

# Chapter 18: Museum Collection, Library, and Records Management

From the park's establishment in 1947 until the 1980s, its museum program received little attention and very limited resources. The park has had a trained curator only from 1987 to 1993 and again starting in 2002. The absence of a well-funded, professional museum program for the majority of the park's history has had unfortunate consequences. The park missed out on opportunities to acquire the papers of individuals like Marjory Stoneman Douglas and John Pennekamp who were closely tied to its past. Also forfeited was the chance to collect items connected to historical activities like alligator hunting, commercial fishing, tomato farming, and tanbark processing. By the late 1980s, Everglades National Park had a considerable history of storing museum items from other Florida parks. The park's more formal role as a multipark repository began with the formation of the Everglades Regional Collection Center in 1987. This later evolved into the South Florida Collections Management Center.<sup>841</sup> The center and its staff are physically located at Everglades National Park. The center serves four other park units in addition to Everglades; this chapter will focus on the Everglades collections. Because the operations of the center affect other aspects of Everglades National Park, notably space allocation, some description of the center's overall functions and operations is included.

## Early Collection Efforts

Although decades would pass before the park had a professional museum program, it was acquiring museum collection and library items almost from the beginning. In August 1948, for example, Former Congressman J. Mark Wilcox gave the park press clippings and some other materials that had been in the files of the Everglades National Park Association. The park gradually began assembling a library, a photograph and slide file, and a collection of natural history specimens. Park collaborator Frank Craighead, park biologist Bill Robertson, and park naturalist Willard Dille began an important herbarium collection in the 1950s. For several decades, little distinction was made between the library and the museum collection and both were kept in the same space. In addition, the available records indicate that the terms museum collection and study collection were used interchangeably. It is likely that the park staff had little idea what it intended to retain permanently as a museum collection and what it kept for

<sup>841</sup> The center holds and manages museum collections for Everglades National Park, Dry Tortugas National Park, Biscayne National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, and DeSoto National Memorial.

consumptive use by naturalist/interpreters. Further, the park made no serious effort to place retired files into an archival collection for several decades. Items continued to accumulate in the 1950s and 1960s, including some extensive collections of *Liguus* tree snail shells and some personal items that had belonged to Audubon warden Guy Bradley.<sup>842</sup>

The park library and collections were kept at park headquarters on Krome Avenue in Homestead until 1961, when they moved to the new park headquarters building just inside the park entrance on Parachute Key. By 1967, the park reported having a library/museum collection of some three to four thousand items, which included an extensive pamphlet/reprint file, the herbarium, other natural history specimens, and a few historic and archeological artifacts (Figure 18-1, American crocodile skull). All were housed in air-conditioned space in the park headquarters, never exceeding 730 square feet. The park's chief naturalist was responsible for the collection/library and was able to keep a museum technician on staff for a portion of the 1960s. In this period, the Everglades Natural History Association funded book purchases and at times paid the salary of a part-time librarian.<sup>843</sup>

Considerable delays and lapses in accessioning items to the museum collection were routine well into the 1980s. In January 1949, the Seminole dugout canoe discovered by Daniel C. Beard, the superintendent's son, became the first item accessioned into the park collection. No record of accessions of any kind have been found for the period May 11, 1959, to July 1, 1982, leading to speculation that an accession book kept in that interval may subsequently have been lost.<sup>844</sup>



**Figure 18-1.** An American crocodile skull, a representative natural history collection item

In the 1970s and 1980s, park management seemed largely unaware of the importance of the park's library and museum collections. Recommendations from a park library task force appointed in 1972 were mostly ignored. When Park Librarian Alcyone Bradley and Park Chief Naturalist George Robinson in

842 J. Mark Wilcox to Thomas J. Allen, RDR1, n.d. [Aug. 1948], CP, EVER 22649; NPS, *South Florida Parks Museum Collection Management Plan* (Homestead, Fla.: 2008) (hereafter *SFPMC-MP*), 9-10; SMR, May 1964.

843 Supt. Beard to Dir., June 18, 1956. NARA Ph, RG 79, 79-62-A-305; SMR, Jan. 1959; Supt. Allin to Dir., Oct. 10, 1967, Mary Ann H. Ogden, "Museum Collection, Everglades National Park," June 15, 1977, EVER 22965.

844 *SFPMCMP*, 8-11; SMR, Jan. 1949.

