

Chapter 3: The Movement for a National Park in the Everglades

Early Suggestions

Perhaps the first published suggestion that the Everglades had the makings of a national park came in a 1905 article in *Century Magazine*. A 16-page piece by Edwin Asa Dix and John Nowry MacGonigle entitled “The Everglades of Florida: A Region of Mystery” appeared in the magazine’s February 1905 issue. Although the authors believed a portion of the region might be drained for agriculture, they also observed:

[T]here are other points of view than the practical. The mystery of the Glades creates a fascination. . . . The mystery is part of our national inheritance. . . . It has its place among the country’s native wonders, like the Mammoth Cave and Niagara Falls, the Yellowstone and Yosemite and the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, the Great Natural Bridge of Virginia and the newly discovered natural bridges of Utah. After all, it is rather a good thing to have a little of Wonderland left.¹⁰⁴

Dix and MacGonigle did not actually state that the Everglades ought to be a national park, but they strongly so implied by comparing the area to existing parks like Yellowstone and Yosemite.

A few years later, authors Anthony Weston Dimock and Julian Anthony Dimock made a similar argument by analogy. Presciently foreseeing future tourist development in the area, they wrote in 1908:

The network of rivers, chains of lakes, beautiful Everglades and ten times Ten Thousand Islands of Southern Florida, will be all-the-year playgrounds of the coming generation. Their most conspicuous charm, which has departed, might be restored if the birds of Florida could secure the same protection as the beasts of Yellowstone National Park.¹⁰⁵

At about the same time, late in Theodore Roosevelt’s second administration, U.S. Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot suggested that Royal Palm Hammock (then more commonly known as Paradise Key) might be made a national monument. Under the Antiquities Act of 1906, the president had the authority to establish a monument on land donated to the federal government. The lack of adequate surveys in the area and the confusion over ownership of the hammock prevented any action on Pinchot’s

¹⁰⁴ Dix and MacGonigle, 512-527.

¹⁰⁵ Anthony Weston Dimock and Julian Anthony Dimock, *Florida Enchantments* (New York: Outing Pub., 1908), 210-211.

proposal. In 1916, Dr. David Fairchild, agricultural explorer with the Bureau of Plant Industry, USDA, repeated the suggestion that Paradise Key be made a national monument. May Mann Jennings from early on viewed Royal Palm State Park as the nucleus of a future national park.¹⁰⁶

By the 1920s, the idea of a national park in the Everglades had appeal for a number of people. Robert Sterling Yard, executive secretary of the National Parks Association, later recalled that he had made the suggestion early in that decade. In the Miami area, a group of naturalists began having informal meetings in 1922. Among them were botanist Dr. David M. Fairchild, ornithologist Dr. Harold H. Bailey, botanist and mollusk expert Charles Torrey Simpson, and forester John Gifford. The group eventually organized as the Florida Society of Natural History. According to historian Charlton Tebeau, these men began discussing the idea of a national park in the Everglades in 1923. The secretary of the interior's annual report for 1923 stated that "an untouched example of the Everglades of Florida" should be established as a national park. In his 1925 work *The Birds of Florida*, Dr. Harold H. Bailey wrote "a large reservation in the 'glades,' such as the 'Big Cypress' and Lake Okeechobee, should be set aside for them [wildlife] as a State or National park."¹⁰⁷

At least one anthropologist believed that the prehistoric Native American sites in the Everglades deserved federal protection. In 1918, noted physical anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička made a four-week reconnaissance of the shell works on the Gulf Coast of Florida from Ft. Myers south to Cape Sable. In a 1922 book, *The Anthropology of Florida*, he wrote that a group of mounds south of the mouth of the Whitney River and the complex of sites on Turner River ought to be made "national reservations."¹⁰⁸ Business tycoon Barron Collier, who purchased a million acres in Southwest Florida in the 1910s, also believed a portion of the area should be made a national park. As early as 1923, when Collier was president of the Tamiami Trail Association, he floated the idea of a Tamiami Trail National Park. In 1926 and again in February 1928, at Collier's urging, Senator Park Trammell introduced a bill calling for the NPS to make an evaluation. The bills did not identify a specific area in South Florida to be investigated and therefore did not receive consideration.¹⁰⁹

106 May Mann Jennings, Report of Royal Palm State Park, July 1939, "Attention is Invited to What Eminent Scientists Say Concerning the Park," n.d., MMJ papers, box 10, 23.

107 Robert Sterling Yard to SOI Wilbur, January 21, 1931, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 230; Tebeau, 174-175; *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1923* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1923), 81.

108 Aleš Hrdlička, *The Anthropology of Florida* (Deland, Fla.: Florida State Historical Society, 1922), 2-3, 14, 30, 39.

109 "Chronology, Everglades National Park – Florida," n.d., EVER 22965; Ernest F. Coe to Ben H. Thompson, NPS, Feb. 2, 1937, Gov. Cone papers, box 30.

Ernest F. Coe and the Everglades National Park Association

It was not until Ernest F. Coe arrived in Florida that an organized campaign for a national park in the Everglades emerged (figure 3-1, Ernest F. Coe). Coe was born in New Haven, Connecticut, on March 21, 1867, the second son of Edward and Louisa Bonney Coe. Edward was a Civil War veteran and for a time held the position of collector or deputy collector of customs of the port of New Haven.¹¹⁰ Ernest Coe took courses in the Fine Arts Department at Yale University from 1885 to 1887, although he never received a degree. He developed a successful practice as a landscape architect in New England and for many years owned and operated the Elm City Nursery in New Haven. Coe seems never to have had any formal training in landscape architecture. He later said that he had learned much about landscape design during trips to Europe and Japan. During a 1911 trip to Japan, he studied the ancient art of bonsai, the cultivation of dwarf trees. Coe brought a number of bonsai specimens back from Japan and published an important article on bonsai in a 1923 issue of *Garden Magazine*. Next to nothing is known about Coe's landscape practice in New England. In an obituary published in *Landscape Architecture* in 1951, Florida landscape architect William Lyman Phillips noted that he was recognized for "his bent for informal and naturalistic design."¹¹¹

In 1925, Coe and his wife Anna moved to the Miami area with two nieces and a nephew, purchasing a large house at 3648 Matheson in Coconut Grove. Sometime after 1930 when the nieces and nephew had moved on, they bought a smaller house at 4131 El Prado Avenue in Coconut Grove. In relocating to Miami, Coe had hoped to design the grounds of the estate homes that some wealthy northerners were erecting in Florida, but his timing was abysmal. The overheated Florida real estate market peaked in 1925 and was in the doldrums for years thereafter. Coe maintained an office at 2311 Ponce de Leon Boulevard in Coral Gables for a few years, but had closed it by summer 1931. There is no record of his having undertaken any private landscape design commissions in Florida, although he did give lectures on tropical plant materials.¹¹²

110 The collector of a port and his deputies were responsible for taking in custom duties on articles imported into the U.S.

