Law 100-301. One of the access points (Mile Marker 71) has been constructed within the original boundary of the preserve. The South Florida landscape has changed substantially since the access plan was prepared 14 years ago. In developing the preliminary alternatives, it became clear that the locations of these access points should be reviewed. Due to the existing infrastructure all the alternatives include an access point co-located with the Florida Department of Transportation rest area (Mile Marker 63). However, the preliminary draft alternatives presented in this newsletter include alternative locations for the one remaining access point.

We sincerely value your input regarding the future management direction of the preserve and thank you in advance for your time and participation. Public communication, collaboration, and cooperation are essential to develop a successful plan for the preservation and conservation of preserve resources.

Sincerely,

Karen Gustin
Superintendent



You're Invited...

We welcome your comments and hope to see you at one of the open houses/public meetings listed below:

Monday

December 12, 2005; • 3:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Everglades City School
415 School Drive
Everglades City, FL. 34139

Tuesday

December 13, 2005; • 3:30 – 7:30 p.m.
The Conservancy of Southwest Florida
1450 Merrihue Drive
Naples, FL. 34102

Thursday

December 15, 2005; • 3:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Weston Community Center
Weston Regional Park
20200 Saddle Creek Road
Weston, FL. 33327

BACKGROUND

In 1988 Big Cypress National Preserve was expanded by about 146,000 acres with the passage of the Big Cypress National Preserve Act (Public Law (PL) 100-301). This new legislation amended the original enabling legislation (PL 93-440) to “assure the preservation, conservation, and protection of the natural, scenic, hydrologic, floral and faunal, and recreation values” of the Addition and “to provide for the enhancement and public enjoyment thereof.”

This expansion consisted of about 128,000 acres northeast of the original boundary and approximately 18,000 acres along the western boundary. These lands consist of a mosaic of prairies, marshes, sloughs, strands, hammocks, pinelands, and mangroves. The land is exceptionally flat. In the wet season (May-October), most of the landscape becomes covered with a shallow, continuous expanse of water that flows slowly towards the coast, providing a supply of fresh, clean water for the vital estuaries of the Ten Thousand Islands area.

This array of vegetation provides habitat to a diversity of species —9 federally listed threatened and endangered species can be found, including the Florida panther and the West Indian manatee.

The majority of the Addition Lands (82,000 acres) were acquired by the federal government through the Arizona-Florida Land Exchange. As a result these lands were placed in escrow until 1996, when the exchange was finalized and the lands were transferred to the National Park Service. The remaining acreage is being acquired through fee simple acquisition by the federal government or through donation from the state of Florida as required in the legislation.

There are currently no visitor facilities within the Addition. The area is closed to off-road vehicle (ORV) use and hunting but open to hiking, backcountry camping, and bicycling. In 2001 the preserve established a fire operation center near Copeland. This center is based on property that was acquired from a willing seller and is used to support the preserve’s fire management program. There is also a fire station at a former homesite near Deep Lake. The only other development in the Addition is at the southeast corner of the intersection of State Highway 29 and U.S. Highway 41. At this location the preserve has leased property to the Everglades City Chamber of Commerce and the Collier County Sheriff’s Office.

INFORMATION GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

Your comments and suggestions have provided us with important insights about what preserve visitors, neighboring landowners, government officials, scientists, and others think about the future of the preserve. You gave us your thoughts, ideas, and concerns, and suggested future visions for the preserve during our public scoping efforts. We distributed a newsletter requesting your comments and held public meetings in Naples, Everglades City, Miami, and at the Big Cypress Seminole Reservation. We have been meeting with our partners (representatives from county, state, and federal agencies), and we also have met with representatives from nongovernmental organizations. Throughout the planning process, American Indian tribes were notified, and consultation with interested tribes continues as an ongoing effort by the superintendent. The planning team appreciated hearing and reading your thoughts, ideas, hopes, and concerns for the future of the Addition.

In developing the preliminary alternatives, the planning team also considered plans of neighboring state, county, and federal agencies.

All of the above information has been analyzed and used to develop the draft preliminary alternatives presented in this newsletter for your review and comment.



MAJOR ISSUES

Many aspects of the desired future conditions of the Addition Lands are defined in the establishing legislation, the preserve’s purpose and significance statements, and established laws and policies. The resolution of questions or issues that have not been addressed by legislation, laws, or policies is the basis for developing different alternatives or approaches to managing the preserve into the future, because usually there is more than one way an issue can be resolved. As with any decision-making process, there are key decisions that, once made, will dictate the direction of subsequent management strategies. Based on public and partner comments and NPS concerns, the following major questions or issues were identified for the Addition.

1. What are the appropriate types of resource protection strategies that the National Park Service should use while providing visitors with the opportunity to experience and learn about the resources?
2. What are the most appropriate locations for providing visitor access, in particular along Interstate Highway 75?
3. What are the appropriate visitor uses that should be allowed for in various portions of these lands?
4. What is the appropriate message for interpretation and educational activities within the Addition?
5. What are different ways that the National Park Service can meet its obligation to maintain biodiversity and optimize habitat values for native species, including threatened and endangered species?

ISSUES NOT ADDRESSED IN THIS PLAN

The GMP will not address the following:

- Tribal rights provided to the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and Seminole Tribe of Florida by the Addition Act. As outlined in the legislation the usual and customary use and occupancy by members of the two tribes will be governed by the development of regulations by the secretary of the interior.
- Oil and gas development in the Addition. The exploration and development of private oil and gas rights in the Addition Act will be addressed in a separate oil and gas management plan that is being developed for the entire preserve.
- Funding for the implementation of the approved plan. The approval of the plan does not guarantee funding for implementation but provides the rationale for seeking funds.



THE MANAGEMENT ZONES AND ALTERNATIVES

Management zones are descriptions of desired conditions for resources and visitor experiences in different areas of the preserve. Management zones are determined for each national park system unit; however the management zones for one unit will likely not be the same for any other national park system unit (although some might be similar). The management zones identify the widest range of potential appropriate resource conditions, visitor experiences, and facilities for the preserve that fall within the scope of the preserve’s purpose, significance, and special mandates. It is important to note that all the activities and facilities appropriate in each management zone may not be

allowed or constructed in each area that the management zone is applied. Four management zones have been identified for use in this plan.

In formulating the action alternatives (alternatives B, C, D, E, and F), management zones were placed in different locations or configurations on a map of the preserve according to the overall intent (concept) of each alternative. Because the no-action alternative (alternative A) represents existing conditions, there are no management zones described for this alternative.

