



## CAPE SABLE DAMS RESTORATION PHASE II

Dear Friends of Everglades National Park,

The National Park Service, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, plans to prepare an Environmental Assessment for the evaluation of dams on four waterways – House Ditch, Slagle Ditch, Raulerson Canal, and East Side Creek – in the Cape Sable region of Everglades National Park (“the Park”).

During the coming months, the National Park Service will evaluate and analyze the potential environmental impact of several dam alternatives, including a No-Action Alternative, in the Environmental Assessment. Through the National Environmental Policy Act process, the National Park Service is requesting public and agency input on the project and the environmental issues and alternatives to be included in the Environmental Assessment.

The purpose of this newsletter is to request your input and to provide you with information about the project background; draft purpose, needs, and objectives; and potential alternatives. Please share your ideas, suggestions, and concerns about this project with us by providing written comments no later than **March 8, 2015**.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Pedro M. Ramos  
Superintendent, Everglades National Park

### HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE

1. You may submit your comments electronically at the National Park Service Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website at <http://www.parkplanning.nps.gov>. Once on our website, select “Everglades NP” from the drop down box, then “Cape Sable Dams – Phase II,” and finally “Open for Public Comment.”
2. If you are unable to access this website or would prefer to submit your comments via letter, please submit written comments to:

Pedro M. Ramos, Superintendent  
Subject: Cape Sable Dams Restoration –  
Phase II  
Everglades National Park Headquarters  
40001 State Road 9336  
Homestead, FL 33034-6733

Once the Environmental Assessment is completed, the National Park Service will make the document available for a 30-day public comment period.

*Note: Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. Although you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.*

The purpose of the National Environmental Policy Act is to:

*Encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; and to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation....*

NEPA requires all federal agencies, including the National Park Service, to prepare detailed statements assessing the environmental impact of any alternatives to major federal actions significantly affecting the environment.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Everglades National Park was established in 1947 and is one of 401 units of the National Park System administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Historically, the interior wetlands of the Cape Sable region in the Park were isolated from both Florida Bay and the Gulf of Mexico by a marl ridge known as the Flamingo Embankment. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, canals were dug through the Marl Ridge in attempts to drain and reclaim the interior marsh areas for development, agriculture, and cattle grazing. These canals opened up the interior wetlands to tidal influence and the inflow of saltwater from the Gulf of Mexico and Florida Bay. The canals were subsequently plugged with earthen dams at the Marl Ridge during the 1950s, but most of the earthen dams have either been breached or severely compromised by the forces of weathering and erosion over the intervening years.

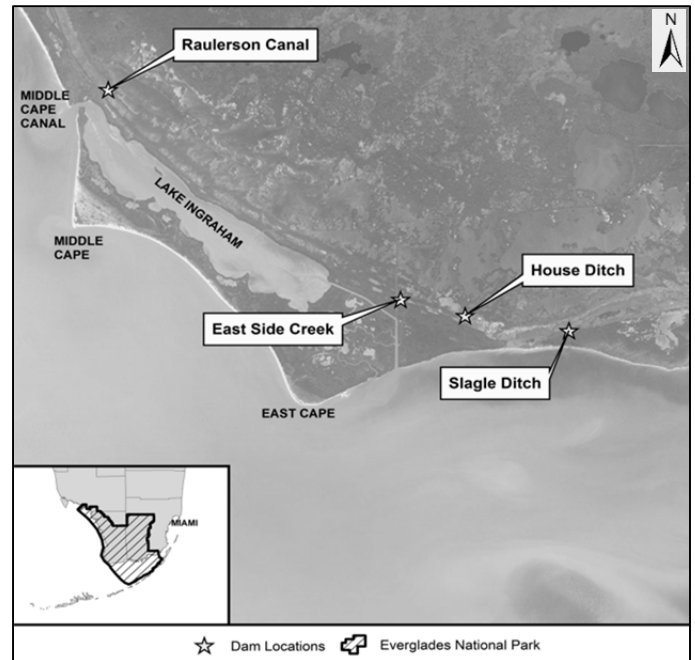
At present, five major ditch/canal dams are known to exist in the Cape Sable region:

- Homestead Canal Dam – a 100-foot long fill dam bounded by sheet pile on each end and reinforced with rip-rap armoring; constructed in 2011
- East Cape Extension Canal Dam – a 100-foot long fill dam bounded by sheet pile on each end and reinforced with rip-rap armoring; constructed in 2011
- House Ditch Dam – an earthen dam; constructed in the 1950s
- Slagle Ditch Dam – an earthen dam; constructed in 1950s
- Raulerson Canal Dam – a former sheet pile dam; the dam has completely failed

Additionally, East Side Creek, a natural waterway in the Cape Sable region, is currently experiencing similar tidal influence and erosional processes as the canals and ditches in the area. The saltwater intrusion via this creek is similarly contributing to the degradation of the interior freshwater and brackish marshes of the Cape Sable region. Based on the available historical evidence, the Park believes that these processes occurring in the

waterway may be due, at least in part, to the presence and widening of the human-created canals in the region. Therefore, this waterway is being included for consideration as part of this project.

***The House Ditch, Slagle Ditch, Raulerson Canal, and East Side Creek waterways are the subject of the proposed Environmental Assessment.***



## DRAFT PURPOSE, NEED, AND OBJECTIVES

### Draft Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is to provide sustainable solutions to canal-induced saltwater intrusion and degradation of the interior freshwater and brackish marshes in order to reestablish the natural function of the Marl Ridge and restore the Cape Sable region to a more natural state.