111 1870, 1880, 1910, 1920 U.S. Census, consulted at Ancestry.com; Yale University, *Directory of the Living Non-Graduates of Yale University* (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1910), 97; W[illiam] L[yman] P[hillips], "Ernest Francis Coe," *Landscape Architecture*, July 1951; "Everglades, New U.S. Park, Tribute to New Haven Man," *New Haven Register*, Nov. 30, 1947. The *Register* article states that, as early as 1910, Ernest Coe established a nursery in South Florida to supply his New Haven business, but this cannot be independently confirmed. For Coe's work with bonsai, see E. F. Coe, "Keeping Japanese Picture-Plants Alive," *Garden Magazine* 37 (1923):331-332.

112 Marjory Stoneman Douglas, "The Forgotten Man Who Saved the Everglades," *Audubon* (September 1971); W[illiam] L[yman] P[hillips], "Ernest Francis Coe"; 1930 U.S. Census, consulted at Ancestry.com.



Figure 3-1. Ernest F. Coe, circa 1930s

Once in Florida, Ernest Coe soon met the members of the Florida Society of Natural History, including Dr. David Fairchild and Dr. Harold H. Bailey, and learned about the natural wonders of the Everglades. By all accounts, he was captivated by what he saw and heard and decided to work for the creation of a national park in the Everglades. Coe made many trips into the region, drawing maps and working out tentative boundaries for a park that would include all of the important natural environments of the area, including not just the Everglades Basin, but mangrove forests along the coast, a portion of the Big Cypress Swamp, and the coral reefs of Key Largo (figure 3-2, ENPA postcard with Coe's propose park boundary). One of the many people that Coe consulted was landscape architect William Lyman Phillips, based in West Palm Beach (see chapter 1). By spring 1928, Coe believed he had his proposal for a national park in shape and wrote to NPS Director Stephen Mather on May 18, 1928. Coe stressed that the Everglades "would make, in my opinion, one of the finest National Parks in the United States, and I believe would eventually within a very short time become one of the most popular of our national parks." Coe was already well organized for his campaign, arranging to have at least two dozen scientists and Florida leaders send letters of support to Mather at the same time. These supporters included Charles

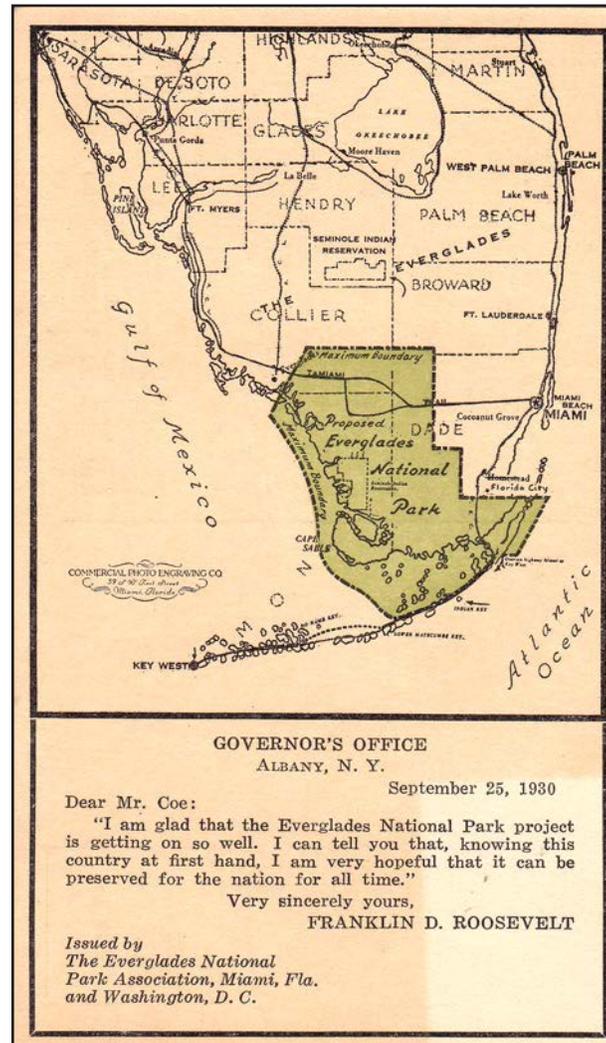


Figure 3-2. Everglades National Park Association postcard with proposed park boundary

Torrey Simpson, Dr. Harold H. Bailey, Frank Stoneman, editor of the *Miami Herald*, B. F. Ashe, president of the University of Miami, R. B. Burdine of Burdines Department Store, and a representative of Carl Fisher Properties.¹¹³

Coe and his wife spent their summers at a family vacation home in Wakefield, Rhode Island. On their way north in 1928, they stopped in Washington and Coe had a meeting with NPS Associate Director Arno B. Cammerer on May 31, 1928. Cammerer was impressed with the work Coe had done and explained to him that an NPS inspection trip to the Everglades would be a first step in seeking national park status. Coe also met with Florida Senator Duncan U. Fletcher to discuss the introduction of a bill to authorize the inspection trip. Coe already had a mailing list of supporters, sending a report on his meetings in Washington to “friends” on June 5. In August, Coe drove over from Wakefield to Darien, Connecticut, and met with NPS Director Mather. Mather had a massive stroke in early November 1928 and would have no further role in the Everglades project. Horace M. Albright took over as NPS director on January 12, 1929.¹¹⁴

From his May 1928 meeting with Cammerer, Coe would work closely with the NPS on the campaign for a national park in the Everglades. In the coming years he would spend many weeks in Washington, at times working from a desk at NPS headquarters. Getting a national park established in the Everglades became Coe’s mission for the rest of his life.

Coe stopped in Washington on his way back to Florida from Rhode Island and reached his Florida home by mid-November 1928. He then put the finishing touches on his plan for the formation of the Tropic Everglades National Park Association, designed to be the primary lobbying group in the campaign for a national park. Coe sent the association’s draft mission statement and a seven-page action plan to the NPS Washington Office for comments. The association was organized at a meeting held at the Nautilus Hotel in Miami Beach on December 11, 1928. Dr. David Fairchild was elected president and Ernest Coe executive secretary of the association (soon changed to executive chairman). The association ultimately dropped the modifier “Tropic,” becoming the Everglades National Park Association as of June 30, 1932. Dade County

113 Jackson, 83; Ernest F. Coe to Stephen D. Mather, May 18, 1928, Ernest F. Coe to Dear Friend, June 5, 1928, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 230. Carl G. Fisher (1874-1939) made a fortune in the manufacture of automobile parts and in the 1920s was the major force in developing Miami Beach as a resort destination.