MANAGEMENT ZONES SUMMARY

	DEVELOPED	FRONTCOUNTRY	BACKCOUNTRY RECREATION	PRIMITIVE BACKCOUNTRY
ZONE CONCEPT	Visitor orientation/education would be the dominant goals for this zone. NPS administrative facilities would also be included in this zone.	Visitor orientation and access would be the dominant goals for this zone.	Preservation of natural and cultural resources, restoration of degraded resources, and continuation of natural processes would be the dominant goals in this zone. Visitors would experience a natural landscape through a variety of recreational opportunities supported by a network of roads and designated trails.	Preservation of natural and cultural resources, restoration of degraded resources, and continuation of natural processes would be the dominant goals in this zone. Visitors would experience a natural landscape with opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation directly dependent on ability, knowledge, and self-reliance.
RESOURCE CONDITION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Natural environment modified for essential visitor and preserve operational needsKnown cultural resources would be avoided to extent possible or mitigated appropriatelyFacilities would be designed and managed to ensure resource protection and public safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Natural environment modified for essential visitor needsKnown cultural resources would be avoided to extent possible or mitigated appropriatelyFacilities would be designed and managed to ensure resource protection and public safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Native species and natural processes would predominateCultural resources would exhibit a high degree of integrityEvidence of human impact would be apparent along roads and trail corridors and designated campsites and infrequent and limited in extent elsewhere in the zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Native species and natural processes would predominateCultural resources would exhibit a high degree of integrityEvidence of human impact would be infrequent and limited in extent
VISITOR EXPERIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Visitor attractions convenient and easily accessibleNPS or self-guided opportunitiesModerate to high encounters with other visitors and NPS staff — should expect to experience relatively high levels of human-related noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Visitor attractions convenient and easily accessibleSelf-guided opportunitiesLow to moderate encounters with other visitors and NPS staff — should expect to experience relatively moderate levels of human-related noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Some opportunities for solitude, challenge, adventure, and self-reliance.Variety of visitor experiences from NPS-led tours to self discoveryEncounters with NPS staff and other visitors could be frequent — should expect to experience periodic human-related noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Numerous opportunities for challenge, adventure, solitude, and self-relianceDiscovery area with no on-site interpretation and very limited facilitiesEncounters with NPS staff and other visitors would be infrequent — should expect to experience natural sounds
APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES / FACILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I-75 access pointsOrientation and interpretation facilities, such as visitor centersComfort stationsBoardwalks and trails to access adjacent natural/cultural featuresNPS administrative/staff facilities — offices, housing, support facilities for preserve management (shops, storage areas, fire cache, etc.)Commercial facilities to support appropriate visitor activityClosed to hunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recreational access or trailhead parkingPicnic areasOrientation facilities and signsCampgroundComfort stationsBoardwalks and trails to access adjacent natural/cultural featuresCommercial activities would be consistent with the visitor opportunities and activitiesClosed to hunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Activities could include hiking, backpacking, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, camping, boating, bicycling, vehicle useVehicle and stock use allowed only on designated roads and trailsTrails and routes may be designated for hiking and boating. Navigational markers may be providedHunting allowed in designated areas and seasons as determined by the NPSCamping in designated sites onlyPublic water supplyInformation/interpretation kiosks and signsBackcountry support facilities such as ranger stations and fire cacheOutfitter/guide activities would be consistent with visitor opportunities and activitiesResource protection and monitoring equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Activities could include hiking, backpacking, hunting, fishing, camping, and nonmotorized boatingNo mechanized useVisitor facilities limited to designated trails, marked routes, and designated campsitesDispersed camping and, where necessary for resource protection, camping sites would be designatedHunting allowed in designated areas and seasons as determined by the NPSOutfitter/guide activities would be consistent with visitor opportunitiesResource protection and monitoring equipment

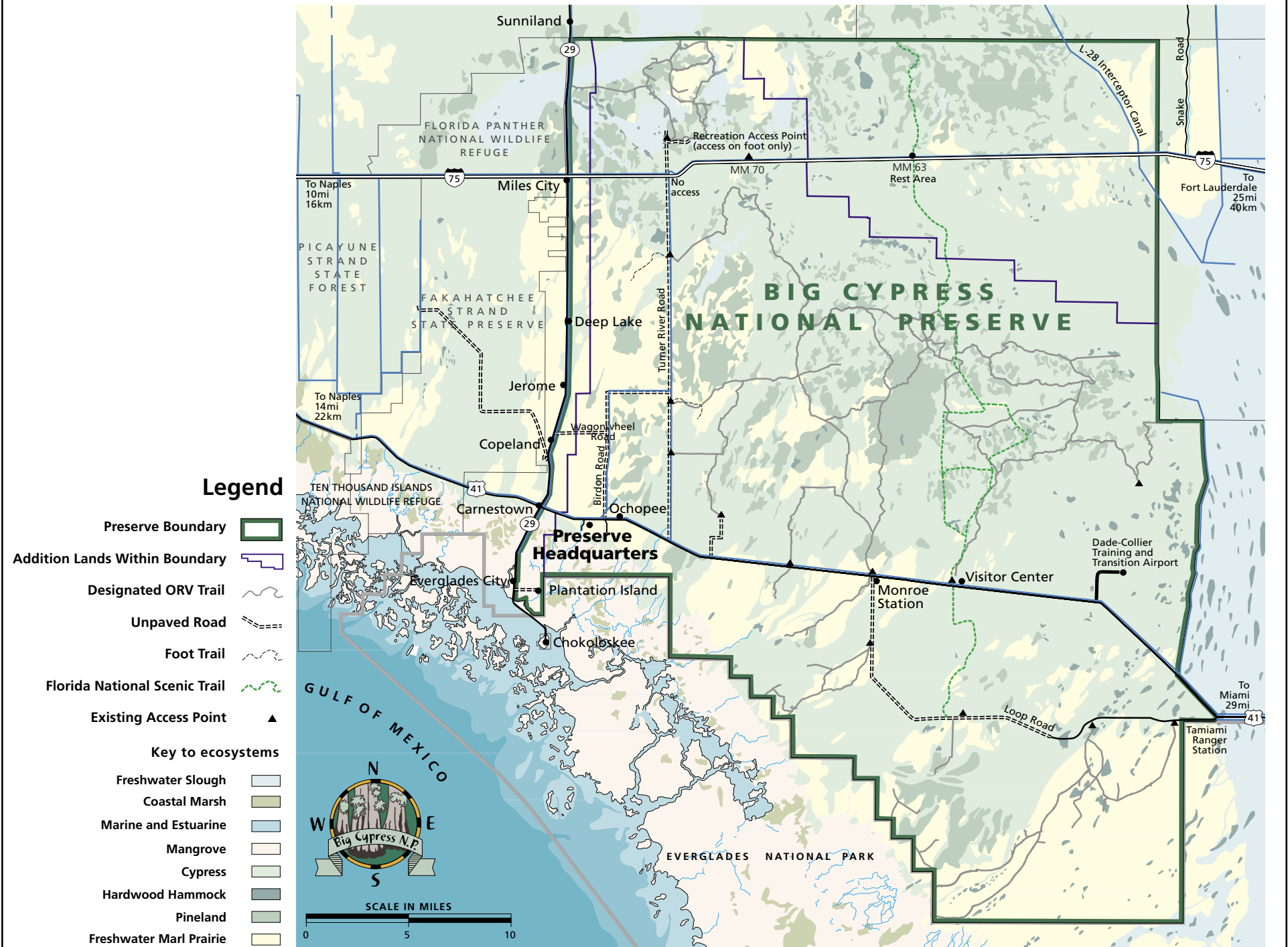
THE ALTERNATIVES

The National Park Service planning process requires development of action alternatives (alternatives B-F) for comparison with continuing current actions (alternative A). Each alternative has an overall management concept and a description of how different areas of the Addition would be managed. The concept for each alternative gives the NPS staff the idea for what the alternative is going to look like. For example, one management zone is called “primitive backcountry” and another zone is called “frontcountry.” An alternative whose concept is to keep most of the preserve in an undeveloped and natural/wild condition would have more of the primitive backcountry zone than the frontcountry zone. Both zones might also be larger or smaller and in different locations in different alternatives, depending on the overall concept for each alternative.

