



Why develop an updated Environmental Assessment (EA)? Why develop a joint EA?

- Fire management activities have historically been insufficient to meet biologically-desirable goals.

Taking a joint approach to this challenge will help avoid the likely consequence of lower frequency/ higher intensity fires occurring throughout Big Cypress National Preserve (BICY) and Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (FPNWR).

- ▶ Intense fires reduce forest coverage and denude habitats, thereby enhancing extirpation risks for threatened and endangered plant, insect, and wildlife species.
- ▶ Intense fires pose potential threats to private property and structures.
- ▶ Intense fires can pose greater safety concerns for firefighters.

- BICY and FPNWR share a common border and vegetative characteristics.

Despite differing resource objectives, we have a legacy of sharing staff, equipment, and information between the two units. The joint EA is a logical extension of this heritage.

- The joint EA is a part of increased collaboration between the two fire programs.
- Further, instead of developing separate EAs for the two units, developing a joint EA is an efficient use of resources of the Department of Interior.

What can we expect from increased collaboration between BICY and FPNWR?

- Improved fire program efficiencies and productivities would result from formalizing the sharing of staff and equipment resources between BICY and FPNWR.
- Prescribed fire supported and augmented by sharing fire management staffing between the two units would increase the total acres of habitat treated.

This would be particularly critical when either entity is experiencing a staffing shortage or is facing a high resource need for a large treatment area.

- Mutual aid assistance would be shared and made available for responding to large or inopportune wildfire incidents.
- Resources would be shared during periods of wildfire severity. During severity periods, various levels of outside resources are imported to enable appropriate responses.
- The sharing of aviation resources (e.g., equipment and staffing) would result in cost savings to both units.
- Combined trainings would help reduce man-hour commitments and travel costs for both units.