114 Donald C. Swain, *Wilderness Defender: Horace M. Albright and Conservation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 178.

provided office space for the association in its recently completed 28-story courthouse building. (Figure 3-3. ENPA membership card.)¹¹⁵

Ernest Coe's passionate attachment to the Everglades, and his somewhat baroque prose style, are apparent in a publicity piece he wrote in Washington in October 1928:

This is our country's only section within the boundaries of the States where the sightseer and tourist can find as many forms of stately palms, tropical orchids hanging from strange trees and see other truly tropical jungle growth, vieing [sic] in interest with unfamiliar tropic birds, butterflies and fish of various forms and colors; long reaches of tropic beaches and richly colored seas, verdure clad tropic islands, clear lakes and open glades. Here is where many tropic birds of fantastic form and colors congregate in great rookeries and where that weird bird, the flamingo, formerly was wont to flock by the thousands and will again as well as myriads of water fowl who make this their winter resort, just as soon as our National Government takes this wonderful area under its protecting wing.¹¹⁶

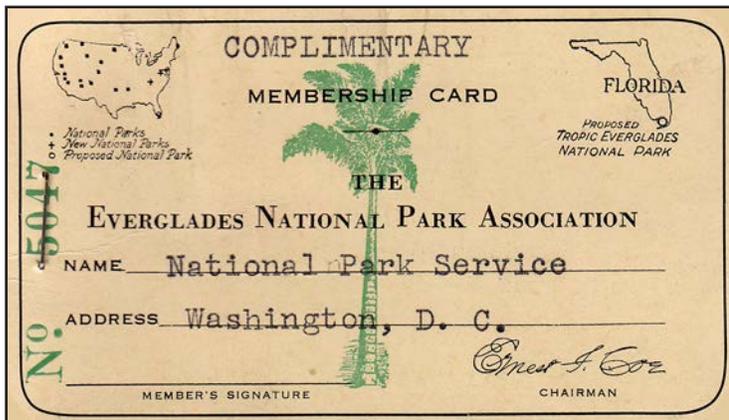


Figure 3-3. Everglades National Park Association membership card

That Coe wanted to make the entire coastline of the Everglades accessible to motor tourists is also quite apparent from the language contained in his action plan (figure 3-4A & B. Map with Ernest Coe's scenic highway & map legend). He anticipated raising funds for:

a scenic highway south from the Tamiami Trail, the logical North and West entrance through the miles of alluring Everglades, cypress hammock and lake country, the highway so designed as to traverse rookeries where great numbers of strange birds have for ages made their nesting home. This scenic highway to lead to the Cape Sable beaches, through thousands of great coconut palms. . . . This highway to lead from the Cape Sable beaches easterly to a junction with the State highway leading to and from Key West. Other roads to be developed later.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Other officers of the association were: Clayton Sedgwick Cooper, David Sholtz, and John O. Shares, vice presidents; F. Lowry Wall, secretary; S. P. Robineau, E. Bruce Youngs, and Dan Chappell, legislative committee. Ernest F. Coe to John O. Shares, July 5, 1950, CP, EVER 22482A; Ernest F. Coe to Senator Fletcher, Dec. 20, 1928, Everglades National Park Association press release, June 30, 1932, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 234.

¹¹⁶ "Re Proposed Tropic Everglades National Park, Location of the Cape-Sable Region of South Florida," NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 229.

¹¹⁷ Ernest F. Coe, "Progressive Sequence of Action," Dec. 6, 1928, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 229.

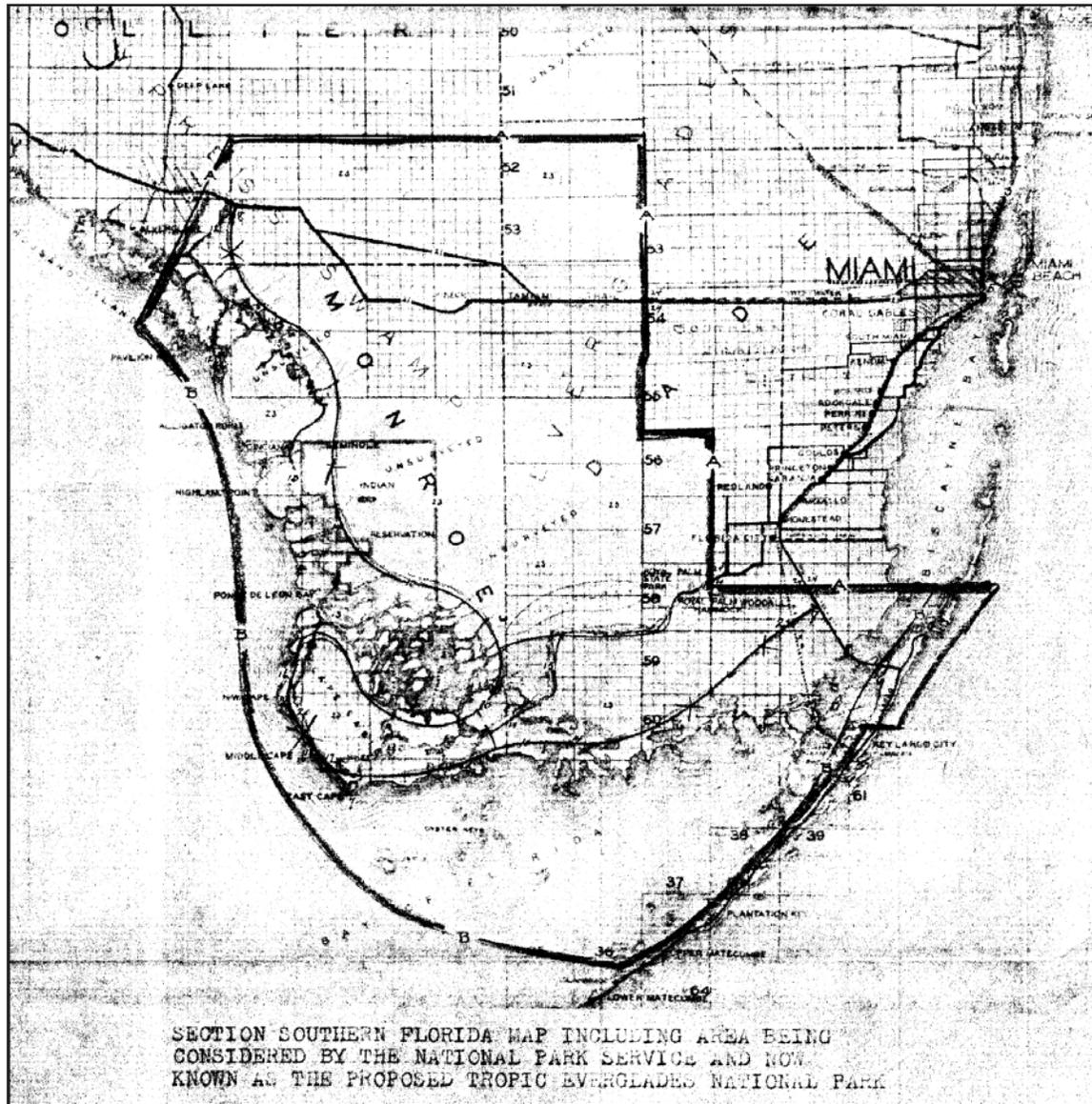


Figure 3-4A. Map with Ernest Coe's planned scenic parkway through the Everglades

Senator Fletcher asked the NPS to draft a bill authorizing an official investigation of the suitability of the Everglades as a national park, which he then introduced. At first, the NPS contemplated that the expenses of the investigating team would be borne by the local promoters of the park. When Robert Sterling Yard, executive secretary of the National Parks Association, got wind of this, he strongly objected. Yard and others believed that having the local park boosters pay for the trip would cast

Letters and numbers to left on following list correspond to letters and numbers on above map.