The action alternatives present different ways to manage resources and visitor use and to develop facilities in the Addition. The five action alternatives embody the range of what the public and the National Park Service want to see accomplished with regard to natural resource conditions, cultural resource conditions, and visitor use and experience in the Addition. The National Park Service would continue to follow existing agreements and servicewide mandates, laws, and policies regardless of the alternatives considered in this plan. However, actions or desired conditions not mandated by policy, law, or agreements can differ among the alternatives.

The NPS preferred course of action, the preferred alternative, has not been identified. This alternative will be designated after we hear from you and include your comments as part of an analysis process. The preferred alternative could be one of the following alternatives or a combination of several elements chosen from any of the alternatives. The preferred alternative will be included in the Draft GMP/EIS.





Preliminary Alternative A No Action Alternative

Addition Lands General Management Plan Big Cypress National Preserve

United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service
DSC • 09/12/05 • 176 / 20074

ALTERNATIVE A

CONTINUE CURRENT MANAGEMENT (NO-ACTION)

This alternative would continue the current management of the Addition Lands. The no-action alternative is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and serves as a basis of comparison for the action alternative. Recreational activities within the Addition Lands include fishing, hiking, and primitive camping. The Addition Lands are currently closed to recreational off-road vehicle (ORV) use and hunting.

Under this alternative access to and development in the Addition would remain limited and include the following existing facilities:

- A trailhead for the Florida National Scenic Trail on the south side of Interstate 75 (Alligator Alley) at the Florida Department of Transportation rest area at mile marker 63 would continue to be open for hikers. The trail extends north and south through a variety of habitats and connects to the trail within the original preserve.
- At Deep Lake a fire station would continue to be operated at a former homesite.
- Near Copeland, an acquired property is currently being used as a fire operations center. This facility provides office and work space for the preserve's fire management program. Under this alternative this facility would remain.
- The southeast corner of the intersection of State Highway 29 and U.S. Highway 41 is developed and encumbered with leases to the Collier County Sheriff's Office and Everglades City Chamber of Commerce. The activities at this location would continue until expiration of the leases in 2014.
- There are no visitor facilities or on-site orientation or interpretation materials provided within the Addition Lands. Orientation and interpretation would continue to be accomplished primarily through the Oasis Visitor Center on U.S. Highway 41 in the original preserve.

ALTERNATIVE B

CONCEPT

This alternative embraces Big Cypress' longstanding backcountry recreation values of self-reliance, isolation, exploration, discovery, and respect for nature. The aim of the alternative is to enable participation in a wide variety

of challenging outdoor recreational experiences while fostering a partnership among users, concessionaires, and NPS managers that ensures long-term care and sustainable use of backcountry resources.

Hunting, fishing, camping, ORV use, and other outdoor recreational activities could be permitted in designated areas of the preserve. Highly developed backcountry skills would be necessary to access many of the more remote areas where these activities would be permitted. However, not all visitors to the backcountry would be expert users.

Opportunities for less-skilled visitors would be provided through NPS- and concessionaire-led interpretive programs and backcountry excursions. The availability of short trails, visitor contact and information stations, and walk-in areas would provide opportunities for novice users to learn about preserve resources and develop the advanced skills before undertaking activities involving more backcountry knowledge and skills.

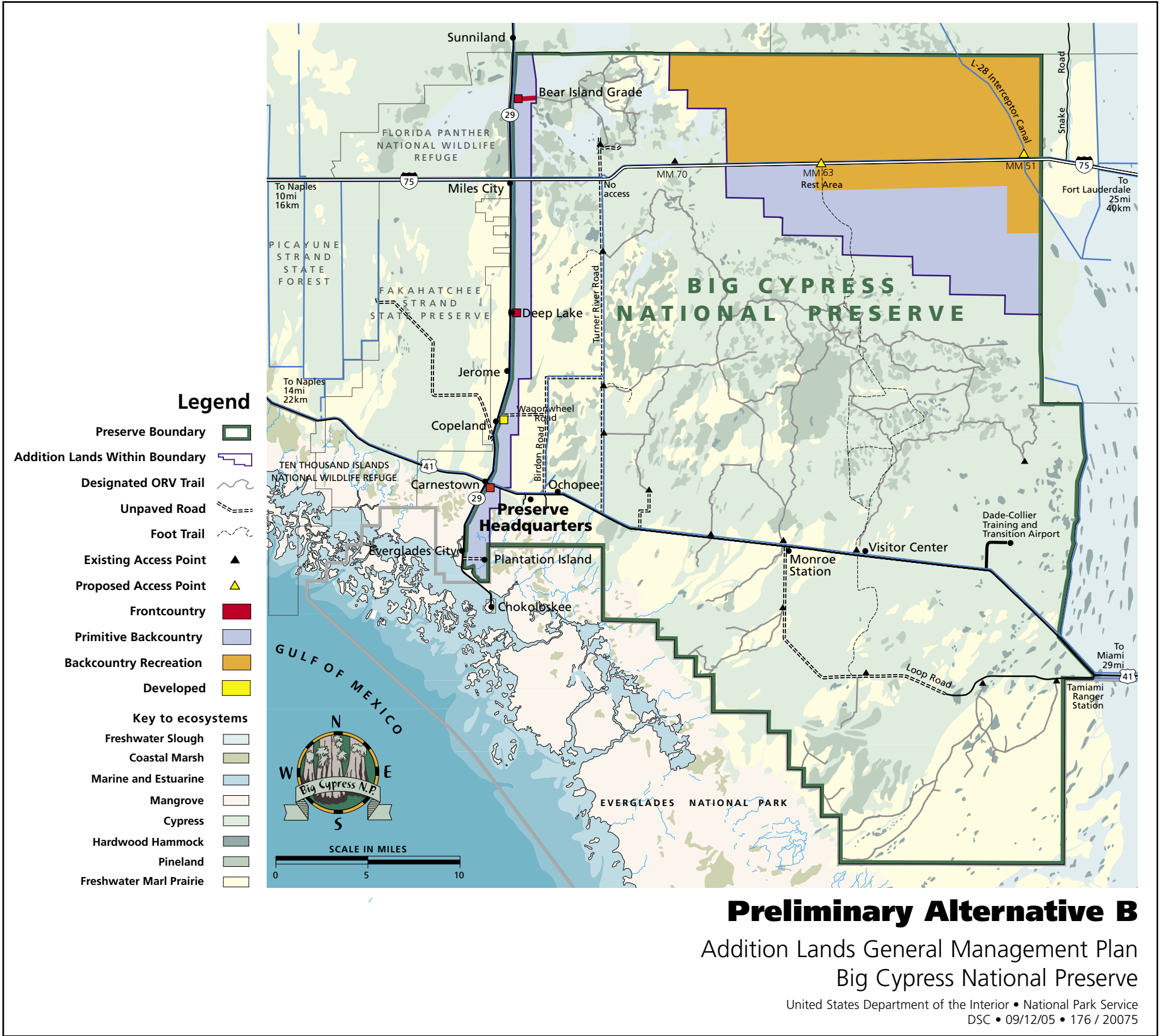
All backcountry recreational activities would be closely monitored and regulated to protect preserve resources and promote visitor safety. Separation of conflicting backcountry uses by time or location, establishment of permit and reservation systems, establishment of use limits, certification of advanced training, equipment inspection, and temporary or permanent closures of sensitive areas for specific activities should be expected.

