

Chapter 10: Wilderness

Values and Wilderness Designations

Much has been written over the years about the wilderness character of Everglades National Park. The NPS points with justifiable pride to section 4 of the 1934 Everglades authorizing act:

The said area 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 the area.

Section 4 is the basis for the often-repeated assertion that Everglades was the first national park set aside for its biological values. As has been shown in chapter 3, this language was not the NPS's idea, but placed into the legislation by wilderness advocates outside the Service. A number of motivations underpinned the emergence of a vocal wilderness protection movement in the early 1930s. This movement led to the inclusion of section 4 in the act and to the formation of the Wilderness Society less than a year after Everglades was authorized. As historian Paul Sutter has demonstrated, the major concern of wilderness proponents was that modern civilization, especially the motorcar, was compromising the nation's primitive or primeval natural areas. Dear to the heart of Robert Sterling Yard, Aldo Leopold, and the other Wilderness Society founders was guaranteeing the opportunity to experience a natural environment of solitude, quiet, and inspiration for a week or more at a time, with no intrusions from the modern world. In their conception, wilderness areas had to be relatively large and remote from highways and railways. This desire had strong aesthetic and spiritual aspects as well as romantic undertones of a man proving his mettle by being able to survive in the wild. The automobile and uncontrolled road building were seen as the greatest threats to this wilderness experience. The extensive program of road building and other development that the NPS was undertaking with CCC labor in the 1930s only added to the concerns of wilderness advocates.⁵⁰²

The idea of wilderness areas as biological preserves or laboratories for scientific inquiry was present in the thinking of wilderness advocates, but it was a minor note. As Sutter puts it, "ecological concerns were not a central causative agent or a major component in the [Wilderness Society] founders' definition of modern wilderness."⁵⁰³ The interest in biological preserves came largely from a different quarter: the second

⁵⁰² Sutter, 241-242; John C. Miles, *Wilderness in National Parks: Playground or Preserve* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 72-73.

⁵⁰³ Sutter, 14.

generation of American ecologists. As early as 1918, the Ecological Society of America formed a committee to look into setting aside public land as research reserves. Victor Shelford, the society's first president, in 1933 proposed a system of nature sanctuaries "containing unmodified assemblage[s] of organisms." These were to be set aside for scientific study; the largest and most unmodified (dubbed first class sanctuaries) would be off-limits to visitors without scientific or educational goals. These sanctuaries would allow scientists to study natural process and also serve as controls—places where ecological forces could operate largely uninfluenced by humans—making it easier to track and evaluate changes elsewhere. While the wilderness advocates largely sought to set aside areas for a special kind of visitor experience, the ecologists wanted sanctuaries for scientific study. The wilderness advocates were more numerous and better organized. In the 1930s, ecology was a young science, and its insights had barely penetrated the thinking of leaders of major conservation organizations.⁵⁰⁴

In general, the NPS in this period saw no need to specifically define wilderness areas in parks for any reason, inspirational or scientific. The Service took a stance that can be characterized as wilderness by default; any areas not developed for visitor use or park administration constituted wilderness. The NPS saw this position as fully consonant with the mandate in the 1916 Organic Act to leave areas unimpaired for future generations. This approach left the Service free to extend development into virtually any park area if its needs changed. An ecologically based approach to development, although hinted at in the views of scientists in the early 1930s, would only begin to gain ground in the 1970s. Under this approach, large natural areas would first be carefully studied to determine the habitat needs of species and the sizes of viable ecosystems, and only after that would development plans be made. Development then would more likely avoid damaging natural processes. As ecology advanced as a science and pressure built to enact a national wilderness act, the NPS gradually moved away from its wilderness-by-default position and came to accept that wilderness areas needed more positive protection and more active management to prevent their degradation.⁵⁰⁵

In developing Everglades, the NPS largely applied its long-standing wilderness-by-default policies. It did not ignore the wilderness mandate in the authorizing act, but accommodating the motorized visitor was the main determinant in its decisions concerning the route of the main park road and development at Flamingo. The NPS was also under strong pressure from state officials and tourist interests to develop the park rapidly. Even if it had possessed the resources and the will, it did not have the luxury of waiting for wildlife studies in advance of park development. Park

⁵⁰⁴ Miles, 61-62; Victor Shelford, "The Preservation of Natural Biotic Communities," *Ecology* 14/2 (April 1933):240-245.

⁵⁰⁵ Miles, 35, 53, 65, 81. There are minor exceptions to this broad picture. In 1927, the NPS designated a seven-square-mile portion of Yosemite National Park as a research reserve. Miles, 61.

managers relied heavily on the argument that the vast majority of Everglades National Park would be preserved as wilderness solely as a result of the difficulty of access. NPS wildlife biologist George Wright made this argument as early as 1931, before Everglades had been authorized.⁵⁰⁶ During Mission 66, the NPS argued that carefully planned development actually helped preserve wilderness values. Associate Director Hillary Tolson expressed this view in 1960:

It is basic in our management of the Parks and preservation of their wilderness that reasonable access be provided for the public. We believe that the Flamingo development meets this situation and that a well designed developed area such as this is an aid to protection.⁵⁰⁷

As swamp buggies, airboats, and inexpensive outboard motors became increasingly common, the wilderness-by-default argument became harder to maintain. Leading national conservation organizations also began leaning harder on the Service to revise its wilderness policies.