A Proposed land boundary lines	B Proposed shore lines and islands
A.C.L. Railroad station site	14 Boat stations along (10-11)
F.E.C. Railroad station site	15 Waterway to Royal Palm Hammock passing through jungles
East Coast State Highway	16 Gulf entrance to Ingraham Lake
West Coast State Highway	17 Ingraham Lake back of Cape Sable
Miami harbor	18-19 Cape Sables. Peak objectives and turning point for park travel
Everglades harbor	18 Logical housing area site
East Cape Sable	19 Camp colony opportunities
West park-highway entrance and boat landing	20 Inland passage from (18) and (19)
East park-highway entrance	21 Tamiami Trail
Trunk park-highway	22 Gator Lake and rookeries
One way highway exit via Royal Palm Hammock and tropic jungles	23 Great primeval nature areas
Turner River. West water entrance for boats going to Cape Sable, etc.	24 Highways adjoining park
General inside water route	25 Mumpus Bend

March 1, 1930
EFC/R

submitted by:
The Tropic Everglades Park Association

Figure 3-4B. Legend for map showing Ernest Coe's development plans

doubt on the objectivity of the investigation. Yard wrote the chairman of the House Public Lands Committee, and the bill was amended. On March 1, 1929, President Hoover signed the act directing the NPS to investigate and report to Congress on "the desirability and practicability" of establishing an Everglades park (see Appendix A for text).¹¹⁸ Because the federal fiscal year was almost over and the most comfortable time to visit the Everglades was winter, the investigating trip was scheduled for early in 1930.¹¹⁹

The Effect of Evolving Views on Wilderness and Its Preservation

The campaign for a national park in the Everglades got started at a time when a number of American conservationists and naturalists harbored serious misgivings

¹¹⁸ The bill authorizing an inspection passed the Senate on January 26, 1929, passed the House on February 26, 1929, and was signed into law on March 1, 1929, as P.L. 70-897.

¹¹⁹ Robert Sterling Yard to Don B. Colton, Chairman, Public Lands Committee of the House, Feb. 14, 1929, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 230; Public Law 70-897, An Act to Authorize the Secretary of the Interior to Investigate and Report to Congress on the Advisability and Practicability of Establishing a National Park to Be Known as the Tropic Everglades National Park in the State of Florida. Text of the act is in Appendix A.



Figure 3-5, Tourist camp, Dade County, Florida, 1939

about NPS policy. These misgivings centered on several issues. Some felt that the NPS, in its zeal to establish national parks east of the Mississippi, was accepting units into the system that did not meet traditional park standards. Traditionally, aesthetic grandeur on the order of the Yosemite Valley or the Grand Canyon had been the defining element of a national park. In the eyes of some, few of the tracts being considered for park status in the East measured up. Another area of concern was that the amount of road-building and other development that the agency was allowing in parks was beginning to damage the very values that had justified the parks' establishment. As historian Paul Sutter has ably demonstrated, hundreds of thousands of motorists had taken to the national parks and other natural areas in the 1920s. Those who believed that the essence of the national park experience was the chance to spend days at a time without seeing or hearing any sign of industrial civilization deplored this. These devotees of primitive or wilderness values at times referred to those who came to the parks in autos and never ventured far from the developed areas as "tin-can" tourists (figure 3-5, Tourist camp, Dade County). Also troubling to some was the degree of influence they believed had been attained by local park boosters in determining the boundaries of prospective parks and other matters. It seemed that local proponents frequently pushed for the inclusion of uninspiring tracts that could be rapidly developed with

campgrounds and other recreational facilities.¹²⁰ All of these issues were part of the extended discussions that developed among conservationists, scientists, NPS officials, and members of Congress during the five-year campaign to get Everglades National Park authorized.

Prominent in these discussions was Robert Sterling Yard, executive secretary of the National Parks Association. Yard had worked closely with Stephen Mather and Horace Albright in the Department of the Interior from 1916 to 1918. Yard was responsible for *The National Parks Portfolio*, a lavishly illustrated love song to the existing national parks. Some 275,000 copies of the book were distributed to members of Congress, publishers, and other opinion leaders, playing a key role in the establishment of the National Park Service on August 25, 1916. Yard decided to leave the newly formed NPS in 1918, partly because Mather had made Albright rather than Yard his principal deputy and partly because Yard disagreed with the emphasis on tourism promotion that Mather and Albright shared. Yard then became executive secretary of the National Parks Association (NPA), found in May 1919, a position he would hold until 1933.¹²¹ Although Yard had somewhat different goals for the parks than Mather and Albright, the three men worked together on many projects and issues. The NPA rapidly developed into an important independent supporter and sometime critic of the NPS. By the time that the campaign for a park in the Everglades got rolling in 1928, the NPA board of trustees included many of the most prominent American conservationists. Among the members were Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., probably the nation's premier landscape architect; Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson of the National Association of Audubon Societies; Dr. Henry Baldwin Ward, national president of the Izaak Walton League; and Dr. John C. Merriam, president of the Carnegie Institution.¹²² These men, with Yard in the vanguard, would be important figures in controversies over whether the Everglades was of national park caliber and how best its fragile environments could be protected.

An understanding of the concerns that many conservationists had over a national park in South Florida requires a brief examination of the history of national park development in the East in the 1920s. Director Mather and his key aide Albright understood that most Americans lived far from the dramatic scenery of the western national parks.¹²³ It became an NPS priority to seek the establishment of parks east of

120 Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 100-111.

121 The organization changed its name to the National Parks and Conservation Association in 1970 and to the National Parks Conservation Association in 2000.