1974 asked for additional space for the library (which still included the museum collections), the assistant superintendent responded: “[W]e cannot provide additional library space now or in the foreseeable future because of problems that would be created in other phases of operations of a more serious nature than those associated with the library.” He suggested that Robinson limit the acquisition of new library materials, get rid of obsolete materials, and consider microfilming some materials. The story was much the same in 1982 when Superintendent Jack Morehead noted that the park’s collections were not used enough to warrant training or recruiting personnel to manage them. Morehead suggested to his regional director that the park’s museum collections be disbanded. He recommended that the parks’ collections be disbursed among other NPS installations and local universities or turned over to the park’s research center and interpreters for consumptive use.<sup>845</sup>

Following the establishment of the South Florida Research Center, the park’s library and museum collection moved in October 1977 from headquarters to the research center in the former Iori bunkhouse (now the Dr. Bill Robertson Jr. Center). The collection got a little more space in the remodeled building, 1,030 square feet, but less than the 1,500 square feet considered adequate by the NPS Library Services Division. Items moved to the center included about 6,000 bound volumes, some five to six thousand pamphlets and reprints, what was described as a “biological study collection,” slides, and photos. Responsibility for the collection shifted from the interpretative division to the director of the research center, and interpretation kept a small library for its use at headquarters. Biologist James Kushlan, who came to Everglades National Park in 1975, believed that the main library housed a good collection of South Florida materials. In 1983, Lead Park Technician Bobbie Pettit-Tilmant was assigned curatorial responsibilities as a collateral duty; it is not known how long she remained in that capacity.<sup>846</sup>

Throughout much of this period, the park had a library committee that made recommendations for the library/collections. The committee tried to make improvements, but achieved little. In 1982, in response to the superintendent’s desire to disband the collection, a team headed by Regional Curator H. Dale Durham visited the park to study the needs of its museum program.<sup>847</sup> The team’s report identified a number of deficiencies, notably in the areas of oversight, accountability, coordination

<sup>845</sup> Handwritten note from asst. supt. on memo, Chief Naturalist Robinson to Supt., Sep. 12, 1974, Supt. Morehead to RDSE, Feb. 12, 1982, EVER 22965; *SFPMCMP*, 15.

<sup>846</sup> Chief, Field Library Services, to Dir., Office of Library and Information Services, WASO, June 4, 1976, EVER 22965; R. Alan Mebane, Chief of Interpretation, to Patricia Wickman, Museum of Florida History, Mar. 18, 1985, EVER 22965; SAR, 1983, 1984; Kushlan interview; Sandy Dayhoff, interview by Bridget Beers, Apr. 6, 2001.

<sup>847</sup> Assoc. RDSE, Operations, to ENP Supt., Oct. 25, 1982, EVER 22965. The other members of the team were Arthur Allen, Chief, Division of Museum Services, Harper’s Ferry Center, and Christine Schonewald-Cox, Biologist, Natural Science Division, WASO.

with research staff, and procedures for processing collections. Among the team's recommendations, which were endorsed by the Southeast Regional Office, were:

1. Returning responsibility for the collections to the interpretative division.
2. Moving the entire collection to Nike Missile Base HM-69 headquarters building (now the Dan Beard Center).
3. A complete inventory of the collections.
4. Preparation of a scope of collections statement.
5. Preparation of a policy on the use of collections.
6. Improved environmental control of collections.

In 1984, the collections moved from the Robertson Building to the Beard Center and once again became the responsibility of the interpretive division. Most of the Beard Center became the new home of the South Florida Research Center. In



**Figure 18-2.** Archival storage in the Robertson building in 2002

2002, space in Robertson was being used for archival storage, indicating that some material remained there after the 1984 move or was later placed there (Figure 18-2, Archival storage in the Robertson building in 2002). It is likely that in the 1984 and earlier moves of the collection, items were discarded to make the moves easier. The Durham team's visit also resulted in the regional curator and the WASO Natural Science Division putting on a training course at the park, which accomplished some basic museum tasks. Compiling an inventory and improving environmental conditions would have to wait another 30 years. The scope of collections statement, approved in March 1985, made some additional recommendations: that the park separate its

museum collection from its library and that the park's archeological artifacts be moved to the Southeast Archeological Center in Tallahassee.<sup>848</sup>