The 1964 Wilderness Act

Everglades National Park was developed during the very years that conservationists, led by Howard Zahniser of the Wilderness Society, were pressing Congress to establish a national wilderness preservation system across all federal lands. After World War II, the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, and the National Parks Association increasingly coordinated their activities. The Sierra Club began a series of biennial wilderness conferences in 1949. These conference brought agency land managers and conservationists together to discuss a wide range of wilderness issues. From these meetings emerged the first version of a wilderness act, largely drafted by Zahniser and introduced in Congress in 1957. Seeing the act as a threat to its administrative authority and prerogatives, the NPS under Director Conrad Wirth fought to exclude the Service from its provisions, although a few in the Service quietly supported it from the beginning. In addition, the Service in the 1950s was preoccupied with its ambitious Mission 66 building program. At the heart of Mission 66 was the idea that accommodating visitors came first, and areas not needed for development amounted to “wilderness by default.” It took some time to build support in Congress for the act, and some changes

⁵⁰⁶ Wright noted, “The visitor . . . will be absolutely confined to the roads and the developed areas. . . . These are the reasons, then, why it seems to us that a park, if established, could be opened up so as to make adequate provision for the appreciation of the Everglades . . . and still further conservation of the unique flora and fauna to the utmost.” George M. Wright to Ernest F. Coe, Oct. 9, 1931, SLH papers.

⁵⁰⁷ Assoc. Dir. Hillary Tolson to Mrs. George P. Milmine, Dec. 2, 1960, NARA Ph, RG 79, 79-66-A-661.

were negotiated as early versions went down to defeat. The endorsement of President Kennedy and his Secretary of the Interior Stuart Udall changed the political equation, and President Johnson signed the Wilderness Act into law in September 1964. By this point, the act had the reluctant support of the NPS.⁵⁰⁸

The Wilderness Act created the National Wilderness Preservation System. It defined wilderness and prohibited certain uses within wilderness areas. The act defined wilderness as:

an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation.

The act banned permanent roads and motorized vehicles, including motorboats, from wilderness areas. It directed the Secretary of the Interior to evaluate all roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more in units of the National Park System within ten years of the act's passage. The secretary was then to recommend to the president those areas deemed suitable for designation as wilderness. Each proposed designation was to be advertised in the Federal Register, with one or more public hearings held before the recommendation was put in final form. The president was then to forward Interior's wilderness proposals to Congress; Congress made the final decisions on what was added to the Wilderness Preservation System. Further, congressional action was needed to remove federal acreage from the wilderness system.⁵⁰⁹

The NPS understood that the 1964 act required a complete revamping of its approach to wilderness. Under the 1964 act, the NPS for the first time had a prescribed definition of wilderness to apply and a mandate to designate wilderness. Once designated, wilderness areas would no longer be available for development and many other park purposes. In essence, the NPS was losing its ability to vaguely consider most of a park wilderness until it needed a particular tract for another purpose.⁵¹⁰

As a number of historians have shown, the NPS was slow in fulfilling its mandate under the act. Its task was large; some 57 units within the system had roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more and each would have to be studied. The delays were also partly a result of cumbersome procedures, bureaucratic inertia, and the NPS's initial insistence

508 Miles, 120-126, 151-156; Mark W. T. Harvey, *Wilderness Forever: Howard Zahniser and the Path to the Wilderness Act* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 189-190, 204-209.

509 Wilderness Act, P. L. 88-577, Sep. 3, 1964. Since the act's passage, historians, led by William Cronon, have shown how problematic it can be to define wilderness as something apart from humans, especially as we learn more about the extensive management of landscapes by Native Americans before Europeans set foot in the Americas. An exploration of these contradictions is beyond the scope of this park history, but the reader should bear in mind that wilderness is a contested term.

510 Miles, 51.

that wilderness reviews be coordinated with the master planning process in each park. Master plans in this period typically required two to three years to complete. The change from a Democratic to a Republican administration in January 1969 also slowed things down, because new political appointees in Interior wanted to review existing wilderness studies. Still, it was clear that the NPS moved very slowly because it understood that a congressional designation was permanent and would limit its managerial discretion. Groups like the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society criticized the Service's first attempts to set guidelines for wilderness reviews, in particular its intention to place large "buffer zones" around developed areas and roads. Early draft wilderness reviews, for example, placed wilderness boundaries as much as a mile away from park roads, creating large buffers that were outside of the wilderness. A scathing article in the Spring 1970 issue of *Living Wilderness* and pressure from Congress caused the agency to move a bit faster.⁵¹¹ Wilderness recommendations began to emerge from Interior, and Congress made the first designations of NPS wilderness in October 1970, six years after the passage of the Wilderness Act.⁵¹²

