

General Management Plan Newsletter One

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



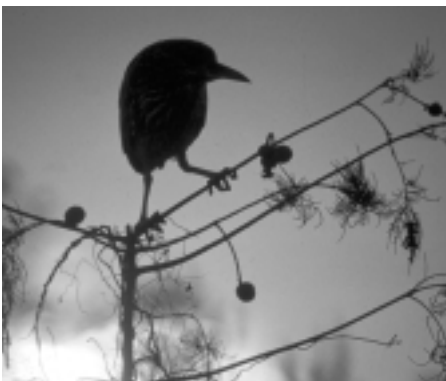
Everglades National Park
Florida



Dear Neighbors and Visitors,

I am writing to announce the start of a comprehensive planning effort for Everglades National Park. The result will be a new *General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* that will guide park management for the next 20 years. All national parks are required to have an approved general management plan. During the development of this plan park staff, along with our neighbors and visitors, will have the opportunity to step back, examine long-range goals and management issues, and chart a course for the future.

The new general management plan for Everglades National Park will provide a broad conceptual framework to guide decisions for long-range park management, resource protection, appropriate types and levels of visitor activities, and appropriate facility development. The man-



agement plan will articulate the park's mission, purpose, and significance, and define the resource conditions and visitor experiences that should be achieved and maintained over time. The plan will consider Everglades National Park both as a unit of the national park system and in a broader ecosystem context that includes the surrounding South Florida region.

Everglades National Park has not had a comprehensive plan since its 1979 master plan. A new management plan is needed to assist the park in addressing the many complex issues that have arisen since that time. The management plan will not only provide a vision for long-term park management; it will set the direction for subsequent and more narrowly focused planning efforts. However, the plan will not include specific facility designs, resolve all park issues, or guarantee funding for the actions proposed in the approved plan. The management plan provides the rationale and the roadmap for

Everglades National Park to proceed in a focused way over the next two decades.

I invite your participation in developing this plan. During this effort there will be a number of opportunities for you to contribute your ideas and concerns about the park and help shape its future. Newsletters with comment forms will be distributed to the mailing list and posted on the Internet throughout the project. There will be public workshops and meetings at key stages. And, when the *Draft General Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* is produced, you will be invited to review and provide comments.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Maureen Finnerty
Superintendent



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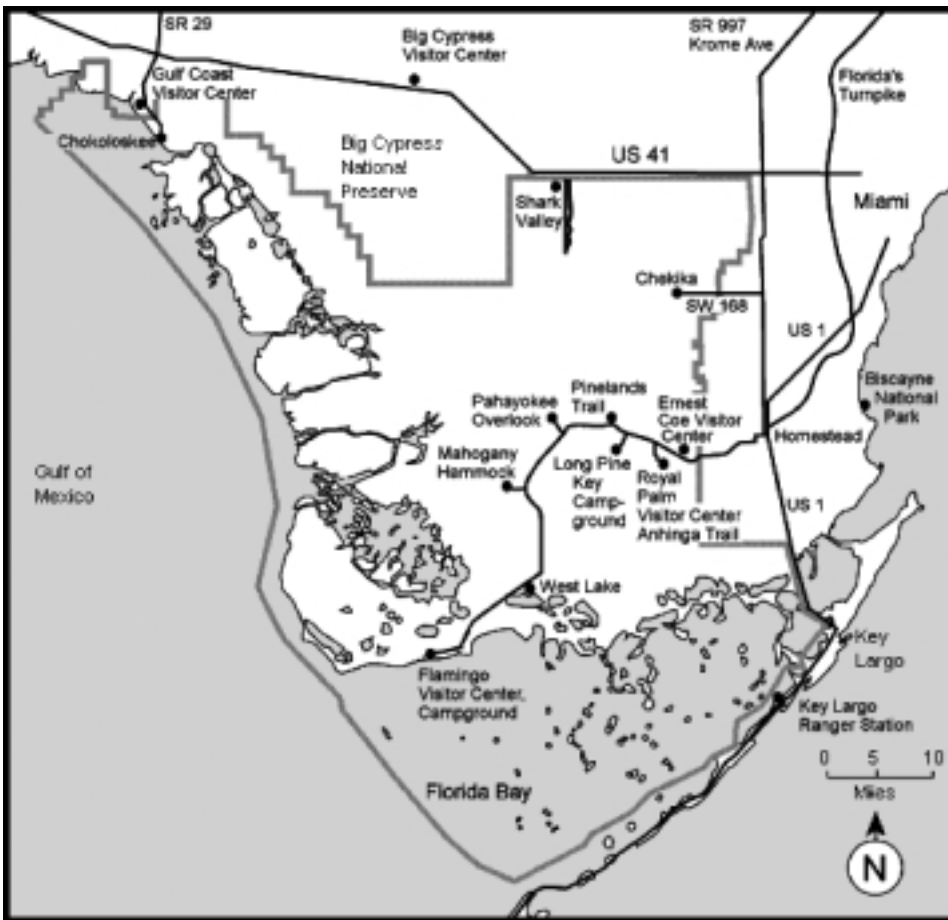
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GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Park planning is a decision-making process, and general management planning is the broadest level of decision making for national parks. A general management plan (GMP) is required for each national park system unit and is intended to set the park's management direction for the next 20 years. The general management plan for the Everglades National Park is being coordinated by a core team of park staff and NPS planning

Why Was This Park Established?