122 Sutter, 102-106; Board of Trustee and Addresses, NPA, n.d. [~1931], JCM papers, box 188.

123 After working with Mather in Washington in the teens, Albright was superintendent of Yellowstone National Park from 1919 to 1929. From his post as superintendent, he also coordinated field activities for all of the NPS and traveled frequently to Washington to consult with Mather and Assistant Director Arno B. Cammerer.

the Mississippi, closer to the country's major urban centers. These new parks would attract millions of new visitors, broadening the constituency for national parks. Mather and Albright knew that the more satisfied visitors they could bring to the parks, the easier it would be to maintain and expand the agency's budgets and its prestige within the federal bureaucracy. Almost all of the western parks had been created from land that was already in federal ownership. In the East, land would have to be either donated by the states or purchased by the states from private owners. The situation would require the NPS to work closely with state governments and with local booster groups, who were in a position to lobby state legislators and mount fund-raising campaigns to buy land. Booster groups were also keenly aware of the economic benefits to be reaped by local businesses from the establishment of national parks.

Eastern park development commenced in earnest when the Congress in May 1926 authorized the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park on the Tennessee/North Carolina border, Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, and Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky.¹²⁴ All of these prospective parks involved private land that would have to be purchased by the respective states and donated to the federal government. In each case, only when a minimum acreage was conveyed would the NPS consider the park as established. Robert Sterling Yard believed that portions of the areas to be included in these parks did not meet national park standards for scenic grandeur. He felt that the NPS was bowing to local demands to include substandard cut-over forest areas that would be cheap to purchase and could be quickly developed for motor tourists. Troubling not just to Yard, but to forester and regional planner Benton MacKaye, forester Robert Marshall, and other conservationists was the NPS's plans to cut ridgeline auto roads in the Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains Parks. The Skyline Drive in Shenandoah was completed, but pressure from conservationists killed the idea of a long ridgeline road in the Smokies.¹²⁵ This experience with the new parks in Appalachia put these conservationists on their guard about the wave of enthusiasm coming from South Florida hoteliers and others for a park in the Everglades. Ernest Coe's proposed scenic highway along the shoreline was of particular concern. As Paul Sutter has shown, the controversies over the parks in Appalachia and the Everglades played an important role in causing some conservationists to place greater emphasis on the protection of wilderness values (sometimes articulated as "primitive" or "primeval" values) in the national parks. This emphasis led directly to the 1935 formation of the Wilderness Society, with Yard, MacKaye, Marshall, Harvey

124 The first national park east of the Mississippi River was Acadia, authorized in 1919.

125 The road extends only from Newfound Gap to Clingman's Dome.

Broome, a leading member of the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club, and forester Aldo Leopold as founding members.¹²⁶

The campaign for a park in the Great Smoky Mountains also coincided with and reinforced a belief among scientists that preserving areas for their biological values was a valid justification for national park status. Although the chief argument for making a park in the Smokies was scenic, emphasizing the rugged topography of mountains reaching over 6,500 feet in height, the area's worth as a botanical preserve also got some attention. The discipline of ecology was in its infancy in America in the 1920s; nonetheless, the Ecological Society of America, founded in 1915, was beginning to advocate the preservation of representative areas that displayed natural conditions. As early as 1926, the society was stressing the importance of "the vast possibilities for science and education" in parks. Dr. John C. Merriam, of the Carnegie Institution and an important advisor to NPS on its educational programs, was thinking along similar lines. In 1928 he wrote a paper in which he concluded: "There is reason for attempting complete preservation of certain relics of plant and animal life associations for the enjoyment and appreciation of the people, and for future needs in scientific and economic studies." The idea of "biological" national parks, then, was beginning to gain adherents and became part of the conversation over the fitness of the Everglades as a national park.¹²⁷

Yard and his like-minded allies kept a close watch as Ernest Coe and the Tropic Everglades National Park Association waited for the official team from NPS to make its inspection. The association continued to mount a vigorous promotional campaign for the park. A keynote of the campaign was the number of tourist dollars a national park would bring to Florida. Coe solicited statements of support from prominent scientists and conservationists, some of whom had never visited the area. Yard wrote of the association that "[t]heir proposed ballyhoo, in a word, is vicious, and I am writing strenuous letters to that effect." He succeeded in getting Coe to hold back on disseminating the statements of support pending the report of the inspection team. As early as June 1928 Associate Director Cammerer had warned Coe to limit his publicity efforts prior to the inspection trip. It was the sort of caution that Coe could rarely heed for very long. In October 1929, on his way back to Florida from summering in Rhode Island, Coe stopped in Washington and had his first meeting with Director Horace

126 Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains were authorized by P.L. 69-268 (44 Stat. 616), May 22, 1926. Darwin Lambert, *Administrative History of Shenandoah National Park, 1924-1978*, typescript (Luray, Virginia: NPS, January 27, 1979), 60; Sutter, 4-6, 130-131, 168, 230-231.

127 Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 115-116; Sutter, 125; "A Change of Policy for the National Parks," *Ecology* 7/1 (Jan. 1926), 112; John C. Merriam, "Significance of Biological Features in the Educational Program of National Parks," Aug. 24, 1928, NARA II, RG 79, NPS Dir. Recs., Albright, box 4.

Albright. Once back in Florida, he worked on arrangements for the inspection team's visit.¹²⁸

The NPS Inspection Team and Its Report

The NPS official investigating party arrived at Miami by train on February 11, 1930. Its members were:

Horace M. Albright, Director, NPS
 Arno B. Cammerer, Associate Director, NPS
 Elbert E. Burlew, Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior
 Roger W. Toll, Superintendent, Yellowstone National Park
 T. Gilbert Pearson, President, National Association of Audubon Societies (Official Collaborator)
 Dr. Hermon C. Bumpus, former director, American Museum of Natural History (Official Collaborator)

Unofficial participants in all or parts of the inspection trip included Dr. W. A. Clark of San Francisco, Caspar W. Hodgson of the Campfire Club of America, Dr. M. W. Stirling of the Bureau of American Ethnography, and Harlan P. Kelsey of the Southern Appalachian Park Commission. Serving as local guides for the tours were Ernest F. Coe and Dr. David Fairchild of the Everglades National Park Association. South Florida Congresswomen Ruth Bryan Owen and author Marjory Stoneman Douglas also participated.¹²⁹

The inspection began with an aerial survey of the Everglades from the Goodyear blimp *Defender*, allowing the party to view parts of the area inaccessible by other means (figure 3-6, NPS inspection party in front of blimp).¹³⁰ Marjory Stoneman Douglas and Ernest Coe had to ride in a small compartment hung below the dirigible's main cabin. Douglas has left an unforgettable account of Coe "being sick, as inconspicuously as possible," in a bucket during the flight. The blimp trip was followed by lunch at the

128 Quotation from Robert Sterling Yard to Henry S. Bryant, Jan. 26, 1929, JCM papers, box 187; Robert Sterling Yard to Ernest F. Coe, Feb. 6, 1929, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 230.