Designating Park Wilderness

Early internal discussions on designating wilderness areas in Everglades National Park are not well documented. The NPS formed an Everglades National Park Wilderness Study Team in late 1966, but no recommendations from this group have been located. A year later, in December 1967, The Wilderness Society held a two-day "Wilderness Workshop on Everglades National Park" in South Florida. NPS staff and representatives of the Florida Audubon Society and other interested groups attended. Topics under discussion included how much of a buffer to provide along roads and around developed areas like Flamingo, how close to the park boundary the wilderness boundary should be, and whether areas that might be developed in the future should be excluded from wilderness. At this early stage, buffers of a one-half mile to a mile on each side of the main road were under consideration. Another concern was the easy access by motorboat to many areas of the park. Park collaborator Frank C. Craighead noted that "This Park will be difficult to classify into the standards set up for Wilderness Areas. It is [so] readily accessible through many waterways that isolation of any sizable part will be a real problem." Most workshop participants urged that large

511 Sellars, 211, 280; Ernest M. Dickerman, "The National Park Wilderness Reviews (Lost in the Wilderness)," *Living Wilderness* 34/100 (Spring 1970):40-49.

512 The designations were in Petrified Forest National Park, Arizona, and Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho, Oct. 23, 1973. An Act to Designate Certain Lands as Wilderness, P.L. 91-504, Oct. 23, 1970.

wilderness areas be established so as to prevent any future park development beyond areas already affected.⁵¹³

Following the workshop, wilderness designation fell lower on the priority list for a couple of years while park managers focused on fighting the jetport in the Big Cypress Swamp (see chapter 9). Believing the NPS was laggard in designating wilderness and seeking less development in the parks, the National Parks & Conservation Association (NPCA) commissioned several independent wilderness plans. In early 1970, the association had land use planning consultant William J. Hart prepare a wilderness plan for Everglades. Hart believed that the vast majority of the park should be wilderness, with only roads and developed areas excluded. He wanted Florida Bay included, subject to somewhat relaxed standards. Acknowledging that motorboats would have to be allowed in the bay, Hart believed that damage to natural values could be limited by strict controls, including restricting larger motorboats to specified dredged channels. Along the Gulf Coast, he recommended that motorboats be allowed to penetrate only to specified access points, with inland waters largely reserved for nonmotorized craft. In transmitting Hart's plan to Director Hartzog, NPCA President Anthony Wayne Smith noted that the 1965 version of the park's master plan included considerably more development than the association considered appropriate. He saw an expansive wilderness designation as an ideal way to prevent excessive development.⁵¹⁴

Between 1972 and 1974, the NPS rushed to complete its wilderness reviews by September 1974, as the act required. In August 1972, the Service produced a preliminary draft of a wilderness study for Everglades. Minor changes were made to this draft before it was printed and distributed in January 1974. The study proposed two wilderness areas aggregating 764,700 acres, 54 percent of the park. One unit of 616,000 acres embraced almost all of the park west and north of the main road; a second unit of 148,700 acres embraced much of the area east and south of the road. Some 140 miles of park road and all developed areas were excluded from wilderness, including almost all of Long Pine Key. Included in unit 2 were all of the keys in Florida Bay, but the bay itself was not included. Almost all of the large bodies of water and navigable passages on the Gulf side were excluded from wilderness. Slated for use by motorless boats only were several lakes—Long, Cuthbert, Henry, Little Henry, the Lungs, Monroe, Middle, and Seven Palms—and some streams entering Florida Bay, such as Taylor River and McCormick, Davis, East, and Mud Creeks. Because motor roads are not

513 Ernest M. Dickerman, TWS, to Stewart M. Brandberg, Exec. Dir, TWS, Nov. 4, 1967, Discussion Points for Wilderness Workshop on Everglades National Park, Dec. 16-17, 1967, Frank C. Craighead to Stewart M. Brandberg, TWS, Sep. 28, 1967, TWS papers.

514 Anthony Wayne Smith, president, NPCA, to Dir. Hartzog, Feb. 24, 1970, HFC; "The NPCA Wilderness Plan Series," *National Parks Magazine*, Sep. 1971, 29. Ideas about limiting motorboat access in Florida Bay would re-emerge in the discussions surrounding the park's general management plan (see chapter 26).

allowed in wilderness, the study called for management roads between Flamingo and Snake Bight and from Flamingo to Lake Ingraham to be converted to trails. The wilderness boundary was set 300 feet from the center line of major roads within the park and 150 feet from the center line of lesser roads. This was considerably closer than in some of the preliminary planning which contemplated road buffers of one-half mile or even a full mile from the center line. The study identified 84,700 acres of potential wilderness. The potential wilderness included portions of the northwest extension still subject to retained mineral rights and inholdings in the Hole-in-the-Donut that were in the process of being added to the park. Joe Bay and Little Madeira Bay were identified as potential wilderness because they were still open to commercial fishing. It was the park's intention to make them wilderness if commercial fishing ended in future.⁵¹⁵

