



Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS), in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), plans to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) of a proposed spreader swale pilot project at Everglades National Park (park). A description of the site and the proposed action are included in this newsletter. The National Park Service is the lead agency for this environmental assessment, and other federal, state, and local agencies are invited to participate in the environmental documentation process. The National Park Service is requesting public input on the proposed action and alternatives and the environmental topics/issues to be included in the environmental assessment.

There are uncertainties about the effectiveness of spreader swales, and because park land is required for their implementation, the National Park Service wants to ensure that they contribute to the overarching goal of improving water flow into the park. To ensure that the swales would work, two pilot swales are proposed to test their benefits to the park. The pilot project would utilize existing culverts. During the coming months, the National Park Service will evaluate and analyze the potential environmental impact of the two proposed spreader swales.

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide you with information about the project and related issues and ask for your help. We invite you to attend an open house on May 28, 2008 to learn about the proposed project, to ask questions, and share ideas, issues, and concerns. The open house will begin at 5:00 p.m., where attendees can review project material. This will be followed by a brief presentation at 6:00 p.m., and subsequently a public comment session. NPS staff will be available to discuss the project and record your ideas and

WHAT IS A SWALE?

A structural feature that distributes water from culverts more evenly across the landscape, theoretically improving water flows into the park.

input. Your opinions matter a great deal to us, and we want to hear from you. Please share your ideas, suggestions and concerns about this project with us by providing written comments and attending the open house.

Please provide your input on or before **June 11, 2008**. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dan B. Kimball

Superintendent, Everglades National Park

MEETING INFORMATION

You are invited to a public meeting to provide input on this project. The first hour will be an open house and NPS staff will be available to discuss the project, answer questions and record your comments. At 6:00 p.m. there will be a brief presentation on the project, followed by a public comment session.

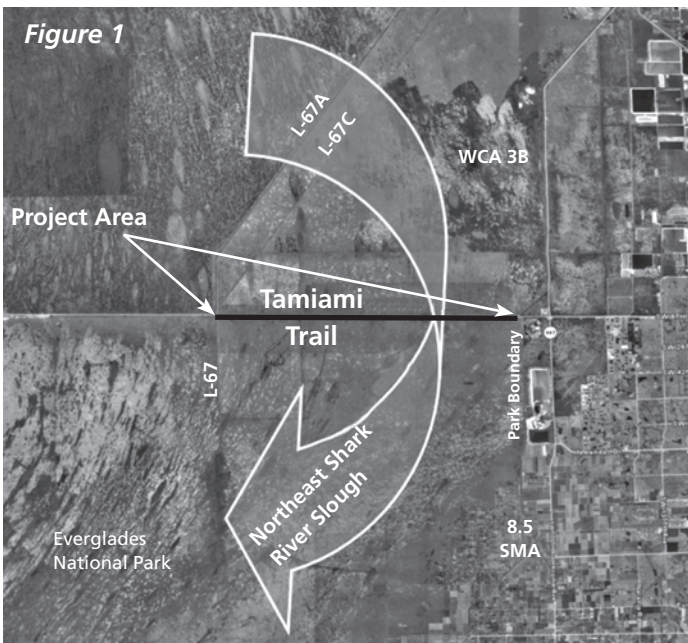
May 28, 2008, 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Florida International University
Graham University Center
11200 SW 8th St.
Miami, Florida 33199

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Florida Everglades was once a free-flowing *River of Grass* that began below Lake Okeechobee and continued south into Florida Bay. Drainage of the Everglades started in the late 1800s, mainly to provide land for agricultural production. The Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41) was constructed in 1928, and the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project (C&SF) began in 1948. The C&SF project sought to provide flood protection, protect the water supply, prevent salt water intrusion, conserve fish and wildlife, provide recreational opportunities, and aid navigation. A complex system of canals, levees, and other water control structures were constructed to meet these project purposes. However, these two projects had unintended consequences — dramatically disrupting the Everglades ecosystem by interrupting the natural flow of water across southern Florida.

The Tamiami Trail forms the northern boundary of Everglades National Park (Figure 1). The park was established in 1947 for purposes of protecting the unique flora and fauna found within the area. Although this road serves as a critical transportation connection across southern Florida, it has led to reduced flows in Shark River Slough and has adversely affected the park's natural resources.



To address ecological deterioration of the ecosystem, Congress passed The Everglades National Park Protection and Expansion Act (Act) of 1989. The Act expanded the boundaries of Everglades National Park to include approximately 109,000 acres south of the Tamiami Trail (the Expansion Area), and directed the National Park Service to preserve and restore the park's outstanding natural features. The Modified Water Deliveries (MWD) project was authorized in conjunction with the Act. One of the goals of the MWD project is to restore the historic hydrologic conditions within the Shark Slough basin by redistributing flows from west Shark Slough to northeast Shark Slough.

In June 2007 congressional committees directed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to take immediate action to increase flows to the park while not causing failures to the adjacent Tamiami Trail roadway. As part of meeting this directive, the USACE has completed a Draft Limited Reevaluation Report on the Tamiami Trail modifications. Initially the USACE recommended the construction of structural modifications to the existing culvert outlets to improve flow through the culverts. These swales were designed to move water laterally from the culvert outlet with the intent to increase the quantity of water discharged to the northeast Shark Slough.

PURPOSE AND NEED OF PROJECT

The purpose of the proposed pilot project is to determine if installation of spreader swales would be effective in contributing to the overall restoration goals of the Modified Water Deliveries Project by augmenting flow volumes and improving flow distribution into the northeast Shark Slough.