ZONE ALLOCATIONS AND RELATED ACTIONS Developed Zone

The developed zone would include two recreational access points along I-75 in the northeast Addition Lands that would serve primarily as staging areas for independent and guided backcountry trips. Some facilities, such as visitor contact and information stations, restrooms, and short hiking trails, would also be provided to serve travelers along I-75.

The first recreational access point would be located near mile marker 51 on the north side of I-75 at the L-28 Interceptor Canal. This access point would be of interest to a variety of users such as hikers, ORV users, and boaters and would include parking, restrooms, and orientation information.

Farther west, the second access point would be co-located with the Florida Department of Transportation rest area at mile marker 63. This access point would have facilities on both the north and south sides of the highway. The south side facility would include a parking area, visitor contact station, and trailhead to allow walk-in and ORV access. The north side facility would include a parking area that would allow ORV access to an existing road



known locally as Nobles Grade. NPS operational facilities would also be in this area.

Near Copeland an acquired property would be in the developed zone. As discussed under alternative A, this property is currently being used as a fire operations center. This facility would be retained and expanded as necessary to accommodate other preserve operational needs.

Frontcountry Zone

Areas along the State Highway 29 corridor would be included in the front-country zone. There would be no ORV access from State Highway 29. Facilities and associated activities in these areas would be compatible with management of the adjacent lands within the original preserve. The northernmost access point would be at Bear Island Grade, approximately 5 miles north of I-75. A trail corridor that would follow Bear Island Grade would be included in this zone. This corridor would provide access to the preserve for bicyclists and hikers. A small parking area would be developed.

At Deep Lake (a sinkhole lake) a former homesite would be developed into a day-use area that would provide parking and restrooms. A trail/boardwalk from this location to Deep Lake would provide visitors the opportunity to walk through a mixed hardwood hammock/cypress strand to the lake.

The southeast corner of the intersection of State Highway 29 and U.S. Highway 41 would also be included in this zone. This area is already developed and encumbered with leases to the Collier County Sheriff's Office and Everglades City Chamber of Commerce through 2014. Under this alternative these leases would be allowed to expire, and the area would be used as a way-side providing visitors orientation to the preserve and the surrounding region.

Backcountry Recreation Zone

The majority of the northeast portion of the Addition would be included in this zone. ORVs would be allowed, with access from the two I-75 recreational access points discussed above. A system of sustainable, ORV-designated trails and routes would be developed.

The Florida National Scenic Trail would pass through this zone. Similar to management within the original preserve, motorized use along the Florida Trail would be prohibited, a buffer zone would be established along the trail corridor, and ORV trail crossings would be minimized.

Primitive Backcountry Zone

This management zone would comprise an area south of I-75. This area includes Mullet Slough, which is not appropriate for ORV use. This area is

predominately a dwarf cypress prairie that has had limited ORV use. The density of the trees and the cap rock near the ground surface makes travel in the area very difficult. The area is a major drainage of the Addition and is wet most of the year.

On the western end of Mullet Slough is a series of large prairies. These prairies are not capable of sustaining ORV use due to the deep marl soils being susceptible to rutting by ORVs. Designated hiking trails or routes would be limited to allow visitors to enjoy the wilderness character of the preserve.

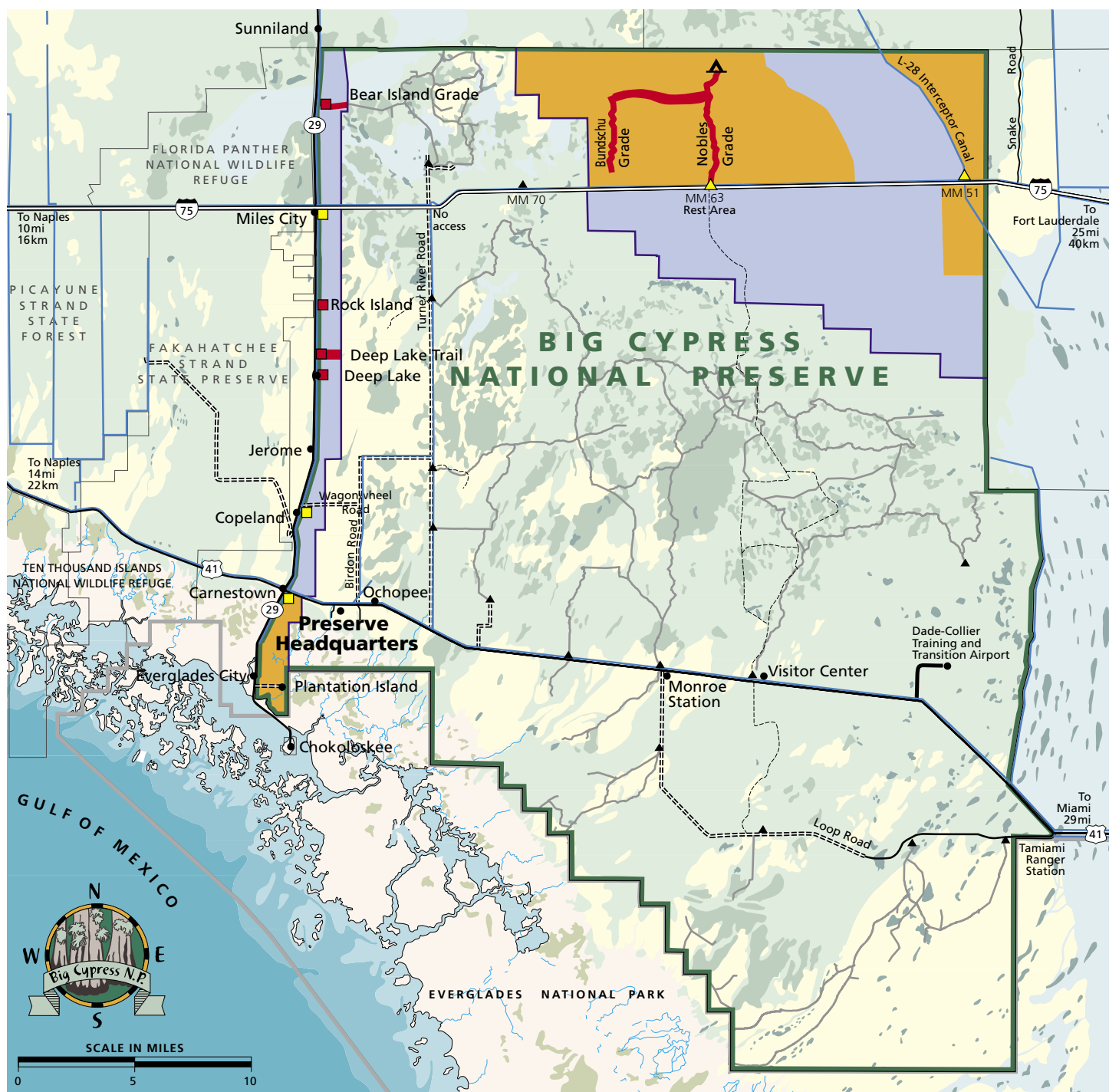
This zone would also include the Addition Lands along State Highway 29, which would be compatible with management of the adjacent lands within the original preserve.