The park held public hearings on the wilderness proposal in Homestead and Naples in late May 1974. In presenting the study, Superintendent Jack Stark emphasized that the plan "would have little impact on the typical visitor . . . as the areas most frequented by visitors are not placed in wilderness." Some 200 attended the hearings and the park received a total of 1,857 oral and written comments. Environmental groups strongly supported the proposal; most of them, led by the Wilderness Society, urged that the seabed of Florida Bay be added to the wilderness and that much of the potential wilderness, Joe Bay and Little Madeira Bay in particular, be added to the designation. Commercial fishermen, some sports fishermen, and some motorboating groups thought the plan was too restrictive. Most objections centered on the waters that were to be closed to motorboats. Some long-time local users saw the restrictions as favoring an elite group of visitors. As Captain Jack Glassmyer put it: "I contend if you close these areas to motorboats you will be in effect actually closing them to almost all the people." Following the hearings, Gary Soucie of the Wilderness Society remarked, "Why it has taken the National Park Service so long to prepare a wilderness proposal for an essentially wilderness park must remain something of a mystery to me," but he was delighted that the proposal was moving forward.⁵¹⁶

The NPS revised its proposal in the wake of the hearings. After some discussions with the state of Florida, it decided that it could make the submerged lands of Florida Bay part of the wilderness while excluding the water column above them, thus not interfering with the long-established use of the bay by motorboaters. Florida Bay's bed became wilderness unit 4. The submerged lands of Joe Bay and Little Madeira

⁵¹⁵ NPS, *Wilderness Study, Everglades National Park*, Preliminary Draft, Aug. 1972, HFC; NPS, *Preliminary Wilderness Study, Everglades National Park* (Denver: NPS DCS, January 1974); Jack Stark, "One Voice," *The Florida Naturalist*, June 1974, 22-23.

⁵¹⁶ 38 Fed. Reg. 13566 (Apr. 15, 1974); Jack Stark, Statement on Wilderness Study, Apr. 1974, EVER 22965; "Anglers Tell Glades Planner Plan Would Cast People Out," *Miami Herald*, May 9, 1974; Transcript of Hearing on Wilderness Proposal, ENP, May 23, 1974, EVER 42242, ser. XIII; Gary A. Soucie, TWS, to David D. Thompson Jr., RDSE, May 30, 1974, TWS papers; NPS, *Wilderness Recommendation, Everglades National Park* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, Aug. 1974).

Bay were included in unit 4, thus removing them from the potential wilderness category. The other major change was the addition of 2,400 acres of pine upland on Long Pine Key as wilderness unit 3. This required the conversion of two automobile nature trail loops to a bicycling/hiking trail. The Service prepared an environmental impact statement (EIS) to accompany the plan and published its revised recommendation in August 1974. It proposed four wilderness units, totaling 1,296,500 acres, nearly 93 percent of the park (figure 10-1). These were the units:

Unit 1	148,700 acres – Taylor Slough drainage and keys
Unit 2	616,000 acres – The Ten Thousand Islands, Whitewater Bay
Unit 3	2,400 acres – Pinelands
Unit 4	529,300 – submerged marine lands. ⁵¹⁷

Interior forwarded the Everglades wilderness proposal to the president on September 21, 1974, who passed it on to Congress without changes. Because so many recommendations went to Congress toward the end of the ten-year period, a backlog was created. Everglades missed a 1976 omnibus bill, but was included with 11 long-pending wilderness designations in another omnibus bill, the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (see appendix A).⁵¹⁸ In reporting the bill out, the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs directed the secretary of the interior to look into the effects on wildlife of motorboat access to wilderness areas on the park's west side.⁵¹⁹

Richard Ring, Everglades superintendent from 1992 to 2000, believed that naming the Everglades wilderness for Marjory Stoneman Douglas would be a fitting honor. He had his policy aide, Brien Culhane, work with the WASO legislative branch on drafting legislation. In 1997, Congress redesignated the Everglades wilderness as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness to “commemorate the vision and leadership shown by Mrs. Douglas in the protection of the Everglades and the establishment of the Everglades National Park” (see appendix A).⁵²⁰ At the time, Douglas was 106 years old and largely confined to her bed. Sandy Dayhoff, park education coordinator, visited Mrs. Douglas at her home to tell her of this honor. As Dayhoff puts it, “It was a

517 NPS, *Wilderness Recommendation*.

518 Omnibus bills for the NPS were an innovation of Congressman Phillip Burton (D-California). By combining many new authorizations, boundary changes, and base funding increases affecting dozens of congressional districts in a single bill, Burton assured broad support.

519 Acting Asst. Secy., DOI, to President, Sep. 24, 1974, TWS papers; P. L. 95-625 (92 Stat. 3470), Nov. 10, 1978; House Subcommittee on National Parks and Insular Affairs, *Legislative History of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978*, Dec. 1978; H.R. Report 95-1165 (1978), 73-74.

520 Sec. 3, Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness and Ernest F. Coe Visitor Center Designation Act, P. L. 105-82, Nov. 13, 1997. It takes nothing away from Douglas's tireless efforts on behalf of the Everglades from the late 1960s on to point out that her role in the *establishment* of the park was slight.