Answers to the WHY question form the foundation for the general management plan. The answers to this question are found in legislation and National Park Service (NPS) policy. All concepts and actions in the plan must be consistent with this foundation. For Everglades National Park, the planning foundation begins with statements of purpose and significance that are presented in draft form on page 4. Your comments will help us refine these statements.



professionals. Participation by the full park staff, park partners and neighbors, and the general public will be crucial to the plan's success.

Planning in the national park system is organized around three primary questions: WHY was this park established (defines the overall mission of the park)? WHAT is the vision for the park (describes the kind of park we want it to be)? And HOW do we accomplish our vision (the actions needed to achieve the desired conditions)?

What Is the Vision for the Park?

Developing a vision that describes the park's future (answering the WHAT question) is the primary role of the general management plan. It is in this step of the planning process that the planning team spends most of its time and where ideas and comments from you are the most important.

The management plan looks into the future and considers the park holistically, that is, in its full ecological and cultural context and as part of the

surrounding region. Several possible visions for the park's future (called alternatives) are developed and analyzed by the National Park Service and the public before a preferred direction is selected. Evaluating a range of alternatives allows for comparing and contrasting the advantages and disadvantages of one course of action over another and provides the sound approach to decision making required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

How Do We Accomplish Our Vision?

Most HOW questions are answered in future implementation plans that branch off the GMP. For example, the desired conditions to be achieved for the park's natural and cultural resources will be described in the management plan, but specific actions to manage resources and achieve these conditions will be identified in resource management plans. Overall goals and conditions to be met by the park's interpretive and educational programs will be established in the general management plan, but required media, programs, or other facilities will be detailed in a comprehensive interpretive plan. Any current implementation plans for the park will be evaluated and revised as necessary to be consistent with the new management plan.

What Are the Major Steps?

Developing a general management plan involves several key steps occurring over a number of years. We are in the initial phases of the project (Steps 1 and 2) – identifying the scope and issues of the planning effort, setting goals, identifying obstacles to realizing those goals, and collecting data. In steps 3 and 4, alternatives to achieving these goals are developed. The relative benefits and impacts (including costs) of each approach are analyzed in an environmental impact statement (EIS) that is prepared as part of the general management plan (GMP). These alternatives and analyses are presented to the

GMP MAJOR STEPS

Step	Planning Activity	Participation Opportunities
1	<i>Initiate Project</i> - The planning team organizes and begins to identify the project's scope and issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read this newsletter and comment on the response form. • Join the mailing list.
2	<i>Identify Planning Context</i> – Based on the park's enabling legislation, the team examines WHY the park was established and reaffirms its mission. Team members collect and analyze relevant data and public input needed to support the planning effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the public meetings. • Send or E-mail us your ideas.
3	<i>Develop and Evaluate Alternatives</i> – The planning team explores WHAT the park's future should look like and proposes a range of reasonable alternatives for achieving that vision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read project updates and newsletters and send in your comments. • Participate in public meetings and workshops.
4	<i>Prepare a Draft Document</i> – A draft GMP/EIS is published. The draft document describes the planning context, sets the foundation to attain desired future conditions, and analyzes the impacts of implementing each of the alternatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the draft plan and send in your comments. • Attend the public meetings discussing the draft plan.
5	<i>Publish Final Document</i> – Based on public comment, environmental analysis, and other information, the team revises the draft GMP/EIS and distributes a final plan to the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the final plan and summary. • Identify final thoughts and concerns.
6	<i>Implement the Approved Plan</i> – After the record of decision is issued and when funding is available, implement the approved management plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay involved in GMP implementation projects.

public for review. In the final steps, after all parties have had an opportunity to comment on the alternatives and the analysis of associated impacts, one alternative is selected and approved for implementation.

EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK - A BRIEF HISTORY

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.”

Because park lands could be acquired only through public or private donation, land acquisition proceeded slowly over the ensuing years. Through the sustained efforts of many supporters, and critical funding

provided by the Florida State legislature, the park was eventually established 13 years later. President Harry S. Truman dedicated the park on December 6, 1947.

From the original 460,000 acres at the time of the park's establishment in 1947, boundary changes expanded the park to 1.4 million acres by 1958. The Everglades National Park Protection and Expansion Act of 1989 added 109,506 acres to the East Everglades portion of the park, and brought the Northeast Shark River Slough within the park boundaries. This addition has provided the cornerstone of



long - range planning objectives to restore more natural hydrologic conditions and revitalize wildlife habitat and ecosystem health. The act authorized modifications to the Central and Southern Project to achieve delivery of appropriate water quantities into the park, and included flood protection provisions for adjacent agricultural and residential areas. The park now encompasses 1,509,000 acres, including the largest designated wilderness area (1,296,500 acres) east of the Rocky Mountains.

