



Rehabilitation of Parkwide Water and Wastewater Systems

Civic Engagement



Potable Water Treatment Plant, Flamingo Area

The National Park Service is beginning the Everglades (EVER) Rehabilitation of Parkwide Water and Wastewater Systems project. This project focuses on the need to improve and/or replace potable water treatment and distribution systems, and wastewater collection and treatment systems at key areas across the park. Those areas include Shark Valley, Loop Road, Main Entrance/Royal Palm, and Flamingo. The existing systems are critically deficient, expensive to maintain, and many are only partially operable or at the end of their service life.

The goal of this project is to maintain the health and safety of visitors at the park and improve their

experiences, while also protecting the unique ecosystems of the Everglades. The updates to systems are aimed to improve efficiency and operations, provide more resiliency to the impacts of climate change, and maximize the lifecycle of these systems. The updates to the water systems would sustain the park's current infrastructure; this project is not an expansion of infrastructure. This project is supported by The National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) established in 2020 by the Great American Outdoors Act to reduce the maintenance backlog on Federal lands.

You're Invited!

We invite you to attend a public meeting to learn more about the project and provide comments:

In-Person Public Meeting

March 7 @ 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. EST
William F. Dickinson Community Center
1601 N. Krome Avenue

Virtual Public Meeting

March 8 @ 1 p.m. EST
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89906565739>

Please see the Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) project page (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/watersystems>) for updates on the specific date and time for both meetings. Both the in-person and virtual meetings will present the same information.

In-Person Public Meeting

March 7 @
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. EST

William F. Dickinson
Community Center,
Homestead, FL

Learn About the Project and Join the Conversation

The purpose of these meetings is to explain the project in detail and allow the opportunity for the community to ask questions or voice any concerns. When you register at the meeting, questions will be collected and organized so our NPS staff can address as many as possible in the time allotted. There will be a presentation, which provides the purpose and need for the system updates, describes the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and Environmental Assessment (EA) preparation, outlines potential system improvements within each of the park areas, and presents a preliminary construction time frame. Following the presentation and formal Q&A, NPS staff will be available for additional questions.