The environmental assessment will evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed swales and any reasonable alternatives that may also come forth. At the conclusion of the NEPA process, the National Park Service will make a decision on whether or not to construct the proposed pilot swales. If the pilot swales are constructed, their performance would be monitored and analyzed, to determine if additional swales should be constructed at additional culverts. An additional NEPA document would be prepared before constructing additional swales.

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

The proposed action would construct two spreader swales parallel to the Tamiami Trail located downstream of two existing culverts (Figure 2). Each spreader swale is proposed to extend laterally from the culvert outlet parallel to the Tamiami Trail 500 feet on each side of each culvert and 30 feet wide. The location of the proposed spreader swales has not yet been determined, and the final dimensions could be modified from the initially proposed configuration. All materials within the footprint of the spreader swale, such as peat and vegetation, would be excavated down to bedrock. Flows would be monitored from the existing and adjacent culverts to assess any potential effects of the swale.

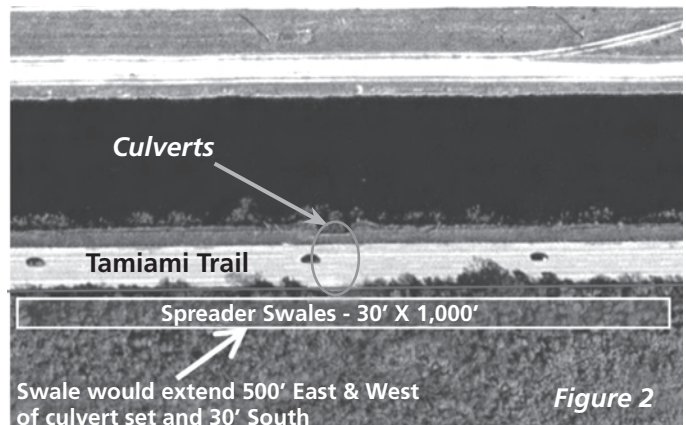


Figure 2

The no-action alternative would result in no potential increased flow through the culverts to the park until additional components of the MWD project, such as the tentatively selected 1-mile bridge, are complete.

Other alternatives developed during the scoping period will be considered and addressed in the environmental assessment.

ENVIRONMENTAL TOPICS

Potential environmental topics to be addressed in the environmental assessment include but are not limited to:

- water resources and hydrology
- biological resources
- air quality and noise
- soils and geology
- land use planning
- cultural resources
- socioeconomics
- visual quality/aesthetics
- recreational quality
- park operations

POTENTIAL ISSUES

Some potential issues identified thus far regarding the spreader swale pilot project include but are not limited to the following:

- Recent modeling performed by the Army Corps of Engineers has provided technical justification for the use of bridges to improve water deliveries to the park. There are, however, differing technical opinions on the degree of improved water delivery provided by the swales when compared to that of culverts alone.

HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE

As part of the NEPA process, the proposed project will be evaluated in an environmental assessment, which will analyze the potential environmental effects of the two spreader swales south of Tamiami Trail (U.S. 41). At this time, the Superintendent of Everglades National Park is announcing a 30-day public scoping period to solicit public comments on this project. During this period, the public is invited to identify any issues or concerns they might have with the proposed project so that the National Park Service can appropriately consider them in the environmental assessment. If the National Park Service determines that this project is likely to result in significant impacts to the human environment, the environmental assessment will be converted to an environmental impact statement.

There are a number of ways to participate in this process and make your voice heard. You may submit your comments electronically at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov>). Once on the website, select "Everglades NP" from the drop down box, then "Proposed Spreader Swales Pilot Test," and finally "Open For Public Comment." If you are unable to access this website, please submit written comments by June 11, 2008 to

National Park Service
Attention Pat Kenney
Denver Service Center, Planning Division
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225-0287

- The construction of spreader swales would alter existing wetland habitats within the park, and therefore environmental impact analysis is warranted.
- There are many federally listed threatened and endangered species within the park, and impacts to such species must be considered in the decision-making.

This list of issues is not complete. One of the primary objectives of the scoping process associated with the environmental assessment is to identify all issues and concerns that should be addressed in the environmental assessment

CONSULTATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

The National Park Service is the lead agency on the spreader swale pilot project. Thus, the National Park Service will have decision authority over implementation. The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers has been invited to serve as a cooperating agency. 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 Department of Transportation
- Florida Division of Historical Resources
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Native American tribes
- South Florida Water Management District
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Finally, we invite you to attend the public meeting on May 28, 2008, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The meeting will be held at:

Florida International University
Graham University Center
11200 SW 8th St.
Miami, Florida 33199

The first hour of the meeting will be an open house and NPS staff will be available to discuss the project, answer questions and record your comments. At 6:00 p.m. there will be a brief presentation on the project, followed by a public comment session.

Once the environmental assessment is completed, it will be made available for public review for a 30-day period.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail 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.

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Everglades National Park
 Florida

National Park Service
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Steps	Planning Activity	Dates	Public/Agency Involvement Opportunities
1	Scoping: Identify planning issues and opportunities	30-day public comment period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend public scoping meeting. Submit written comments by June 11, 2008
2	Prepare environmental assessment	June-August 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency and tribal consultations
3	Public comment period on the environmental assessment	September–October 2008 30-day public comment period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the environmental assessment and provide comments to the National Park Service. Attend public meeting
4	Federal decision anticipated	December 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review NPS decision