In 1992, Hurricane Andrew caused considerable destruction at Everglades National Park. The 1961 main visitor center had to be demolished. A hurricane salvage team, made up of Kent Bush, Dale Durham, and Jonathan Bayless, recommended that the Bernard Thomas mural painting from the visitor center dating to the late 1960s be removed and evaluated by a conservator. See chapter 20 for details on the commissioning of this painting. The team did not remove the painting from the wall, apparently because of concerns that the wall contained asbestos. Some time later, the painting was taken down by others, cut into two pieces, rolled up, and removed to museum storage. In 2011, a conservator treated the painting, stabilizing paint that had flaked and lifted, and mounting it on a backing cloth. The park hopes to find a suitable future exhibition location for this 22-foot-long mural. Hurricane Andrew did not affect the museum program's spaces at the Beard Center as severely other parts of the building; water damage was largely confined to the wet specimen room.<sup>849</sup> The loss of electrical power did lead to some mold growth in collection storage areas. Park staff discarded significant amounts of water-damaged files and other material from research offices in the building as well as microfilm and perhaps other material from the park library. No formal process guided this activity. The "loss of administrative record and research data from Hurricane Andrew was significant."<sup>850</sup>

In 1996, the park partnered with Florida International University and a number of other organizations to create the Everglades Digital Library (EDL). A service of the Digital Collection Center at Florida International University Libraries, the EDL is an ongoing effort to make primary source material concerning the Everglades easily available over the Internet to support research, education, ecosystem restoration, and resource management. Material from a number of repositories, including the Everglades Regional Collection Center at Everglades National Park, was digitized. Only a small fraction of the material housed at Everglades National Park, mainly some archival items and photographs, was placed online.<sup>851</sup>

848 Assoc. RDSE, Operations, to ENP Supt., Oct. 25, 1982, ENP Scope of Collections Statement, Mar. 25, 1985, EVER 22965; *SFPMCMP*, 16.

849 In 1992, the museum program had in place a supposedly hurricane-reinforced Bally® modular building awaiting the transfer of collections materials. Nothing had been moved into the building because of problems with its floor. This proved fortunate, because Hurricane Andrew flattened the building. Nancy Russell, personal communication, June 26, 2013.

850 SFCMC, FY2011 & FY2012 Annual Reports (Homestead, Fla.: SFCMC, Sept. 30, 2012) (hereafter FY11 and FY12 AR), 30; Nancy Russell, personal communication, Sept. 28, 2012, and June 26, 2013; *SFPMCMP*, 16, 71-72, quotation from 16.

851 Everglades Digital Library, <http://everglades.fiu.edu>; "At Last, There's an Everglades without Mosquitoes," *Miami Herald*, May 26, 1997.

## The Beginnings of a Multipark Approach

In April 1987, the Everglades Regional Collection Center (ERCC) was formed to take responsibility for the museum collections of all four South Florida NPS units: Everglades, Fort Jefferson, Biscayne, and Big Cypress. The exact history is obscure, but it is clear that materials from Fort Jefferson were housed at Everglades National Park from the early 1960s and materials from Biscayne from the late 1970s. The superintendent's annual report for 1987 indicates that 1,700 square feet in the Beard Center was allotted to the ERCC. A GS-7 museum technician position was also established at this time. The ERCC was made formal in 1990 with the adoption of "Protocols for the Everglades Regional Collections Center." The stated goal of the ERCC was "to provide centralized collections management services for the natural science and cultural collections of the four south Florida park units." In this same period, Superintendent Michael Finley decided to shift responsibility for the library/collections to the South Florida Research Center. When Finley hired Michael Soukup as center director in 1989, he told him he would have responsibility for the library/collections and resource management, without any increase in the center's budget.<sup>852</sup>

The park hired Jonathan Bayless into the newly created museum technician position in 1987. He was soon promoted to museum curator, and Dan Foxen was hired as the technician. Bayless moved to remedy some of the program's deficiencies, making some progress on the backlog of unaccessioned items, purchasing needed museum furniture and equipment, and installing a new security system. He also assembled a team to prepare a collection management plan (CMP), which was approved in 1989. The CMP endorsed the concept and mission of the ERCC and recommended that the three other parks make an annual contribution of \$3,000 to the center. When Bayless left the park in 1991, Foxen became curator, while the museum technician position remained vacant. Foxen stayed on as curator only until spring 1993, and the position was vacant until 1995. At that time, Walter Meshaka, a herpetologist, was hired as curator. In 1999, the park's newly formed planning and compliance branch became responsible for the ERCC. The following year, 2000, Meshaka left the park, leaving the curator position vacant until summer 2002.<sup>853</sup>

Brien Culhane, chief of the newly formed planning and compliance branch, believed that the park had long needed a cultural resource management program, which would be the logical home for the museum collection and library. Culhane urged park management to create a separate cultural division, and in August 2002, the park hired

<sup>852</sup> SAR, 1987; Soukup Interview; *SFPMCMP*, 12-13.