The primitive backcountry zone would also consist of the tidal areas in the southwest corner of the Addition. This would include the area south of U.S. Highway 41 as well as the tidally influenced portion of the canals along State Highway 29 and U.S. Highway 41. Nonmotorized boating would be allowed, including the provision of new canoe trails. The area would not be open to ORVs, including airboats, which is consistent with how ORVs are managed in the adjacent lands within the original preserve boundary. The preserve would implement and enforce strict protective measures in this area consistent with the NPS policy of manatee conservation. Commercial canoe and kayak trips consistent with the area's resource protection goals would be encouraged.

ALTERNATIVE C

CONCEPT

This alternative would provide a diversity of both backcountry and frontcountry uses and visitor experiences throughout the Addition Lands. A variety of activities such as ORV use, bicycling, boating, hunting, fishing, camping, picnicking, and hiking would be accommodated. Facilities would be constructed along I-75, State Highway 29, and a frontcountry corridor that extends north into the preserve from I-75 to facilitate backcountry access and to provide for education, orientation, and other structured activities requiring developed facilities. A range of commercial services would be encouraged to facilitate visitor recreational and educational opportunities. Natural resources and processes would be protected. Recreational activities and facilities would be located and managed to minimize resource impacts. Operational facilities would be provided to support the more extensive maintenance, enforcement, and resource management activities needed to effectively manage increased visitor use and protect resources.



Addition Lands General Management Plan Big Cypress National Preserve

Under this alternative, several areas of the Addition would be included in this zone. The first would be located in the northeast corner extending south across I-75 and the L-28 Interceptor Canal. This area would be open to ORVs. Access would be provided from the I-75 recreational access point located at the L-28 Interceptor Canal. Designated ORV trails and routes would be developed in this area.

picnic area. A trail from this location to Deep Lake would provide visitors the opportunity to walk through a mixed hardwood hammock/cypress strand and observe the lake.

Near Copeland an acquired property would be included in the developed zone. This property has already been converted to a fire operations center. This facility would be retained and expanded as necessary to accommodate other preserve operational needs.

The southeast corner of the intersection of State Highway 29 and U.S. Highway 41 would also be included in this zone. This area is already developed and encumbered with leases to the Collier County Sheriff’s Office and Everglades City Chamber of Commerce. These leases currently expire in 2014. Under this alternative this site would be made available to the current tenants to remain or leased to other partners.

Frontcountry Zone

Bundschu Grade would be included in this zone. This road would provide access to hikers and bicyclists. In addition commercial interpretive tours and a destination camp providing overnight accommodations could be established if they were deemed economically feasible. In accordance with the Addition Act, the opportunity to provide commercial services would be first offered to the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

Areas along the State Highway 29 corridor would be included in the front-country zone. There would be no ORV access from State Highway 29. Facilities and associated activities in these areas would be compatible with management of the adjacent lands within the original preserve. The northernmost access point would be at Bear Island Grade, approximately 5 miles north of I-75. A trail corridor that would follow Bear Island Grade would be included in this zone. This corridor would provide access to the preserve for bicyclists and hikers. A small parking area would be developed.

A small parking area and trailhead would be developed north of Deep Lake, which would provide access to an existing tram for hikers and bicyclists to enter the preserve. A frontcountry corridor would be established on the tram.

Backcountry Recreation Zone

The backcountry recreation zone would include Nobles Grade and an area north and east. A system of sustainable, ORV-designated trails would be developed in a portion of this area.

The Florida National Scenic Trail could pass through this zone. Similar to management within the original preserve, motorized use along the trail would be prohibited, a buffer zone would be established along the trail corridor, and ORV trail crossings would be minimized.

The area south of U.S. Highway 41 would also be included in this zone. Motorized boating would be allowed subject to restrictions (e.g., speed limits, horsepower limits) to protect the estuarine mangrove forests and endangered West Indian manatee critical habitat. The preserve would implement and enforce strict protective measures in this area consistent with the NPS policy of manatee conservation. Navigation markers would be added as necessary to provide assistance to motorboaters to avoid mud flats and sand bars. Canoe/kayak trails would be marked and maintained.

Under this alternative the preserve would seek to have commercial boat tours provided in this area, which would emphasize an educational experience associated with mangrove habitat and protection of its inherent flora and fauna, such as manatees. The commercial tour operation would be evaluated to determine if it is economically feasible prior to seeking proposals for operation. In accordance with the Addition Act, the opportunity to provide commercial services would be offered first to the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

Primitive Backcountry Zone

This management zone would comprise most of the Addition Lands. It would include the Mullet Slough south of I-75 and Cow Bell Strand and California Slough north of I-75. It would also include much of the strip of Addition Lands along State Highway 29. The Florida National Scenic Trail would be included in this zone south of I-75 and could pass through this zone north of I-75. Other trails and routes would be provided in this zone to provide separate trails for walk-in users.

ALTERNATIVE E

CONCEPT

The emphasis of this alternative would be to expand the opportunities for visitors with limited backcountry expertise to interact with preserve resources. Interpretive opportunities would be focused along I-75, State Highway 29, and a frontcountry area that extends north into the preserve from I-75. There would be a mix of ORV, bicycle, boating, hunting, fishing, camping, and hiking access. Facilities would be constructed to provide backcountry access and to provide for education, orientation, and other structured activities requiring developed facilities. In the backcountry, visitors would experience a landscape where natural processes would predominate. A range of commercial services could be provided to facilitate visitor access and understanding of the preserve. Operational facilities would be provided to support the more extensive maintenance, enforcement, and resource management activities needed to effectively manage increased visitor use and protect resources. To minimize impacts, development would emphasize education and sustainable design concepts and would be primarily focused on previously disturbed areas.

ZONE ALLOCATIONS AND RELATED ACTIONS

Developed Zone

The developed zone would include two recreational access points along I-75 within the Addition. Roads would provide easier entry into the Addition and support enhanced learning opportunities and interaction with a broad range of resources.

On the east side of the preserve, a recreational access point would be developed near mile marker 51 on the north side of I-75 at the L-28 Interceptor Canal. The developed area would include a visitor contact station that would provide orientation to the preserve and its resources. This access point would provide for a variety of uses, including hikers, ORV users, and boaters. There would be no access to the south.

