



CAPE SABLE CANALS DAM RESTORATION PROJECT

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 options for mitigating the impacts from failed dams on the East Cape and Homestead Canals in Cape Sable at Everglades National Park. The purpose of the project is to prevent saltwater intrusion into freshwater marshes that are habitat for the threatened American crocodile and various wading birds by restoring the failed dams on the two canals. A detailed description of the site and the range of potential alternatives that could be selected for the project 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 project and the environmental issues and alternatives to be included in the environmental assessment. During the coming months, the National Park Service will evaluate and analyze the potential environmental impact of the alternatives (including the proposed action) in the environmental assessment.

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 **October 8, 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 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 **October 23, 2008**. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

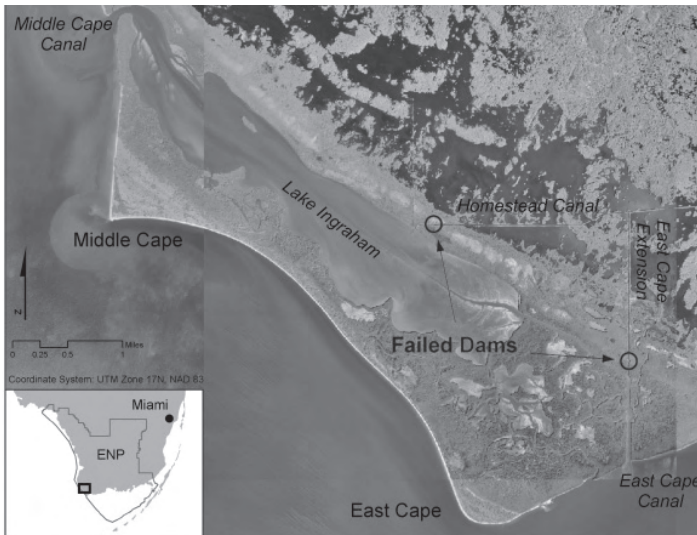
Dan B. Kimball
Superintendent, Everglades National Park

MEETING INFORMATION

You are invited to a public meeting to provide input on this project. The meeting will begin at 5:00 p.m. 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.

October 8, 2008
5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
South Dade Regional
Library
10750 SW 211th St.
Miami, Florida 33189

Figure 1. Location map.



PROJECT BACKGROUND

The East Cape and Homestead Canals on Cape Sable were constructed in the 1920's to allow draining of interior Everglades freshwater marshes and provide improved access to the backcountry. Because of the impact of these canals on the human and environmental history of the Everglades, they are considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The construction of the canals in the 1920's allowed tidal saltwater to intrude into the freshwater marshes of Cape Sable. To control the intrusion of saltwater, dams were constructed on the East Cape and Homestead Canals in the late 1950's or early 1960s.

Over the years, the dams have been repaired and replaced with the goal of managing saltwater intrusion into the freshwater marshes of the Cape Sable backcountry. However at present, both dams have failed and once again require repair so that they function effectively to protect the freshwater marshes and surrounding areas which serve as habitat for the threatened American crocodile, various wading birds and other native species.

The National Park Service contracted with URS (an engineering firm) in 2007 to conduct an engineering analysis of various options for restoration of the failed dams. The report that URS completed included four options for the East Cape Canal and five for the Homestead Canal. The URS study provided the basis for the range of potential alternatives presented in this newsletter.

PURPOSE AND NEED OF PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to prepare an environmental assessment of options for the restoration of the failed dams on the East Cape and Homestead Canals in Cape Sable, Everglades National Park.

The project is needed because

- saltwater intrusion is causing collapse and erosion of freshwater marshes north of the marl ridge that once

kept saltwater out of the system, resulting in degradation of habitat for the threatened American crocodile and various wading birds

- tidal flushing has transported silt from the marshes resulting in siltation of Lake Ingraham and other water bodies
- currents around the failed dams present safety hazards to canoeists
- motorboats using the area are going around the failed dams into designated wilderness where they are prohibited.

The environmental assessment will evaluate the potential environmental effects of the National Park Service's proposed action (to be identified at a later date) and the alternatives.

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES

The potential alternatives for restoration of the failed dams on the East Cape and Homestead Canals are presented below. The no-action alternative would take no corrective action, which would result in the canal channels continuing to widen around the existing dams and allowing saltwater to continue to intrude into freshwater marshes. This would continue to result in the degradation of freshwater marsh habitat that is important to juvenile American crocodiles (a threatened species), wading birds, and other native species.

EAST CAPE CANAL DAM

- Install additional sheet pile at the existing location
- Install a new earthen dam at the existing location
- Install additional sheet pile and an earthen dam at the existing location
- Install a new dam downstream of the existing dam using sheet piling

HOMESTEAD CANAL DAM

- Install additional sheet pile at the existing location
- Install a new earthen dam at the existing location
- Install additional sheet pile and an earthen dam at the existing location
- Install a new dam using sheet piling in a new location
- Install a new dam by placing geotubes (high strength geotextiles) downstream of the existing sheet pile dam and filling the area with sand or other suitable materials (see figure below)



Figure 2. Dam construction using geotubes

ENVIRONMENTAL TOPICS

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

- water resources and hydrology
- biological resources (including threatened and endangered species)
- 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 dam restoration project include but are not limited to:

- The repair and construction of dams 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.
- The remoteness of both dam sites and the difficulty in accessing the dam area on the East Cape and Homestead Canals had significant impact on the repair alternatives that were developed as well as the associated costs.
- All repair alternatives need to provide a stable canoe/kayak portage as part of the construction project.

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 Cape Sable canals dam restoration project. Thus, the National Park Service will have decision authority over implementation. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is a partner in this effort. 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

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 proposed action (to be identified by the NPS at a later date) and the alternatives for restoration of the dams. 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 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 "Cape Sable Canals," and finally "Open For Public Comment." If you are unable to access this website, please submit written comments by October 23, 2008 to:

National Park Service
Attention: Patrick Malone
Denver Service Center, Planning Division
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225-0287

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

South Dade Regional Library
10750 SW 211th St
Miami, Florida 33189

Once the environmental assessment is completed, it will be made available for public review for 30 days.

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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CAPE SABLE CANALS DAM RESTORATION PROJECT SCHEDULE

STEPS	PLANNING ACTIVITY	DATES	PUBLIC/AGENCY INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES
1	Scoping: Identify planning issues and opportunities (30-day public comment period)	September - October 2008	Attend public scoping meeting on October 8, 2008 Submit written comments by October 23, 2008
2	Prepare environmental assessment	October 2008 - February 2009	Agency and tribal consultations
3	Public comment on the environmental assessment (30-day public comment period)	March - April 2009	Review the environmental assessment and provide comments to the National Park Service Attend public meeting
4	Federal decision anticipated	May 2009	Review NPS decision

Thank you for your interest in Everglades National Park!