<sup>853</sup> SAR, 1988, 2006; *SFPMCMP*, iv, 12-13, 18-19; Nancy Russell, SFCMC, *South Florida Collections Management Center Five Year Accomplishment Review (FY2003-FY2007)* (Homestead, Fla.: SFCMC, Dec. 14, 2007) (hereafter *5-Year Review*), 2.

Nancy Russell as museum curator. In 2006, with the establishment of the park's cultural resource management program, the museum function transferred from planning and compliance to the new division. Melissa Memory was hired as the first chief of culture resources and remained in the position until summer 2013.<sup>854</sup>

## A New Direction

As of late 2002, the museum program at Everglades National Park had suffered from decades of understaffing, underfunding, and neglect. The backlog of unaccessioned and uncatalogued items was large; physically the collection lacked adequate space and was poorly protected; accountability for the collection was deficient; and for decades park staff had enjoyed access to the collections without any monitoring or controls. Curator Russell began working to revitalize the multipark approach, provide a clear direction for the center, and begin to bring it up to NPS standards. One of her first moves was to change the center's name. In 2003, the Everglades Regional Collection Center became the South Florida Collections Management Center (SFCMC). The new name emphasized that the center served multiple parks and that henceforth, collections would not just be stored but actively managed. The 1989 collection management plan (CMP) was outdated, and Russell assembled a team headed by Allen Bohnert, regional chief of curatorial services, to prepare a new one. The CMP project team made two visits to South Florida in 2004 and produced a draft plan the following year.<sup>855</sup>

After its first visit, the team developed three alternatives for a vision statement for the SFCMC. In July 2004, representatives of the four South Florida parks met and used a modified choosing-by-advantages process to articulate the center's vision and make other broad policy decisions. Getting the four parks together in this way was key to building support for the center concept. The group strongly supported a centralized approach, affirming that the SFCMC "is the central museum services provider for the four south Florida NPS units." The group went on to adopt a mission statement and goals and objectives for the center. The mission was stated as acquiring, documenting, preserving, interpreting, researching, and making accessible the natural and cultural history of the four parks.<sup>856</sup>

The concept of a charter for the SFCMC grew directly from the CMP process. Biscayne managers involved in the process suggested a charter similar to the charters

<sup>854</sup> SAR, 2006; Brien Culhane, interview by author, Oct. 7, 2011; Russell, *5-Year Review*, 2.

<sup>855</sup> Other team members were Jonathan Bayless, Steve Floray, Paul Rogers, Brigid Sullivan, Robert Wilson, Heather Young, Donald Cumberland, and Carol Ash. *SFPMCMP*, 1; Russell, *5-Year Review*, 2.

<sup>856</sup> *SFPMCMP*, 20-21. See the plan for a list of the goals.

used by the Service's inventory and monitoring networks. Approved in February 2005, the charter sets out the functions and organizational structure of the center and contains provisions designed to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of the park units served. The charter establishes a board of directors and a collections committee. Serving on the board are the three park superintendents, the SFCMC curator, and the Southeast Region's chief of museum services. The board provides guidance for and oversight of the center's operations and evaluates its performance. Having the superintendents on the board helps ensure their ongoing commitment to the center. The collections committee, made up of representatives appointed by the parks from relevant disciplines, provides technical assistance and advice to the curator. The charter also describes the duties of the SFCMC curator and the areas to be covered in the center's annual work plan and annual report. In fiscal year 2006, DeSoto National Memorial became part of the SFCMC, and an amendment to the charter was executed to reflect this.<sup>857</sup>

Since late 2002, the SFCMC curator and staff have made tremendous strides in putting the center and its collections on a sound professional footing. The accomplishments achieved in various program areas are described below.