129 Arno B. Cammerer, Confidential memorandum for the files, concerning the Everglades inspection, Feb. 24, 1930, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 229; Horace M. Albright, *The Birth of the National Park Service: The Founding Years, 1913-1933* (Salt Lake City: Howe Bros., 1985), 256. Marjory Stoneman Douglas was the daughter of *Miami Herald* publisher Frank Stoneman. A journalist, author, and conservationist, Douglas became indelibly associated with the Everglades with the publication of her first book in 1947, *The Everglades: River of Grass* (see chapter 5).

130 After having built blimps and dirigibles for the U.S. military, Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. launched its own blimp fleet in 1925. The large airships became a major promotional tool for the company, which arranged with the City of Miami to station them at Watson Island, east of the city. It made sense for Goodyear to fly inspection parties over the Everglades; a national park would promote tourism, which could only help tire sales. Maurice O'Reilly, *The Goodyear Story* (Elmsford, N.Y.: Benjamin Co., 1983), 60-66.



Figure 3-6. NPS inspection party and Goodyear blimp, 1930

home of Dr. Fairchild, where the visitors met a number of scientists, including Charles Torrey Simpson, Dr. Harold H. Bailey, and herpetologist Dr. Thomas Barbour, director of Harvard University's Museum of Comparative Zoology. The party then proceeded to Matecumbe Key for a two-and-one-half-day excursion into Florida Bay and up the west coast on the houseboat *Friendship*. While anchored in Tarpon Bend, the group watched as “[a] vast vermillion and gilt sunset smoked up from the Gulf to the west as thousands and thousands of adult birds in full nuptial plumage” returned to their nests, as Douglas recalled it (figure 3-7, NPS inspection party on boat). A comic moment occurred when Dr. Bumpus fell out of the boat. At the conclusion of the boat trip on February 14, the party drove to Royal Palm State Park, where May Mann Jennings and other clubwomen provided lunch and guided tours of the hammock. That evening, the official members of the party were provided costumes and reserved seats for a fancy-dress ball at the Nautilus Hotel, Miami Beach, sponsored by the Committee of One Hundred. The next day, the inspection party had a luncheon meeting with business leaders. Albright, Cammerer, and Burlew then departed for North Florida, while the rest of the group toured the Big Cypress Swamp with Dr. Bailey.¹³¹

The NPS did not release a statement concerning the Everglades inspection trip until May 1930, but within three weeks of his return from Florida, Director Albright told a meeting of the Camp Fire Club that the team was “unanimous” in favor of national park status. Robert Sterling Yard believed Albright was jumping the gun. He believed that such a public commitment would be difficult to withdraw, even if subsequent information cast doubt on the area's eligibility. Albright wrote confidentially to a board member of the New York Zoological Society in

131 Arno B. Cammerer, Confidential memo for the files, concerning the Everglades inspection, Feb. 24, 1930, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 229; Douglas, “The Forgotten Man.” The Committee of One Hundred, a social and philanthropic group of prominent South Florida residents, was then just two years old.



Figure 3-7. NPS inspection party on boat

March 1930 stating the same unanimous opinion in favor of national park status. Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur¹³² announced on May 19, 1930, that the team had reported that the Everglades area “measured up to the high standards prescribed for national park establishment,” and that he would recommend that Congress authorize the park project. Apparently this statement was rushed out when the department learned that Representative Owen had on May 14 introduced a bill (H.R. 12381) authorizing an Everglades park, without waiting for the secretary’s formal report.¹³³ Wilbur’s press release further noted that “the area should be preserved to protect the primitive character of the country.” As if anticipating the sort of criticism some in Congress would direct at the project, Wilbur stated that some team members’ “original conception of the Everglades as an impassable tropical jungle, festooned with lianas and with miasmatic swamps full of alligators, crocodiles and venomous snakes, was entirely shattered.” Ernest Coe was in Washington in fall 1930, helping to draft the report that was to go to Congress over Secretary Wilbur’s signature.¹³⁴

¹³² Ray Lyman Wilbur was an M.D. and a lifelong friend of Herbert Hoover, who appointed him secretary of the interior on Mar. 5, 1929.

¹³³ Senator Fletcher introduced an identical measure, S. 475, on December 17, 1930. Ernest F. Coe, “Story of the Everglades National Park Project,” typescript, CP, EVER 22888, 66.

¹³⁴ Robert Sterling Yard to John C. Merriam, March 5, and Oct. 22, and Oct. 25, 1930, JCM Papers, box 187; DOI press release, May 19, 1930, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 226; Director Albright to William White Niles, New York Zoological Society, Mar. 29, 1930, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 230. Yard wrote to Merriam in October 1930 that Coe thought the draft report “corking” and was “awfully proud” that he had “a little part” in framing it.

In December 1930, Secretary Wilbur transmitted his official report on the Everglades to Congress. He found the Tropic Everglades National Park project to be “of outstanding merit, and the park, if established . . . would measure up to established national park standards.” He acknowledged that the scenery in certain sections, presumably the sawgrass marshes, had “a uniformity that may be said to approach monotony.” He emphasized the great diversity of environments, including the mangrove forests, and the great variety of wildlife, much of it not found elsewhere in the U.S. In recognition of the growing interest in biological parks, Wilbur mentioned the area’s value to scientists. He noted the threat to the area from fire and plant collectors and urged Congress to act while there was still time. The size of the proposed park was about 2,000 square miles (1.3 million acres), some 20 to 25 percent of which was state-owned. Relying heavily on estimates from the Tropic Everglades National Park Association, Wilbur declared land values to be quite low, predicting that the one million acres still in private hands could be obtained for about one dollar an acre. He foresaw fishing, boating, including motorboating, and nature observation as the principal visitor activities. He was careful to note that “a considerable part” of the area “would be retained in its present state as primitive wilderness.” Wilbur was confident that developed areas would be limited and would “not seriously interfere with the objective of conservation,” although he noted that any roads would have to be constructed on dredged material. He saw the Everglades as a fitting complement to the other national parks being developed in the East, and noted that it would draw its heaviest visitation in winter, when many of the western parks were difficult or impossible to visit. He devoted a sentence of his report to the area’s shell mounds that gave evidence of pre-historic human habitation.¹³⁵

The tentative boundary for the park was indicated on a map that accompanied the secretary’s report (figure 3-8, maximum proposed boundary, 1934 act). This boundary followed the boundary that Coe’s ENPA advocated. The northern boundary line was set close to the 26th parallel, taking in some 225,000 acres north of the Tamiami Trail. This original maximum authorized boundary ran along the inner shoreline of the Florida Keys and took in a 12-mile section of Key Largo. If adopted, the boundary would have included 93 percent of the land area of Monroe County.¹³⁶

The idea of a national park in the Everglades had significant support from the editorial pages of Florida’s newspapers. The *Miami Herald* led the way, but support came as well from the *Miami Daily News* (the *Daily News-Metropolis* for much of the 1920s), the *Florida Times-Union* (Jacksonville), the *St. Petersburg Times*, and many other papers. National newspapers and magazines also pushed the idea from the time the

¹³⁵ Ray Lyman Wilbur, *Report of the Secretary of the Interior to Accompany S. 475*, Dec. 3, 1930, 71st Congress.