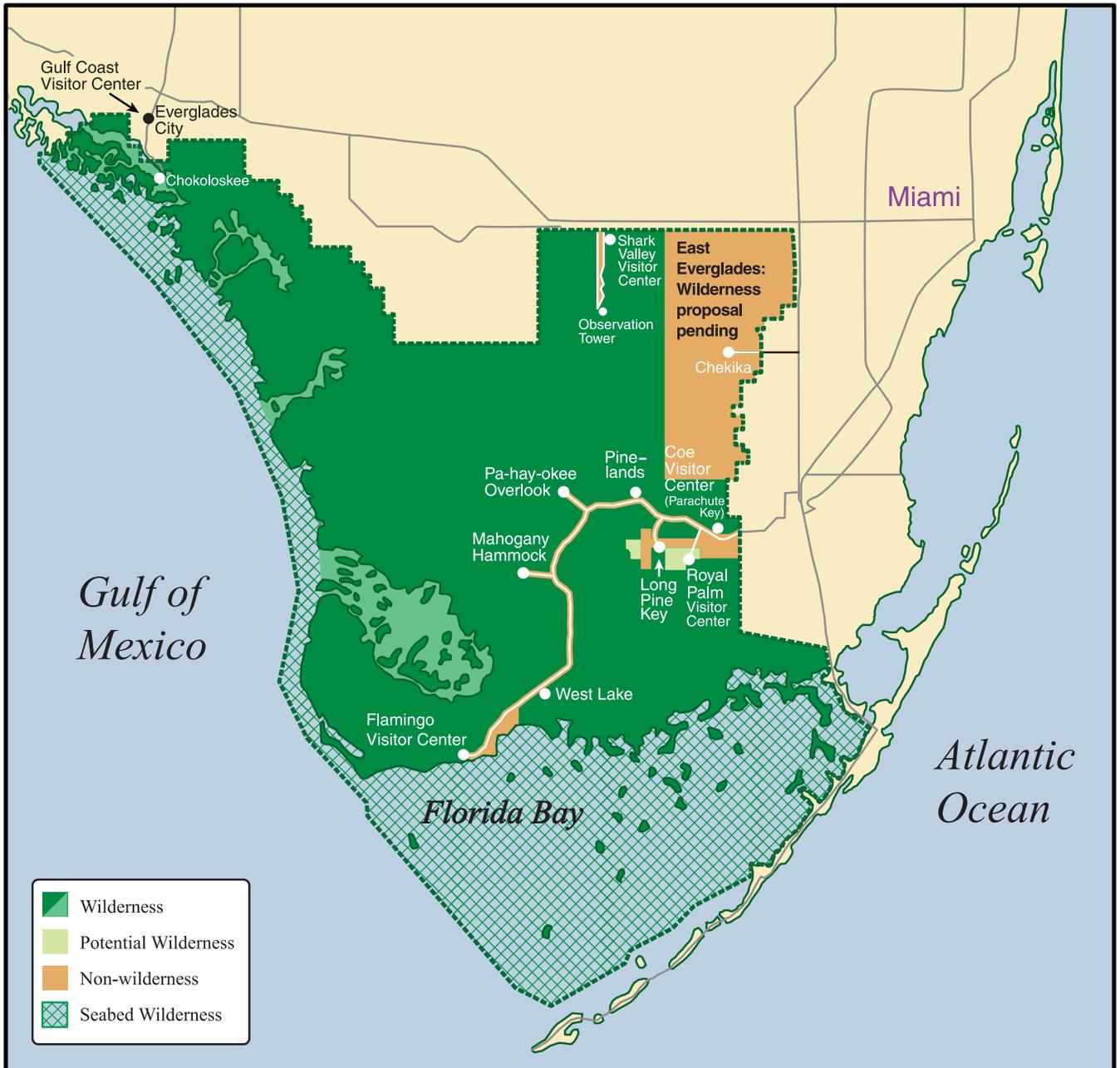


Figure 10-1 Everglades Wilderness Areas

very emotional thing for Marjory. She said, ‘Oh my, oh my!’ It was wonderful that before she passed, she got to hear that – she understood what had been done for her.’⁵²¹

Wilderness Evaluation of the East Everglades Addition

With the addition of the East Everglades, the park was required to do a wilderness study for the 109,506 acres added to the park. In 2006, the East Everglades wilderness study was folded into the park’s general management plan (GMP) process, the public scoping for which began in 2002 (see chapter 27). The park’s initial assessment was that about 106,000 acres (97 per cent) of the East Everglades addition were suitable for designation as wilderness or potential wilderness. Areas excluded from consideration as wilderness were the Chekika developed area, developed areas (including airboat operations) along the Tamiami Trail, and some roads. As planning proceeded it became clear that Congress’s intent was for private and commercial airboat operations to continue in the East Everglades. Because airboats are incompatible with wilderness values, areas where they operated were excluded from wilderness consideration. The preferred alternative in the park’s draft GMP calls for 80,100 acres to be declared wilderness. Another 9,900 acres would be potential wilderness, to be designated wilderness when incompatible uses end. The remaining 19,500 acres are proposed as frontcountry. About 12,000 of these acres are in the northwestern portion of the addition, where the long-standing use of airboats would continue (see chapter 23). Once the GMP is approved, a wilderness recommendation for the East Everglades will be developed for ultimate action by Congress.⁵²²