Farther west, the second access point would be co-located with the Florida Department of Transportation rest area at mile marker 63. This access point would have facilities on both the north and south sides of the highway, including a visitor contact station. The south side facility would include a parking area and foot trail/boardwalk. The trail would expose visitors to a variety of habitats within the preserve. The north side facility would include a parking

area and would provide access to an existing road, known locally as Nobles Grade. This road would be included in the frontcountry zone and would be improved to allow visitors to travel in their vehicles approximately 5 miles north. Within this corridor a series of waysides and trailheads with parking areas would be developed. The road improvements would end at a former ranchsite. In this previously disturbed area a parking area and campground would be developed.

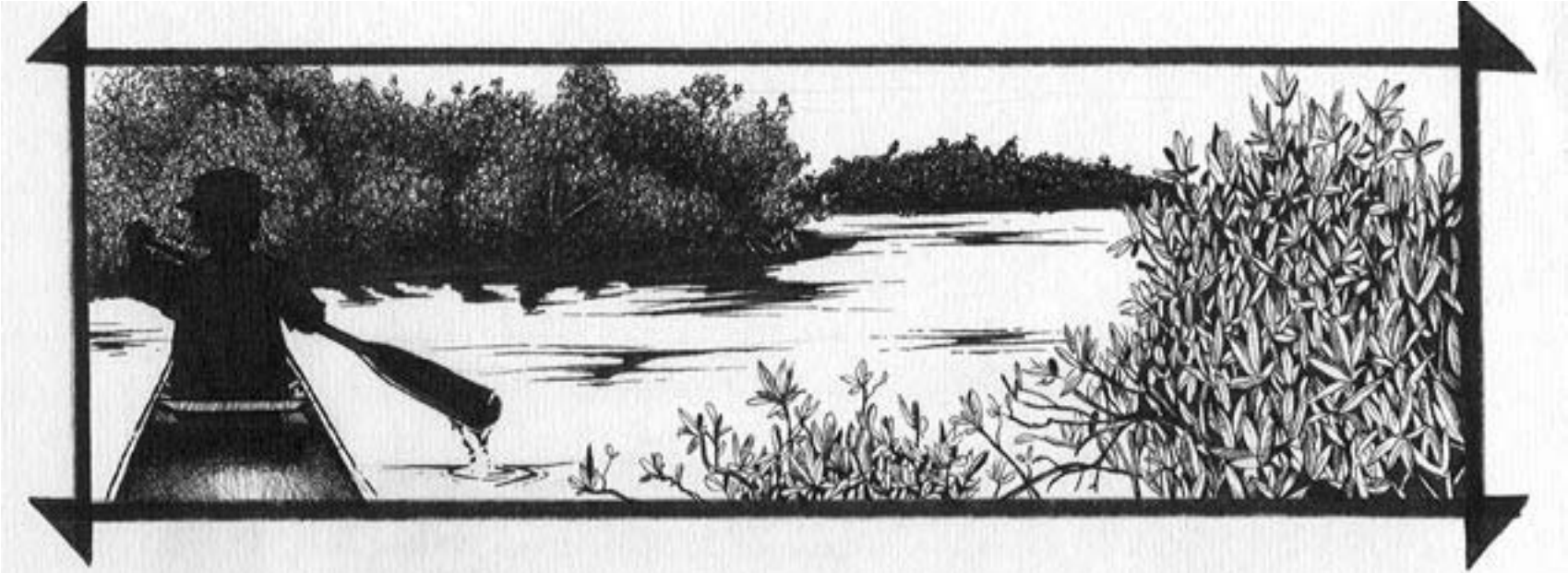
At Deep Lake the former homesite would be developed into a day-use area, including a visitor contact station, parking, and a shelter for picnicking or other small gatherings. A trail from this location to Deep Lake would provide visitors the opportunity to walk through a mixed hardwood hammock/cypress strand and observe the lake.

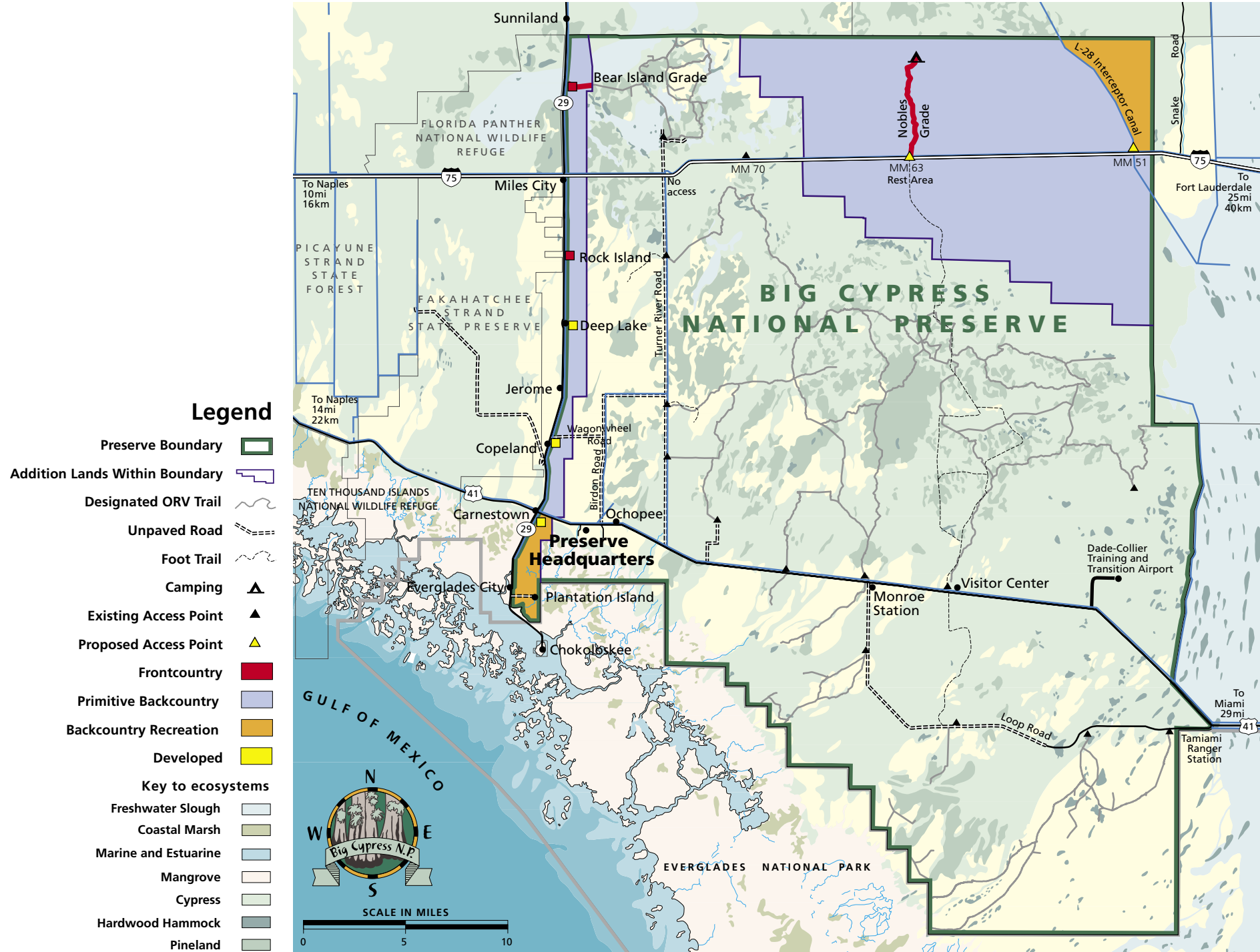
Near Copeland an acquired property would be included in the developed zone. This property has already been converted to a fire operations center. This facility would be retained and expanded as necessary to accommodate other preserve operational needs.