### *Collection Storage and Protection*

As of August 2002, conditions were abysmal at the Beard Center, the main museum storage area, and the Robertson Building, which held the archival collection and library. At the Beard Center, there were problems with condensation and mold growth from the heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) system; peeling paint; seepage from the concrete floor slab; improper storage of items; cockroach infestation; and general uncleanliness (Figure 18-3, Storage of wet specimens in 2002). At the Robertson Building, archival collections and library materials, some of the latter shelved and some boxed, shared space with nonmuseum researchers, stored equipment, and other uses. In some areas, boxed books were stacked floor to ceiling and the bottom boxes had suffered mold growth.<sup>858</sup>

The museum curator acted quickly to end the incompatible uses in the Robertson space. At long last, the library was physically separated from the museum collection. Library items were evaluated, with duplicate or extraneous items given to the Florida International University Library. The remaining library items were moved to the training room in the Beard Center. The library had been assembled largely to assist park science and was the responsibility of the SFNRC. In 2010, the SFNRC opted to

<sup>857</sup> *SFPMCMP*, 27; Charter of the South Florida Collections Management Center; Amendment One to Charter of the South Florida Collections Management Center.

<sup>858</sup> Russell, *5-Year Review*, 17-19.





**Figure 18-3.** Storage of wet specimens in 2002

gave up the library, and the SFCMC lacked staffing to take it over. Consequently, when the Beard Center was remodeled in 2011, the library was disbursed. Park divisions were given first choice of materials, with any unclaimed items going to Florida International University.<sup>859</sup>

The removal of the library from the Robertson Center in 2002 and the relocation of the GIS function freed up additional space in that building for the archival collection, an archivist's office, and a desk for museum researchers. Over several years, staff added additional compactor storage, new map cases, and fixtures that allowed framed works of art to be properly accommodated. In 2003, a fire detection system was installed for the first time, and the Robertson museum space now has available a trailer-mounted generator and an emergency switch to transfer power when regular power service is interrupted.<sup>860</sup>

Natural history items and artifacts were stored in the Beard Center as of late 2002. Curator Russell's first office was inside the secured storage area. In 2004, an office was found for her just down the hall from storage. The Beard Center got a new security system in 2003 and an emergency transfer switch in 2006, allowing generator power to be used when needed. In FY2007 and FY2008, a \$260,000 rehabilitation of the collection storage space in the Beard Center took place. This work required that the entire collection be temporarily relocated. The overall goal of the rehabilitation was to provide a tighter shell for the 1,800 square foot storage space by replacing the HVAC ductwork, adding a new ceiling and lighting, installing a plastic vapor barrier to the walls and a chemical vapor barrier between the floor slab and a new poured epoxy floor (Figure 18-4, Preparing for the rehabilitation of Beard Center space). A \$30,000 compactor storage system was installed after the rehabilitation while the space was empty. The compactor system increased the space available for the natural history collections, and the center purchased new museum furniture for these items. In 2009, the curator was given a new office, and the space she had been using since 2004 was devoted to overflow collection storage (Room C). In late 2013, the SFCMC took over

<sup>859</sup> Nancy Russell, personal communication, Nov. 1, 2013. The library was intact when I began research for this history and it provided useful information. Its loss is regrettable.

<sup>860</sup> Russell, *5-Year Review*, 18-19; Bonnie Ciolino, personal communication, June 26, 2013; Nancy Russell, personal communication, June 26, 2013.



**Figure 18-4. Preparing for rehabilitation of the Beard Center space**

the former conference room in the Beard Center for collection storage. The SFCMC is glad to get any additional space that it can, but receiving space piecemeal here and there is not cost-effective.<sup>861</sup>

### *Collection Size and Accountability*

A basic task facing the SFCMC staff was determining just what was in the museum collection and where it was located. Previous staff had not followed standard museum practices in defining locations, so merely locating material was a challenge. Much material lay unaccessioned and uncatalogued. In particular, the vast majority of the hundreds of thousands of archival items were not catalogued (Figure 18-5, Storage of audio-visual materials in 2002). A first step was compiling a 100 percent inventory of all material in the collections, and this task was accomplished in stages over six years. In FY2003, the center's best estimate was that the Everglades collection had 1,334,969 items, some 247,000 of which were archeological artifacts and related documentation

<sup>861</sup> Nancy Russell, personal communication, Nov. 1, 2013; Russell, *5-Year Review*, 17-19; SFCMC FY2008, FY2011, and FY 2012 Annual Reports, South Florida Collections Management Center (Homestead, Fla.: SFCMC, June 12, 2008), 39-59. Appendix A of the 2008 report provides a more detailed account of the rehabilitation of the Beard Center collections space.