### Draft Needs Statements

The needs of this project are to:

- Reestablish the natural function of the Marl Ridge in the Cape Sable region
- Reduce the impacts of the canal-induced breaching of the Marl Ridge, which is allowing unnatural intrusion of saltwater into freshwater and brackish marshes north of the marl ridge
- Reduce the erosional processes currently occurring in House and Slagle Ditches, Raulerson Canal, and East Side Creek
- Reduce sediment transport to/from Florida Bay and the interior marshes
- Protect the freshwater and brackish interior marshes and surrounding areas, which serve as habitat for fish and wildlife
- Improve the qualities of wilderness character in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness Area

## Draft Objectives Statements

### Natural Resources

- Reduce the flow of saltwater into freshwater and brackish interior marshes of the Cape Sable region through House and Slagle Ditches, Raulerson Canal, and East Side Creek, thereby restoring a more natural hydrology to the region
- Reduce freshwater loss from freshwater and brackish interior marshes through House and Slagle Ditches, Raulerson Canal, and East Side Creek
- Promote ecological resilience to climate change and sea level rise in the interior marshes of the Cape Sable region
- Improve habitat for juvenile crocodiles, wading birds, forage fish and other wildlife within the interior freshwater and brackish marshes of the Cape Sable region
- Reduce the loss of sediment and nutrients from the interior freshwater and brackish marshes of the Cape Sable region
- Reduce/eliminate adverse impacts to marine resources in the Cape Sable region

### Wilderness

- Design project features to maximize compatibility with the qualities of wilderness character

### Cultural Resources

- Avoid adverse impacts to cultural and archeological resources and historic features through project design or mitigation measures

### Engineered Features

- Design engineered features, when necessary, to last at least 50 years (barring severe damage by catastrophic hurricane events) with annual/bi-annual maintenance

### Visitor Use and Experience

- Provide safe passage into the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness Area for canoeists/kayakers
- Improve the wilderness visitor experience by reducing the opportunity for illegal motorized access into the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness Area

## DRAFT PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

### House and Slagle Ditches

Due to the similar nature of the House and Slagle Ditches and the similar nature of the current earthen dams, the same suite of alternatives is being considered for each of the waterways.

- Re-backfill the eroded areas back to the anticipated original widths with a coarse grained limestone rock fill, place a sand drain for seepage control, backfill the ditch up to ten feet outward from the dam, and place erosion protection along the downslope areas of the dam and end sloping ditch backfill.

- Re-backfill the eroded areas of the existing earthen dam, place erosion protection along the downslope areas of the existing dam, and construct a new dam structure at the mouth of the ditch.
- Restore the natural function of the Marl Ridge by constructing a new dam the width of the Marl Ridge.

### Raulerson Canal

- Construct a new sheet pile only dam with rip-rap erosion protection at the former failed dam location, with options for a flow discharge structure and/or a canoe ramp.
- Restore the natural function of the Marl Ridge by constructing a new sheet pile only dam at the center of the Marl Ridge, with options for a flow discharge structure and/or a canoe ramp.
- Construct a new sheet pile and fill dam with rip-rap erosion protection at the former failed dam location, with the option for a canoe ramp.
- Restore the natural function of the Marl Ridge by constructing a new sheet pile and fill dam the width of the Marl Ridge, with the option for a canoe ramp.

### East Side Creek

- Restore the natural function of the Marl Ridge by constructing a new sheet pile only dam at the center of the Marl Ridge, with options for a flow-through structure, weir, and/or a canoe ramp.
- Restore the natural function of the Marl Ridge by constructing a new sheet pile and fill dam the width of the Marl Ridge, with the option for a canoe ramp.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Potential environmental topics to be addressed in the Environmental Assessment include, but are not limited to, the following: Geologic Resources & Soils; Air Quality; Soundscapes & Noise; Water Quality & Quantity; Marine & Estuarine Resources; Wetlands; Floodplains; Land Use; Listed Species, Wildlife, & Habitat; Visitor Use & Experience; Historic & Archeological Resources; Socioeconomics; Wilderness; and Park Management & Operations.

## AGENCY CONSULTATION

The National Park Service is the lead agency on this project. However, the National Park Service will consult with a number of federal and state agencies, tribes, and other interested parties throughout the planning process. Agencies invited to participate in the planning process include but are not limited to the following:

- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Florida State Historic Preservation Office
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - National Marine Fisheries Service
- Native American Tribes
- South Florida Water Management District
- United States Army Corps of Engineers
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service



**CAPE SABLE DAMS RESTORATION – PHASE II  
PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Public and Agency Involvement Opportunities</b>
Public and Agency Scoping (30-day comment period – OPEN NOW)	February – March 2015	<i>Submit written comments about the draft project purpose, need, objectives, alternatives, and issues via the National Park Service Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website, or letter</i>
Prepare Environmental Assessment	October 2014 – September 2015	<i>Agency and tribal consultation</i>
Environmental Assessment Public Comment Period (30-day comment period)	September – October 2015	<i>Submit written comments about the Environmental Assessment via the National Park Service Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website, or letter</i>
Decision Document	January 2016	<i>Review selected project alternatives</i>

**Thank you for your interest in Everglades National Park!**