Virtual Public Meeting

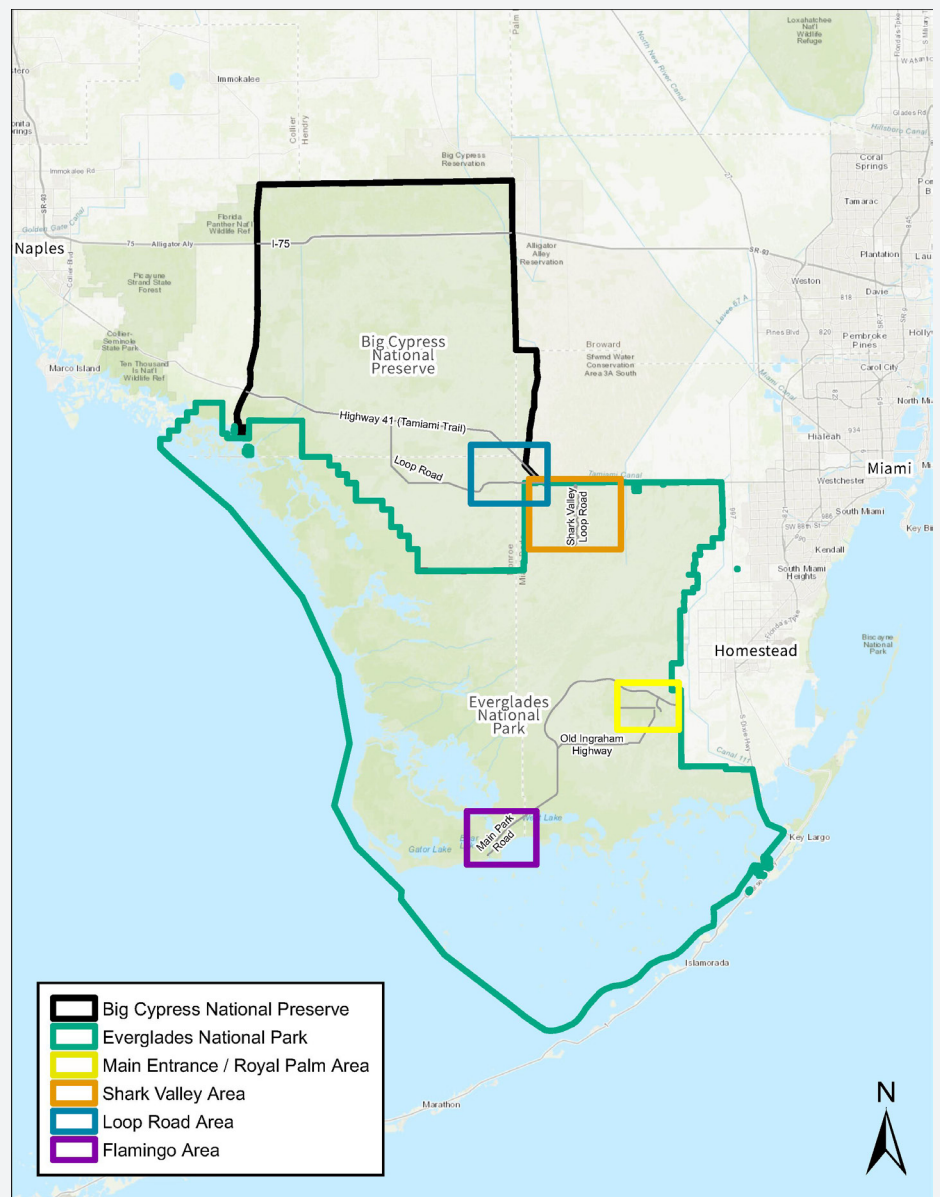
March 8 @
1 p.m. EST

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89906565739>



Project Overview: Rehabilitation of Parkwide Water and Wastewater Systems

This project includes the evaluation, replacement and/or rehabilitation of a variety of water and wastewater systems including, but not limited to, potable water distribution systems, septic systems and wastewater collection systems, wastewater treatment plants, reverse osmosis potable water treatment plants, water storage tanks, and well houses. The project area consists of several sites within the Flamingo Area, Shark Valley Area, the Main Entrance/Royal Palm Area, and the Loop Road Area.





Purpose and Need of the Project

Project Purpose

The purpose of the proposed project is to address the physical and operational deficiencies of the Everglades National Park potable water and wastewater systems by improving the systems' efficiency, operation, safety, and climate resiliency.

Project Need

The current potable water and wastewater infrastructure across Everglades National Park is old and in need of substantial repair and upgrade. The existing systems are critically deficient, expensive to maintain, and many are only partially operable or at the end of their service life. The worn network of buried pipes and equipment frequently require emergency repairs due to leaks and failures, especially at buried junctions where original and newer piping hardware connect. The potable water systems have dated well equipment and distribution lines.

Rising groundwater levels and wide ranges in seasonal use are causing problems with aging septic systems, leach fields, and wastewater

treatment facilities. Use of septic systems at the end of their service life risk system failure and contamination of the sensitive Everglades ecosystem. Additionally, infrastructure, particularly near the ocean, can corrode/deteriorate due to saltwater, high UV index, and temperature of the Everglades.

Everglades National Park connects more than one million annual visitors from all over the world to Florida's protected ecosystem. The park encompasses over 1.5 million acres of land and water with eight distinct land habitats plus the marine ecosystem and Florida Bay, making it one of the world's most diverse ecosystems. The park is an essential breeding ground for more than 400 species of birds and home to more than 20 rare, endangered, and threatened species. Reliable, well-maintained and properly designed water and wastewater systems are essential to the NPS meeting its dual obligations of protecting the unique environment of the Everglades, while also enabling public access and recreation in the park.



Planning Process

NEPA requires all federal agencies to consider and document the potential impacts of management actions on the human environment. The NPS Organic Act of 1916 directs NPS to both conserve park resources and provide for their use and enjoyment. Both Acts are used by NPS to plan and make informed decisions that help protect park resources and values.

During the NEPA planning process, members of the public and agencies have the opportunity to provide input on issues, concerns, or opportunities related to the proposed project. Following the civic engagement period, this input, along with data gathering and facilities assessments, will be used to inform the design of infrastructure improvements and documented in the Environmental Assessment (EA).

An EA is a NEPA document that evaluates the likely environmental consequences resulting from a proposed action. The EA will address the

project background, the purpose and need for the proposed project, and the alternatives considered. The EA will also document the existing environmental conditions and potential impacts of implementing those actions carried forward for further review. The draft design plans and the EA will be presented for public review and comment. The EA is anticipated to be available for review in Fall 2023.





Civic Engagement Public Comment Period

The public comment period for this project is open through March 20, 2023. This comment period is an information gathering process through which the public is invited to express views on the information, issues, and alternatives that need to be addressed in the EA.

We invite you to attend a public meeting to learn more about the project and provide comments; please see our PEPC website for the most up to date information on specific dates. Comments on the project may be submitted electronically at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/WaterSystems>.

Written comments may be mailed to:
Superintendent
Attn: Rehabilitation of Parkwide Water and Wastewater Systems
Everglades National Park
40001 State Road 9336, Homestead, FL 33034

Mailed comments must be postmarked by March 20, 2023.

If you would like more information or have questions related to this project, please contact Adrian Valdes at 305-242-7765 or Adrian_Valdes@nps.gov.

Thank you for your interest in the Rehabilitation of Parkwide Water and Wastewater Systems project!



Observation Tower Restroom, Shark Valley



Next Steps and Schedule

The following schedule highlights the next steps in the Everglades Rehabilitation of Parkwide Water and Wastewater Systems process:

<u>Milestone</u>	<u>Targeted Schedule</u>	<u>Opportunities for Public Input</u>
Civic engagement	February – March 2023	Review newsletter, attend a public meeting, and provide your comments at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/WaterSystems
NPS analyzes public comments and begins infrastructure rehabilitation designs	Spring 2023	
NPS prepares design alternatives and initiates environmental compliance	Summer 2023	
Public review of draft design plans/EA	Fall 2023	Review draft design plans /EA and provide your comments at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/WaterSystems
Decision document	December 2023	See final designs and decision document at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/WaterSystems

Before including your address, telephone number, electronic mail address, or other personally identifiable information in your comments, you should be aware that your entire comment (including your personally identifiable information) may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us to withhold your personally identifiable information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.