Figure 18-5. Storage of visual materials in 2002

housed at the Southeast Archeological Center (SEAC). For all four parks, the estimate was 3.5 million items, 1.7 million of them at SEAC. Because of the history of incorrectly accessioning collections and the failure to accession collections, there was not a lot of confidence in these estimates. By FY2012, Everglades had 2,948,695 items. This increase of more than 1.5 million items consisted mostly of archival materials that had been accumulating for decades in various park divisions, but had never been turned over to the collection.<sup>862</sup>

The SFCMC staff began the work of adding this material in the collections. Much of this was accomplished through term employees, interns, and some volunteers. A snapshot of the progress made is indicated in the tables below.

#### Total Number of Accessions, FY2002 – FY2012

Fiscal Year	Everglades	SFCMC
2002	599	816
2007	1375	1924
2012	1907	3008

<sup>862</sup> *5-Year Review*, 10, 15; FY11 and FY12 Annual Report, 49; Nancy Russell, personal communication, June 26, 2013.

**Total of Catalogued Items, FY2002 – FY2012**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Everglades</b>	<b>SFCMC</b>
2002	733,386	1,363,841
2007	936,456	2,000,640
2012	1,714,700	3,399,815

As of the close of FY2012, 58.14 percent of the items in the Everglades portion of the collection had been catalogued. The vast majority of the uncatalogued material is archival.<sup>863</sup>

*Funding and Staffing*

In FY2003, the SFCMC received approximately \$80,000 in Operations of the National Park Service (ONPS) funding, generally known as base funding. In addition, it received about the same amount of funding for specific museum projects, known as PMIS (Project Management Information System) funding. This level of funding was wholly inadequate for the needs of the center, and the curator began working to achieve an increase in base funding and compete more successfully for project funding. Project funding showed a notable increase in FY2005 and was between \$550,000 and \$648,000 for four of the five years from FY2007 through FY2011 (Figure 18-6, Jean Schardt providing conservation treatment on a bobcat specimen). The center received a substantial increase in base funding beginning in FY2009, because of a notable collaborative effort involving DeSoto National Memorial. Parks prioritize their requests for base funding additions. At Curator Nancy Russell's suggestion, DeSoto Superintendent Scott Pardue made a base increase for the SFCMC his top priority, recognizing that it would help four Florida parks as well as his. As a result the center received a \$300,000 base increase, part of which went to fund a new position at DeSoto. The SFCMC's base funding reached \$295,000 in FY09 and \$394,000 in FY2011. The superintendent of the smallest park involved in the SFCMC in this instance recognized the large benefit that could be achieved by assigning his top priority to a collective effort rather than one that benefited only his park.<sup>864</sup>

The increased base funding has allowed the center to add to its permanent staff. As of August 2002, the SFCMC had just one full-time position, the GS-12 curator. As of this writing, the SFCMC has five base-funded positions: a curator, archivist,

<sup>863</sup> *5-Year Review*, 9-13; FY11 and FY12 Annual Report, 49.

<sup>864</sup> Russell, *5-Year Review*, 4-5; FY11 and FY12 Annual Report, 11-13, 37-39; Nancy Russell, personal communication, June 26, 2013.



**Figure 18-6. Jean Schardt treating a bobcat specimen with diatomaceous earth**

registrar, museum technician, and archives technician. The curator has made extensive use of project funding to fill term and temporary positions and has creatively employed students, interns, and volunteers. Volunteer hours have grown from 423 in FY2003 to as much as 2,829 in FY2007. Project funding has also permitted the hiring of contractors to address backlog cataloging and object conservation needs.<sup>865</sup>

### *Collection Access and Use*

As more of the center's collections have been catalogued and provided with finding aids, they have become increasingly useful and utilized by park staff and outside researchers. The increased accessibility of the museum collection is reflected in a dramatic increase in NPS and external users. In FY2002, the center handled eight

<sup>865</sup> FY11 and FY12 Annual Report, 11, *5-Year Review*, 9.

requests for EVER materials from all sources, while in FY2012, the center responded to 225 park and 86 external requests related to EVER collections. This represented 85.5 percent of the total park requests and 59.3 percent of the total external requests that the SFCMC handled. An important aspect of making collections more accessible is providing digital access. Since 2002, the center has made considerable progress in digitizing individually cataloged photographs, slides, specimens from the herbarium, and selected archival items from the Everglades collections.<sup>866</sup>