Managing Wilderness

When Congress established the Everglades wilderness in 1978, the park created a backcountry management function within the resource management division. Resource management then took the lead in developing a backcountry management plan (BMP). Approved in 1981, the plan was prepared by Backcountry Management Technician Jonathan Poynter and Resource Management Specialist James Holland. The BMP devoted some attention to administrative use of the backcountry (fire management, law enforcement, scientific research, and resource management), but focused primarily on visitor use of the backcountry. The plan stated: “The overriding

⁵²¹ Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness and Ernest F. Coe Visitor Center Designation Act, P. L. 105-82 (111 Stat. 1541), 1997; Sandy Dayhoff, interview by author, Jan. 24, 2012.

⁵²² NPS, *Everglades National Park General Management Plan/East Everglades Wilderness Study Newsletter* 4, May 2007, <http://www.nps.gov/ever/parkmgmt/upload/GMP%20news4.pdf>; *Draft GMP*, 85-86, 164.

management objective is to provide the visitor with a variety of wilderness experiences without incurring significant resource deterioration.” The plan referenced the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, but NPS policies in 1981 did not require the preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement in conjunction with such a plan. The plan omitted a number of features that would today be required in a wilderness management plan. It did not, for example, include a statement of desired future condition or provide much detail on how impacts on wilderness would be monitored and evaluated. It depended on the existing resource management function, stating that resource management “will work with each district ranger in monitoring and evaluating the impacts of the backcountry program as it affects visitors, endangered species, and the park resources.” It seems clear that “backcountry program” largely meant backcountry visitor use.⁵²³

Regarding administrative uses, the plan recognized that airboats and helicopters were often needed for park staff to carry out their duties and cited NPS policy that such use would be allowed only when “necessary to meet the minimum needs of management to achieve the purpose of the area.” All administrative use of motorized vehicles in the Everglades backcountry, except for emergency law enforcement, search and rescue, and fire suppression, would require prior approval. Each park division was to include information on any projects requiring such use in its annual budget plan. Approval by the superintendent of the programs in the budget plans constituted approval of the use of motorized vehicles.⁵²⁴

Over the years, park managers have worked to balance appropriate visitor access and enjoyment with wilderness preservation. The park banned glades buggies and airboats from the park in 1949. In 1955, the Service prohibited reckless boat operation and established a 40 mph speed limit for motorboats. In 1994, before the NPS had a national policy, the park instituted a ban on personal watercraft in park waters. An important measure included in the park’s 2013 draft GMP is the creation of a poll-and-troll zone in approximately one-third of Florida Bay. In this zone, all boat motors except small trolling motors would be banned, in order to enhance wilderness values.⁵²⁵

In the late 1980s, park managers decided that it was time to begin work on a true wilderness management plan, and a committee was formed to work on one. It quickly became apparent that the scoping and preparation of such a plan, including coordinating public involvement, was a huge task. The group did not complete a plan but evolved into a body that met periodically, largely to look at proposed activity in the wilderness. The committee relied on the EIS prepared in the 1970s at the time of

⁵²³ Everglades Backcountry Use and Policy, circa 1985, EVER 42242, Ser. VI, Subser. A, Subser. 2; Everglades National Park, *Backcountry Management Plan*, July 1981, 1, 6.

⁵²⁴ ENP, *Backcountry Management Plan*, 24, 29.

⁵²⁵ 14 Fed. Reg. 3748 (July 7, 1949); 20 Fed. Reg. 2663 (Apr. 21, 1955); 59 Fed. Reg. 58,781-58,786 (Nov. 15, 1994); *Draft GMP*, 69.

the wilderness designation, Servicewide wilderness policies, and the 1981 BMP. The committee has evolved into a multidisciplinary committee that now meets monthly. It applies “minimum requirements” analysis, a two-step process that first determines whether an action is appropriate or necessary, including whether it can be accomplished elsewhere than in park wilderness. If the action meets that test, the committee goes on to decide whether the tools, equipment, and methods proposed are the minimum necessary to achieve the management objective and are the least damaging to wilderness values.⁵²⁶

With the increase in funding for research that came with the 2000 enactment of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, requests to conduct research and monitoring in the park increased substantially. These requests came both from government researchers and academic scientists. Given that 90 percent of the park is wilderness and that monitoring and testing sites often can be reached only by using helicopters and airboats, requests for the use of such equipment in wilderness also grew. In consequence, there are five to six thousand helicopter landings in park wilderness annually. This has led to tension between some researchers and some members of the park’s wilderness committee. Some observers have asked whether the park is rigorously questioning whether some activities might not be pursued with equal success outside its boundary. These observers believe park managers at times take “necessity” for granted and press for an immediate move to minimum-tools analysis. Some have also pointed out that temporary structures erected for research are not always removed when the project is completed. Scientists and technicians tend to counter that they are sensitive to wilderness values in planning their projects, avoiding visitor-use areas and testing the effects of activities on wildlife beforehand. They also mostly believe that disturbances to wildlife and habitat by things like helicopter landings are temporary.⁵²⁷ These differences in outlook on the appropriate application of wilderness policies and guidelines likely will never be definitively resolved.