The southeast corner of the intersection of State Highway 29 and U.S. Highway 41 would be included in this zone. This area is already developed and encumbered with leases to the Collier County Sheriff’s Office and Everglades City Chamber of Commerce. The existing uses would continue for the life of the leases. When the leases expire in 2014, this area would be used for providing visitor services. The area would be evaluated for serving as a base for a concession operation such as commercial boat tours, including possibly pontoon boat, canoe, and kayak. If deemed to be economically feasible, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida would be given the right of first refusal in accordance with the Addition Act.

Frontcountry Zone

Nobles Grade would be included in the frontcountry zone and would be improved to allow visitors to travel in their vehicles. Within these road corridors a series of waysides and trailheads with parking areas would be developed. The road improvements to Nobles Grade would end at a former ranch-site approximately 5 miles north of I-75. In this previously disturbed area, a parking area and campground would be developed.





Preliminary Alternative E

Addition Lands General Management Plan

Big Cypress National Preserve

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Areas along the State Highway 29 corridor would be included in the front-country zone. There would be no ORV access from State Highway 29. Facilities and associated activities in these areas would be compatible with management of the adjacent lands within the original preserve. The northernmost access point would be at Bear Island Grade, approximately 5 miles north of I-75. A trail corridor that would follow Bear Island Grade would be included in this zone. This corridor would provide access to the preserve for bicyclists and hikers. A small parking area would be developed.

Farther south along the State Highway 29 corridor, a trailhead would be established at Rock Island. This former homesite would be developed to have a small parking area to allow access for visitors to walk into the preserve.

Backcountry Recreation Zone

Under this alternative two areas of the Addition would be included in this zone. The first area is located south of U.S. Highway 41, and the second area is in the northeast corner of the preserve.

The area south of U.S. Highway 41 would be opened to both motorized and nonmotorized boats. Canoe and kayak trails would be marked and maintained. Motorized boating would be allowed subject to restrictions (e.g., speed limits, horsepower limits) to protect the estuarine mangrove forests and endangered West Indian manatee critical habitat. The preserve would implement and enforce strict protective measures in this area consistent with the

NPS policy of manatee conservation. The preserve would erect one or two chickees (platform campsites), similar to those found in Everglades National Park, within this area to provide backcountry camping opportunities for boaters.

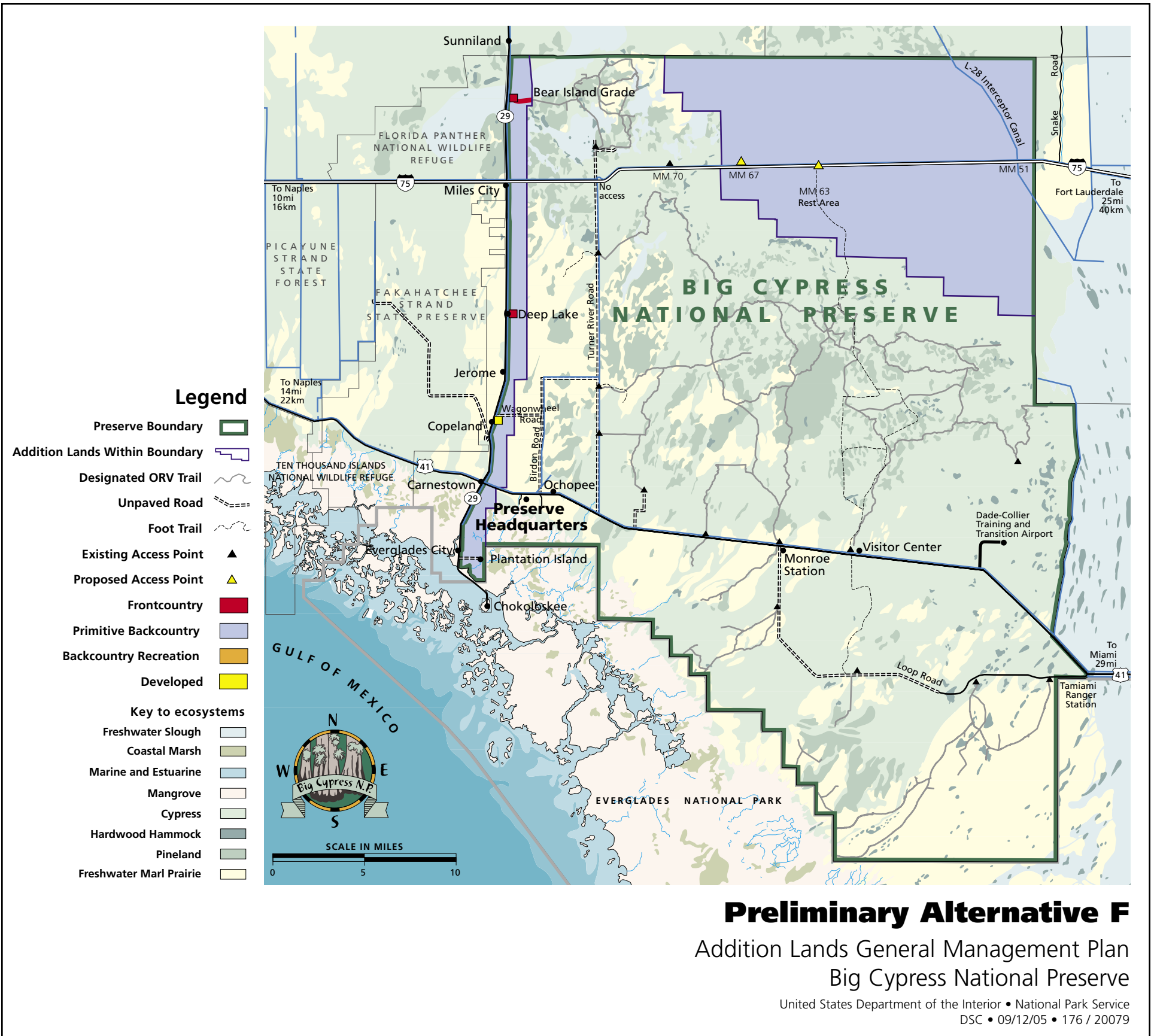
Under this alternative the preserve would explore commercial boat tours in this area, which would emphasize an educational experience associated with mangrove habitat and protection of its inherent flora and fauna such as manatees. Commercial opportunities would be offered to the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida, because they have a legislatively established right of first refusal.

The northeast corner of the preserve would be included in this zone. This area would be open to ORVs. Access would be provided from I-75. A system of sustainable, ORV-designated trails would be developed in this area.

Primitive Backcountry Zone

This management zone would comprise most of the Addition Lands and allow for visitors to explore these areas where natural processes predominate. The zoning would also limit the amount of development of facilities that could occur.