### *Oral Histories*

A number of oral histories were present in the center on various media, mostly magnetic tape. The curator has been able to have a number of these transcribed, and has initiated a program of conducting oral history interviews with departing staff, former staff, and local residents. In October 2011, Everglades National Park hosted a 40-hour, Servicewide workshop, “NPS Effective Oral History: Interviews, Project Management, and Practical Implications.” Five SFCMC staff members participated.<sup>867</sup>

### *Permitting and Accessioning of the Results of Research*

Every research permit issued by each of the South Florida parks should result in a museum accession. Even those research projects that do not generate specimens produce field notes, data, reports, and other archival material. Retention and proper curation of collection items produced by research projects are important to making the results of the research usable and accessible. Without a professional museum program for most of the park’s history, important results from research projects have been scattered or lost forever. Prior to August 2002, the vast majority of research projects covered by permits were not being assigned accession numbers. Any data, reports, and specimens generated by these projects were not becoming part of the SFCMC collection and were generally not available to scientists or researcher in the future. The SFCMC has now become integrated with the NPS Research Permit Reporting System. The SFCMC curator succeeded in getting accession numbers assigned for all DRTO and EVER permits in 2003, and soon thereafter for the other parks. Not until 2010, when the center had funds to hire a registrar, was it able to systematically follow up and try to ensure that project-generated data, reports, and specimens actually got into the collection. In FY2012, the center had 109 active permits with accession numbers, some 53 of which were for Everglades.<sup>868</sup>

<sup>866</sup> Russell, *5-Year Review*, 20-21; FY11 and FY12 Annual Report, 1, 71.

<sup>867</sup> FY11 and FY12 Annual Report, 44.

<sup>868</sup> *SFCMCP*, 91; FY11 & FY12 Annual Report, 53.

The chronic failure to include the costs of curation in scientific and other research projects imposes a substantial burden on the SFCMC. It is NPS policy that each research project, whether in-house or permitted, include a line item in its budget to cover curation costs. This policy is widely disregarded, meaning that the SFCMC must come up with the funding and staff time to incorporate the research products into the collection. In this way, the backlog of the center continues to grow. Not only is this problematic for the center, but makes the research efforts less useful than they could be, because of unavoidable delays in making the research results available to users of the collection.

### *Conservation Projects*

As previously mentioned, the Bernard Thomas mural received stabilization treatment in 2011. The center has undertaken a number of other conservation projects since 2002. These include treatment of damaged Everglades color slides and five original signs from the HM-69 missile base (Figure 18-7, Nike base warning sign). The center has completed many conservation projects for other participating parks, details of which may be found in the SFCMC's annual reports.<sup>869</sup>

### *Planning Documents*

Under the curator's direction, a number of museum planning documents were prepared and approved beginning in 2003. These include:

- South Florida Parks Collection Management Plan (2008)
- Museum Storage Plan (2004)
- SFCMC Integrated Pest Management Plan (2009)
- Preventive Conservation Plan, including a Museum Housekeeping Plan (2007)
- SFCMC Archives Processing Manual (2008, with regular updates)
- SFCMC Archives Collection Condition Survey (2008)
- Scope of collection statements for EVER (2007), DRTO (2003), BICY (2007), BISC (2007), and DESO (2010)
- Museum Security and Fire Protection Surveys for EVER (2003) and BISC (2008)
- Museum Access and Use Policy for EVER/DRTO (2004), BICY (2007), BISC (2007), and DESO (2007)<sup>870</sup>

<sup>869</sup> FY11 & FY12 Annual Report, 30; SFCMC FY2009 Annual Report (Homestead, Fla.: SFCMC, Jan. 26, 2010), 34-35.

<sup>870</sup> See Russell, *5-Year Review* and SFCMC annual reports for additional detail.

## New Museum Storage Facility

The SFCMC has chronically been short of space, and the problem will only grow as the collections of the five parks grow. The CMP team, meeting in 2004, recognized this and recommended that a new museum facility be constructed, noting that the existing spaces in Beard and Robertson were not large enough and did not meet NPS storage standards. In order to house existing collections and the anticipated growth over ten years, the team calculated that a facility of 11,500 square feet was needed. Even after acquiring additional space in the Beard Center, the SFCMC has less than 4,000 square feet available to it. The preferred alternative in the park's draft GMP calls for the construction of new museum along Research Road within the park.<sup>871</sup> The new facility would:

provid[e] for public exhibits and a storage facility that meets NPS collections standards. Museum collections would continue to be acquired, preserved, and accessible to researchers, and the public would have its first opportunity to experience the center's vast resources and collections.<sup>872</sup>