¹³⁶ Wilbur, 17.



Figure 3-8 Maximum Park Boundary from 1934 Act

first bill was introduced until final passage in 1934. In March 1931, the editors of the monthly journal *Parks and Recreation* viewed the interest of Congress in an Everglades park as “welcome news.” In January 1932, the *New York Herald Tribune* editorial page came out strongly in favor of a national park.¹³⁷

Concerns over Preserving the Wilderness Values of the Everglades

The NPS firmly believed that the Everglades should contain a national park, but a number of scientists and conservationists had reservations. The Everglades National Park project was a hot topic in conservation and scientific circles even before Secretary Wilbur made his report. Some who had seen the area felt it lacked the dramatic scenic qualities of other national parks. Dr. John C. Merriam initially felt that only the hammock and mangrove areas had the inspirational qualities needed for a national park. The scientists’ greatest fear was that the area could not be developed for visitor access without great damage to the natural environment. Dr. Merriam believed that the Ingraham Highway had already driven away wildlife and changed the nature of the nearby vegetation. The Tropic Everglades National Park Association added to the unease by circulating a map showing substantial potential development, including the coastal scenic highway, boat stations, and “camp colony opportunities” (see figure 3-4). In conversations, Ernest Coe also spoke of building a resort hotel at Cape Sable. Concern over these development ideas led a number of scientists to suggest that the area would be better preserved as a national monument or wildlife refuge, where road and recreational development would be less than in a national park. Another concern was that the maximum area recommended by the Secretary of the Interior, embracing 2,000 square miles, included developed areas like the Tamiami Trail, railroad lines, and canals.¹³⁸ The American Forestry Association articulated the reservations shared by many in a resolution in December 1930:

The American Forestry Association’s approval of the proposed Tropic Everglades National Park is contingent upon the restriction of the area to be included in the park to lands which come fully up to the standards of the great National Parks, upon the preservation to the fullest possible degree of the wilderness character of the area, and upon placing the primary emphasis on national as distinguished from local considerations in acquisition of lands and in administration of the park.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ *Florida Times-Union*, Sept. 9, 1931, “Vision and Vigor,” *St. Petersburg Times*, Oct. 11, 1931; “The Proposed Everglades National Park,” *Parks & Recreation*, March 1931.

¹³⁸ John C. Merriam, Everglades of Florida, Mar. 1 to 6, 1929, NARA II, RG 79, NPS Dir. Recs., Albright, box 4; Robert Sterling Yard to John C. Merriam, Oct. 22 and Oct. 24, 1930, JCM papers, box 197.

¹³⁹ American Forestry Association, “Preservation of Florida Everglades Approved by the American Forestry Association,” Dec. 19, 1930, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 230.

On December 15, 16, and 18, 1930, The House Committee on the Public Lands held hearings on the bill (H.R. 12381) introduced the previous May by Congresswoman Owen. The bill was quite brief, providing that the Tropic Everglades National Park would be considered established when the secretary of the interior had accepted some portion of the approximately 2,000 square miles contained within the maximum boundary as indicated on the map accompanying the secretary's December 3, 1930, report. It was left to the secretary to determine the precise boundary at a later date. The NPS Organic Act of 1916 was to guide the administration and development of the park. Testifying before the committee were Congresswoman Owen, Senator Fletcher, Director Albright, Ernest Coe, Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson, president of the National Association of Audubon Societies, Dr. John Kunkel Small, and several others. Albright described the area as "absolutely distinctive" and up to national park standards. He thought that "probably two-thirds of this park should be kept as a wilderness accessible only by boat or on foot." Nonetheless he saw no reason why the Royal Palm Hammock, the Cape Sable beaches, and one or two rookeries could not be made accessible to visitors. Albright believed that the Ingraham Highway could be improved and modernized and that it might be necessary to run a road "some distance" south from Everglades City into the park. Under questioning, he assured the committee that it would be easy and inexpensive to build roads in the park. He estimated that land could be acquired by the state for from \$1.00 to \$1.50 per acre, except on Key Largo, where the cost would be greater.¹⁴⁰ In short, Albright did all he could to sell the project to the congressmen.

One incident during the hearings entered into the lore of the Everglades, sometimes in a garbled form. Baltimore surgeon and amateur naturalist Dr. Howard A. Kelly, who had often visited South Florida, testified before the committee. He brought conch shells and *Liguus* tree snail shells as exhibits and also produced a live specimen from a sack, remarking "I brought this to show you what a nice, big, kindly creature a king snake is." With that he placed the snake on the table in front of him. In Director Albright's recollection, this created a sensation; a woman in the audience fainted, and the court reporter jumped up, knocking over his stenotype machine. Some skeptical congressmen were already branding the Everglades bill "the snake and alligator swamp bill." Not wanting to give any encouragement to the naysayers, Congresswoman Owen quickly picked up the snake and placed it on her lap, showing it to be harmless. When asked what would have happened had the snake bitten her, the unflappable Mrs. Owen responded, "the consequences of such an incident would be much less harmful than if

¹⁴⁰ U.S. House Committee on Public Lands, *Establishment of Everglades National Park: Hearings*, 71st Cong. (Dec. 15, 1930).

the representatives halted discussion of the park project.” Reporters recognized some good copy and spread the story across the country.¹⁴¹

Robert Sterling Yard was ill and unable to attend the hearings, so he sent a letter to the committee’s chairman. Yard had only two days’ notice of the hearings and lacked enough time to have his letter approved by the board of the NPA. He agreed that the Everglades needed protection, but urged careful consideration by scientists of what type of protection to afford. He advised the committee to “inquire particularly into the plan for developing and administering the proposed park” and to inform the public “to what extent, if any, and under what conditions, tourists will be permitted to enter the protected area.” Yard also raised questions about how the “local promoters” planned to raise money for land acquisition. Yard’s letter caused quite a stir in conservation circles. Although the letter represented Yard’s personal views, they were shared by other NPA board members. Two members, Dr. Merriam and Dr. Vernon Kellogg of the National Research Council, contacted Secretary Wilbur about wilderness preservation in the proposed park. The Ecological Society of America wrote Chairman Don B. Colton of the house committee expressing concerns that the NPS would bow to local pressure for excessive park development.¹⁴²

Although there was some overlap, wilderness advocates like Yard had a substantially different perspective than scientists like Victor E. Shelford of the Ecological Society of America. Yard and the other founders of the Wilderness Society placed a value on wilderness that was primarily anthropocentric and had strong spiritual dimensions. In essence they wanted to save wild spaces for a special kind of visitor experience that appealed to just a few. The ecologists were much more concerned with preserving and studying biological systems from which all visitors were excluded. These differing points of view are explored in greater depth in chapter 10.