The park’s draft GMP includes statements of park policy on wilderness, notably that: “In designated wilderness, natural and cultural resource management activities and research and other administrative uses are consistent with NPS wilderness management policies.” The document also reaffirms the park’s commitment to the minimum requirements concept. To help achieve the goals for designated wilderness, the GMP commits the park to developing a wilderness stewardship plan “to guide

⁵²⁶ Skip Snow, interview with author, Oct. 5, 2011; Chapter 6: Wilderness Preservation and Management, *National Park Service Management Policy*, 2006; Operations Evaluation Report, ENP, Apr. 24, 1987, EVER-00470; Skip Snow, personal communication, Oct. 23, 2012; Fred Herling, personal communication, Feb. 11, 2011.

⁵²⁷ Brien Culhane, personal communication, Sep. 25, 2013; Oron Bass, personal communication, Oct. 29, 2013.

preservation, management, and use of these lands.” The development of the plan will depend on future allocations of funding and professional positions in the park.⁵²⁸

Visitor Use of Wilderness/Backcountry Camping

Well before the 1978 designation of park wilderness, Everglades had begun to develop wilderness or backcountry campsites. The first two, at Graveyard Creek and the Cane Patch, were opened in the winter of 1962/1963. By 1970, the number had grown to 25, and at this writing there are 46 (figure 10-2, Lopez River backcountry campsite). Most of the sites can be reached only by canoe, kayak, or small motorboat. The Ernest F. Coe and Old Ingraham Campsites and the Clubhouse Beach Campsite at the end of the Coastal Prairie are accessible on foot. Several factors influenced the choice of sites. The primary consideration was limiting damage to natural resources, but sites also had to be accessible to maintenance crews in motor barges. Because nearly all areas of higher ground along the Gulf Coast had attracted human settlement for



Figure 10-2. Lopez River backcountry campsite

millennia, it was inevitable that many locations selected for campsites contained the remnants of historic structures or archeological resources. Although important known archeological sites seem to have been avoided, no effort was made to avoid sites with remains of white settlement, such as cisterns. To supplement the limited number of areas of higher ground, the park began a program of creating camping platforms on pilings, protected by traditional chickees, open-sided structures with thatched palm roofs. This

⁵²⁸ *Draft GMP*, Appendix D, 524; Fred Herling, personal communication, Aug. 22, 2013; Fred Herling, personal communication, Feb. 11, 2011.



Figure 10-3. Indian Key backcountry campsite, circa 1968

gave managers considerably more flexibility in locating campsites. In the 1960s, the chickee sites were meant to accommodate a single camping party and were equipped with picnic tables and cookstoves. Regulations were put in place prohibiting the cutting of vegetation for fires, restricting fires on beach sites to below the high tide line, and requiring refuse to be packed out.⁵²⁹

Interest in backcountry camping grew substantially in the late 1970s and 1980s, and the park took steps to handle more visitors while still protecting resources. Use of the sites was estimated at 8,000 overnight stays in 1980. A voluntary permit system, begun in 1977, was made mandatory in 1983, in part to provide better data on campsite use. Campers could self register until 1989, when the park began to require application be made to a park employee in the winter season and in summer as well, when staff was available. Because of overcrowding, the park occasionally allowed camping at nondesignated sites. To accommodate more camping parties, the park in 1983 began removing picnic tables at all chickee sites and adding a second chickee at some sites. Recorded overnight stays were 15,469 in 1987, no doubt an undercount because some parties did not get the required permit. The park experimented with placing limits of two nights or a single night at some popular sites. Over time, policy moved toward

⁵²⁹ Jack B. Dodd, Asst. Supt., to Ranger Maxwell et al., Aug. 8, 1962, Everglades National Park, "Notice to Back Country Visitors," May 1970, EVER 42242, ser. XIII; Northwest District Issues and Goals for the 1995 Squad Retreat, 1995, EVER-00886.

its current contours, where permits must be obtained at either Everglades City or Flamingo no more than 24 hours in advance of a visit. Permits are limited to 14 days, with restrictions of from one to three nights at a single campsite in the winter season. Reservations are made for a particular campsite; an alternate campsite can be used only in case of an emergency (figure 10-3, Indian Key backcountry campsite). For many years there was no charge for backcountry camping; as of this writing there is a \$10 processing fee and a \$2.00 per person per night charge.⁵³⁰