Ongoing public concern regarding regional development and ecosystem degradation have galvanized efforts among all governmental levels and numerous nongovernmental organizations to work towards a balanced and sustainable South Florida ecosystem. Among these efforts, the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force was established by Congress in 1996 as a consortium of federal and state agencies, local governments, and Miccosukee and Seminole tribal representatives.

The Task Force coordinates and develops consistent policies, strategies, plans, and programs to restore the South Florida ecosystem. Under authority granted by the 1992 and 1996 Water Resources Development Acts, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also received congressional approval to implement comprehensive planning for a series of water

system improvement projects to assist South Florida ecosystem restoration and preservation.

In 2000, the \$8 billion Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan was approved, resulting in unprecedented focus on Everglades National Park and the South Florida region. Numerous projects scheduled over the next 30 years will alter hydrologic conditions; infrastructure; landownership; political relationships; and local, regional, and national policy issues in and around the park. Restoration efforts have raised public awareness of issues within and around the park and changed the framework for discussion of nearly all issues affecting the park. The general management plan will consider these inter-related issues and their potential effects on park resources and conditions.

A wide variety of recreational opportunities are available to park visitors. Popular activities include wildlife viewing, nature hikes, bicycling, fishing, camping, motorboating and canoeing. The 99 mile-long Wilderness Waterway that runs through the western portion of the park offers backcountry boating and camping experiences.

Other attractions are boating in Florida Bay and the Ten Thousand Islands area near Everglades City; taking the tram tour and viewing

wildlife at Shark Valley; and participating in walks, canoe trips along trails throughout the park, and ranger-led interpretive programs.

PARK PURPOSE

Park purpose statements are 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

Park significance statements place each park within its current regional, national, and international context. They provide a means to recognize important resources or characteristics that were perhaps not recognized at the time of establishment.

Significance statements also identify the resources and values that the National Park Service is entrusted with managing and protecting. They express the importance of Everglades National Park to our natural and cultural heritage. They also provide

important direction for park resource management and preservation in accomplishing the park's purpose.

Everglades National Park is nationally and internationally important because it

- has been designated a World Heritage site, an International Biosphere Reserve, and a Wetland of International Significance by the United Nations
- supports the largest continuous stand of protected sawgrass prairie in North America
- serves as a crucial water recharge area for South Florida through the Biscayne aquifer
- provides sanctuary for many threatened and endangered species
- supports the largest mangrove ecosystem in the western hemisphere
- constitutes the largest designated wilderness east of the Rocky Mountains, providing foraging habitat and breeding grounds for migratory wading birds
- contains important cultural resources documenting at least 3,000 years of human history
- is the homeland of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida
- contains a nationally significant estuarine complex (Florida Bay), and provides a major nursery ground that supports sport and commercial fishing
- comprises the only subtropical preserve on the North American continent, presenting a major ecological transition zone where diverse temperate and tropical species mingle
- functions as a major corridor and stopover for neotropical migrant species in the South Florida ecosystem

- encompasses resources that directly support significant economic activities
- engenders inspiration for major literary and artistic works
- offers a place where recreational, educational, and inspirational activities occur in a unique subtropical wilderness

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE

Your involvement throughout the planning process is important for the success of the general management plan. Please take a moment to fill out the enclosed comment form and return it to the GMP planning team. Your thoughts and concerns provide valuable feedback on the goals and issues to be addressed in the document. For more information about the planning process and park issues, you can contact the park at:

Everglades National Park,
General Management Plan
40001 State Road 9336
Homestead, Florida 30034-6733

or log onto the Everglades
National Park home page at:
<www.nps.gov/ever/planning>.

Project newsletters will be distributed at key times in the planning process to explain and highlight what we have heard from the public and other government agencies, what the next steps in the process will be, and information on upcoming public meetings and workshops.

You will have the opportunity to participate in public meetings and workshops, hear more about our progress, and share your concerns and insights. Please plan to attend one of the initial meetings/workshops listed on the back page.

NEXT STEPS

Please provide your thoughts, ideas, and concerns by March 3rd. In the meantime, the planning team will continue to collect and analyze information about park resources, learn more about opportunities and obstacles to fulfilling park goals, and identify the diversity of resources and visitor experiences available in the park.

After we receive your comments, we will begin to identify alternative future visions for Everglades National Park. These broad descriptions of desired resource conditions and visitor experiences will form the basis for the development of alternative management strategies.



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You're invited...

We hope to see you at one of the following public open houses:

Everglades City

January 28, 2003
Everglades City School
415 School Drive
3:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Naples

January 29, 2003
Naples Beach and Golf Club
851 Gulf Shore Boulevard North
3:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Key Largo

January 30, 2003
Key Largo Holiday Inn
Mile Marker 99
3:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Miami

February 18, 2003
Florida International University
Graham Center
11200 SW 8th Steet
3:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Key Colony Beach

February 19, 2003
Key Colony Beach City Hall
Mile Marker 53
3:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Homestead

February 20, 2003
Keys Gate Golf and Tennis Club
2300 Palm Drive
3:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