## Records Management

Everglades National Park has never had a records management officer, and it appears that the NPS Southeast Region has not had one since its headquarters moved to Atlanta. Records management is not a museum program function; in practice at Everglades the responsibility devolves upon the administrative officer. Records are identified as temporary (with 3-year or 15-year retention) or permanent. When no longer needed in the park, records are turned over to a federal records center managed by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The NPS has an arrangement with NARA under which records related to natural and cultural resource management can be retained in park museum collections. This provides park managers with access to records documenting previous resource management decisions, as well as actions and events that have affected resources in the past.<sup>873</sup>

At Everglades, those responsible for record disposition decisions often do not fully understand NPS policy. At times, this has resulted in records being destroyed that ought to have been retained. At the other extreme, some staff have sent records indiscriminately to the museum collection. This has forced museum staff to become *de facto* records managers, making decisions on temporary and permanent status, etc.<sup>874</sup>

871 *SFPMCMP*, 165-166.

872 NPS, *Draft GMP*, 68.

873 Nancy Russell, personal communication, Nov. 1, 2013.

874 Nancy Russell, personal communication, Nov. 1, 2013.



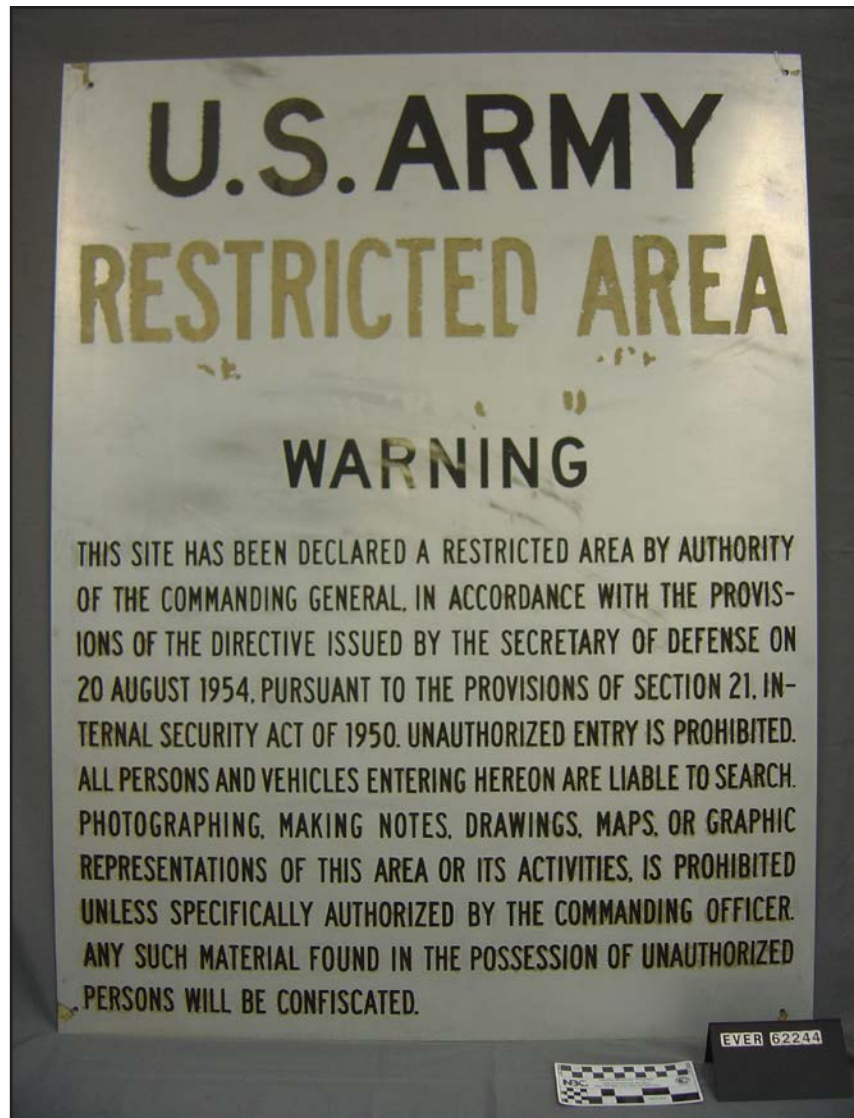


Figure 18-7. Nike base warning sign from South Florida Collection Management Center

As the NPS moves more and more to electronic records, the need for a parkwide policy on them is increasingly apparent.