The Wilderness Waterway

Much of the backcountry use at the park is via marked canoe trails starting at Flamingo or Everglades and along the Wilderness Waterway. The park had two marked canoe trails in the mangrove forest as early as September 1967 and five marked trails in the Flamingo area by 1977: Bear Lake, Hells Bay, Noble Hammock, West Lake and Nine-Mile Pond. The Wilderness Waterway is a 99-mile trail that traverses inland waterways between Everglades City and Flamingo. It was opened in 1968 and has proven tremendously popular.⁵³¹

Native Americans for millennia had been using and improving sheltered inland water passages in the Everglades. They also created canals to improve water transportation, notably the Mud Lake Canal in the park. A substantial inland route for boaters had been a goal of park managers since shortly after the park's establishment, but nearly impassable mangrove forests at several spots seemed an insurmountable obstacle. Richard Stokes, who in 1959 became district ranger for the Gulf Coast District, based at Everglades City, thought otherwise. In the early 1960s, he and other park staff cleared routes through bottlenecks at Alligator and Plate Creeks. There remained a major blockage between Broad Creek and Harney River. Using early charts of the area known as T-charts, Stokes in 1966 began to search for a route. His first effort in August 1966 in the company of Superintendent Roger Allin and Chief Ranger Robert Kerr ended with Stokes and Allin swimming down Broad Creek in life jackets before they were spotted by Ralph Miele in the park plane and rescued after dark. Stokes kept trying (without the superintendent) and by the end of summer 1968, had cleared a connection. The park then began to mark the 99-mile route and add backcountry

530 Jonathan Poynter, Backcountry Management Technician, ENP, to Jennifer L. Walker, Geography Dept., Northern Michigan University, Dec. 26, 1980, Everglades Backcountry Use and Policy, circa 1985, EVER 42242, ser. XIII; SAR 1987; ENP Statement for Interpretation, 1995, EVER-00619; Everglades National Park Wilderness Trip Planner, http://www.nps.gov/ever/upload/Wilderness_Trip_Planner_2009.pdf.

531 *Anhinga*, Sep. 1967; Chief of Maintenance, ENP, to Supt., Jan. 27, 1977, EVER 22965.



Figure 10-4 Everglades Wilderness Waterway

campsites so a canoeist could make the trip in seven to 10 days (figure 10-4, Wilderness Waterway).⁵³²

An important part of making the Wilderness Waterway known to visitors was the 1969 publication of the *Guide to the Wilderness Waterway*, written by ranger William Truesdell. Truesdell came to the Everglades in 1967 and soon began preparing “strip maps of the entire waterway, section by section, and writing text to accompany the maps.” The narrative “described critical places in the route” and gave background on the natural and cultural history of the territory traversed. The 64-page spiral-bound guide was published through the Everglades Natural History Association partnership with the University of Miami Press; a revised edition was published in 1985. The outdoors community greeted the opening of the waterway with enthusiasm and it received considerable media attention. The Wilderness Waterway has proved enduringly popular. In 2011, Holly Genzen and Anne McCrary Sullivan produced a new guide to the waterway, *Paddling the Everglades Wilderness Waterway*, which also provides information on previous human use of the areas traversed (figure 10-5, canoeing in backcountry).⁵³³

From its inception in 1978, the park’s Wilderness Waterway has been shared by operators of nonmotorized canoes and kayaks and operators of small boats with outboard motors. Widely held definitions of the wilderness experience find the sounds and odors of outboard motors incompatible with that experience. Long-time park volunteer John Buckley believes that canoers coming to the park use the Wilderness Waterway are often disappointed when they find it is open to motorized boats. In the public meetings conducted to help shape the park’s GMP, some users expressed a wish that motorized and nonmotorized users could be separated. The preferred alternative in the latest version of the park’s GMP calls for the establishment of an Alternative Wilderness Waterway that would offer a more tranquil visitor experience for users of human-propelled craft. The alternative route would incorporate the existing Hells Bay Canoe Trail at its southern end and have its northern end at Everglades City. Most of the route of the Alternative Wilderness Waterway would also receive limited use by motorized boats. Some sections of the alternative route would be restricted to nonmotorized craft where parallel routes for motorized craft exist. The Alternative

⁵³² Richard A. Stokes, ENP, to various media, Dec. 12, 1966; Max Hunn, “Everglades Waterway,” *Outdoors* 2/1 (Jan. 1970), 32. Stokes wrote that early on Supt. Beard planned to dredge a canal between the upper Shark River and Broad River drainages, but no documentation has been found in support of this.

⁵³³ Holly Genzen and Anne McCrary Sullivan, *Paddling the Everglades Wilderness Waterway* (Birmingham, Ala.: Menasha Ridge Press, 2011), 29-32; Hunn, 30-34; “Boaters’ Discovery: Wilderness Waters,” *Broward Today*, Mar. 8, 1970.

Wilderness Waterway would have fewer physical markers so as not to compromise views of the scenery and would have GPS waypoints.⁵³⁴



Figure 10-5. Canoeing in the backcountry

⁵³⁴ John Buckley, interview with Nancy Russell and Alan Scott, March 19, 2011; NPS, *Draft GMP*, 74.