The Florida National Scenic Trail would pass through this zone. The trail would be marked and maintained as necessary for resource protection and safety.



ALTERNATIVE F

CONCEPT

The emphasis of this alternative would be on the preservation of native species and natural processes and the restoration of previously disturbed areas. Visitors would experience a natural landscape that reflects the wilderness character of the land and provides opportunities for solitude, challenge, and self-reliance. Resource preservation and restoration would be the overriding consideration in the Addition. Lands that have been altered would be restored to their natural conditions to the extent possible. Evidence of past uses, including roads, ORV trails, cattle grazing, and backcountry camps that are not excluded from acquisition by legislation, would be removed. Research would be emphasized, with new information used to manage and restore resources. Research would also provide opportunities for interpretive and educational experiences for visitors. Preserve staff would work closely with researchers to cooperatively interpret research efforts and educate visitors about the preserve’s resources.

There would be minimal new development in the Addition Lands. Small-scale parking areas would be along I-75 and State Highway 29, which would serve as walk-in access points for trips into the backcountry. Minimal information and interpretation would be offered within the Addition, and visitors would primarily rely on facilities elsewhere in the original preserve for these services. Hunting would be allowed by walk-in access only in designated areas and seasons determined by the National Park Service.

ZONE ALLOCATIONS AND RELATED ACTIONS

Developed Zone

The developed zone would include two recreational access points along I-75. Limited information and interpretation such as sign boards or waysides would be available at these parking areas/trailheads. One recreational access would be co-located with the Florida Department of Transportation rest area at mile marker 63. This access point would have parking and walk-in access on both the north and south sides of the highway. In addition to backcountry access, a short trail would enable visitors to experience a hardwood hammock area to the south. Interpretation would be available along the trail.

The second access point would be point would be near mile marker 67 on the north side of I-75 at Bundschu Grade. This site would provide walk-in access. Near Copeland an acquired property would be included in the developed zone. This property has already been converted to a fire operations center.

This facility would be retained and expanded as necessary to accommodate other preserve operational needs.

Frontcountry Zone

Two areas along the State Highway 29 corridor would also be included in the frontcountry zone. Facilities and associated activities in these areas would be compatible with management of the adjacent lands within the original preserve.

The northernmost area would be at Bear Island Grade, approximately 5 miles north of I-75. At this location a small parking area would be developed to provide access to the preserve for bicyclists and hikers.

The frontcountry zone would also include the former homesite south of Deep Lake. A small parking area would be developed to provide access.

Primitive Backcountry Zone

This management zone would comprise much of the Addition Lands, including the lands in the northeast portion of the Addition. Access would be provided along the I-75 corridor.

The Florida National Scenic Trail would be included in this zone. It would be a primitive trail that would be minimally maintained as necessary for resource protection and safety. The Nobles and Bundschu Grade corridors would be restored to native vegetation and natural hydrology except for minimally maintained trails that would serve as the primary access corridors from which visitors could disperse into the backcountry. Other trails or marked routes would be limited.

The 1-mile strip along State Highway 29 would also be included in this zone. This would include the tidal areas in the southwest corner of the Addition, including the area south of U.S. Highway 41 and the tidally influenced portions of the canals along State Highway 29 and U.S. Highway 41. This area is dominated by estuarine mangrove forests and is habitat for the endangered West Indian manatee. This area would provide protection for the manatee by allowing nonmotorized access.

The southeast corner of the intersection of State Highway 29 and U.S. Highway 41 would also be included in this zone. This area is already developed and encumbered with leases to the Collier County Sheriff’s Office and Everglades City Chamber of Commerce. Upon expiration of the existing leases, this area would be restored.

NEXT STEPS

The next step is to send us your comments on these preliminary alternatives and management zones. You may like some but not all of the elements of one alternative, or you may like a concept but disagree with the way we have translated that concept into actual visitor experiences or resource protection in the preserve. We need to know the reasons for your likes and dislikes. Maybe you have an entirely different vision that would solve issues better than any of the alternatives presented. This is the kind of feedback that will help us formulate the best possible future for the preserve. We encourage all ideas.

Each comment is considered on its own merits and unrelated to the number of similar comments received. Public comment analysis is not a voting process. Please take time to fill out the enclosed comment form or submit commits and return it within 60 days from receipt of this newsletter. Comments can also be provided through the internet by going to www.parkplanning.nps.gov and selecting Big Cypress National Preserve. We also encourage you to attend one of the open houses that has been scheduled throughout the region (see dates, times, and locations listed on page 1 of this newsletter). We will consider your comments when we develop the NPS preferred alternative and the Draft GMP/EIS, which will include an analysis of the environmental consequences of implementing each of the alternatives.

Implementation of any approved alternative depends on funding. A general management plan provides analysis and justification for future funding requests but in no way guarantees that money will be forthcoming. The plan will establish a vision that will guide year-to-year management of the Addition. Full implementation of the approved plan could take many years.

Also, please be aware that due to the requirements of public disclosure (318 Department Manual 4 App.2.11), the National Park Service must make the names and addresses of commenters public if requested. Individual respondents, however, may request that this information not be released. The National Park Service will then determine whether the information may be withheld under the Freedom of Information Act and will honor your request to the extent allowed by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses available for public inspection if requested.



Project Schedule

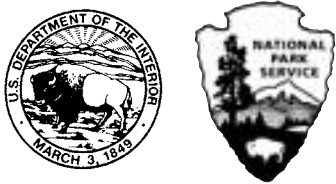
Big Cypress National Preserve’s GMP process is expected to take several years to complete. A summary of the process and anticipated time frame is presented below. You will have opportunities to share ideas and comments throughout the process.

Step	Time frame	Planning Activity	How You Can Be Involved
1	2000 - 2001	Initiate Project The planning team assembles and begins to identify the project’s scope, customize the planning process, and establish contacts with participants.	
2	2001 - 2002	Define Planning Context and Foundation The team affirms the monument’s purpose, and significance. Team members collect and analyze relevant data and public comments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read newsletter• Send us your ideas and comments• Participate in public meetings
3	2002 – Spring 2006	Develop and Evaluate Alternatives Based on staff and public input, the team explores what the future of the national monument should look like and proposes a range of reasonable alternatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read newsletter• Send us your ideas and comments• Participate in public meetings
4	Spring 2006– Spring 2007	Prepare a Draft Document A draft general management plan and environmental impact statement is published. The draft document describes the alternatives and impacts of implementing each. Based on the impacts and public input, a preferred alternative is identified in the document.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read draft plan• Send us your ideas and comments• Participate in public meetings
5	Summer 2007– Fall 2008	Prepare and Publish Final Document Based on review by the National Park Service and the public, the team revises the general management plan and distributes a final plan. The plan is approved in a published Record of Decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read the final plan, including NPS responses to substantive public comments and official letters.
6	2008 and beyond	Implement the Approved Plan After the Record of Decision is issued, and as funding allows, the general management plan is implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with the preserve to implement plan

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Addition Lands General Management Plan
Big Cypress National Preserve
Florida
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Big Cypress National Preserve



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Addition Lands GMP Newsletter