There was considerable discussion of the Everglades project at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) held in Cleveland December 29, 1930, to January 3, 1931. Founded in 1848, the AAAS was and remains the most influential broadly based scientific organization in the U.S. As of December 31, 1930, the association had 19,526 members. Dozens of affiliated scientific and professional societies held meetings at the same time as the AAAS annual meeting, and nearly all of the board members of the NPA were AAAS members. Henry Baldwin Ward and Vernon Kellogg were on the AAAS’s executive committee

141 U.S. House Committee on Public Lands, *Establishment*, 55-56; “Ruth Owen Charms Snake for House Land Committee,” *New York Times*, Dec. 17, 1930; “Park Proposal Is Due to Pass,” *Miami Daily News*, Sept. 17, 1931; Howard A. Kelly to Arno B. Cammerer, Feb. 22, 1934, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 233; Davis, *Everglades Providence*, 338-339; Albright, *Birth of the National Park Service*, 257.

142 Robert Sterling Yard to Don B. Colton, chairman, House Public Lands Committee, Dec. 15, 1930, V. E. Shelford, Ecological Society of America, to Don B. Colton, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 230.

at the time. Ward, who chaired the association's committee on conservation, was aware of the resolutions already passed by the Ecological Society of America and the American Forestry Association. He made sure that the AAAS's resolution on the Everglades would call for the preservation of natural features without being in any way critical of the NPS.¹⁴³ On January 1, 1931, the association's governing body, known as its council, adopted the following resolution:

A Resolution on the Need for Preservation of Everglades Areas

Whereas, the southern end of the Florida peninsula contains biological features of unique character, which are found no where [sic] else, and

Whereas, it has been proposed to establish a national park for the preservation of these features in their primitive state, therefore the council of the American Association for the Advancement of Science

Approves of the establishment of such a park, but only under conditions that will completely exclude railway and other commercial developments and fully protect the floral and faunal associations within the limits that are established.¹⁴⁴

While scientists and conservationists were discussing how best to protect the natural values of the Everglades, a group of U.S. Senators decided to conduct its own inspection. Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota, chairman of the Senate Public Lands Committee, five of his colleagues, and NPS Associate Director Arno B. Cammerer arrived in Miami on December 26, 1930, for a four-day tour. Ernest Coe, Dr. Fairchild, and Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson of the Audubon Society were the hosts for a series of trips that largely duplicated those of the NPS party of the previous winter, including a blimp ride. Sometime later, Senator Nye's hometown newspaper sharply criticized the \$4,000 cost of the trip.¹⁴⁵

143 *American Association for the Advancement of Science Summarized Proceedings, June, 1929, to January, 1934* (Washington, D.C.: AAAS, 1934); Henry Baldwin Ward to T. Gilbert Pearson, Jan. 16, 1931, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 230.

144 American Association for the Advancement of Science, Board and Council Minutes, 1926-1935, AAAS Archives; Ecological Society of America, "Resolution on Everglades Tropical National Park," Dec. 31, 1930, *Ecology* 12/2 (Apr. 1931), 430. The Ecological Society's resolution stated: "The Ecological Society of America endorses the formation of the Everglades National Park provided the largest possible portion of it be preserved in its primitive wilderness condition, its value and its classification as a museum of nature and hence as a National Park being dependent upon such preservation. The boundaries of the proposed park should be so drawn as to exclude all railroad development [emphasis in original]."

145 The other senators were Tasker L. Odie, Nevada; Otis F. Glenn, Illinois; Henry F. Ashurst, Arizona; Thomas J. Walsh, Montana; and Peter Norbeck, South Dakota. "New Territory Seen by Senate Group in Blimp," *Miami Daily News*, Dec. 30, 1930; "Mr. Nye Stages Some Party," *Fargo Forum*, June 25, 1932; Coe, "Story of the Everglades National Park Project."

As Anthropologist Laura Ogden has noted, naturalists who celebrated the biological values of the Everglades tended to devote little attention to the local whites who lived, hunted, or fished there, viewing their presence as, in a sense, transgressive. Naturalists were somewhat more likely to acknowledge the Seminole Indians' place in the Everglades, but often this mainly served to emphasize the remoteness of the area and its need for protection. Early on, the House of Representatives showed some concern for the claims of the Seminoles in the Everglades. When the Everglades bill was reported out of the House Committee on Public Lands on January 17, 1931, the authorizing act had been amended as follows:

Provided further, that nothing in this act shall be construed to lessen any existing rights of the Seminole Indians which are not in conflict with the purposes for which the Everglades National Park is created.¹⁴⁶

This language remained in all subsequent versions of the bill and in legislation that finally passed in May 1934.

Director Albright did what he could in the early months of 1931 to reassure conservationists that the NPS was committed to the preservation of the wilderness areas of the Everglades. Albright believed that Coe's "flood of propaganda and unhappy approach" were counterproductive. Robert Sterling Yard kept up the pressure by writing twice to Secretary Wilbur, which annoyed Director Albright, who was not pleased that Yard went over his head.¹⁴⁷ Albright wrote Henry Baldwin Ward to uphold the principle that public enjoyment was compatible with preservation: "We have never had any intention, if the Everglades come [sic] to us, of opening up its wilderness areas, those great sections known as White Water Bay, the Harney River country, and the Shark River country." By reconstructing the Ingraham Highway, Albright believed that "perhaps 25 per cent" of the park would be accessible to visitors. He relied on the wet and forbidding nature of the rest of the area to deter visitation and preserve it intact. He pointedly asked, "How could we ask the people to pay taxes to maintain a great area like this if some provision is not made for everybody to get a glimpse of what the park is?"¹⁴⁸

By early 1931, it was abundantly clear that the Florida supporters of the proposed park had no interest in a designation other than a national park and would have scant success in raising land-acquisition funds for anything but a national park. This was acknowledged by Albright, Yard, Ward, and others. With national park status a given,

¹⁴⁶ Chronology, Everglades National Park – Florida, EVER 22965.

¹⁴⁷ Albright seemed personally affronted by Yard's attitude, writing that it was "a reflection on the Service and myself in its intelligent planning." Director Albright to H. C. Bumpus, Mar. 14, 1931, EVER 42242.

¹⁴⁸ Robert Sterling Yard to SOI Wilbur, Jan. 7 and Jan. 9, 1931, Horace Albright to Henry Baldwin Ward, Jan. 24 and Jan. 30, 1931, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 230.

conservationists turned instead to attempting to amend the authorizing legislation to include explicit protection of wilderness values. Already on January 22, 1931, Yard had met with Congresswoman Owen and another Florida representative, Herbert J. Drane, to propose adding language to the draft legislation that would prohibit any through highways in the park, ban any public road running north from Cape Sable, and exclude from the boundary any “areas whose primitive quality had been impaired.” Owen was open to these changes, but the end of the last session of the 71st Congress was rapidly approaching, and Director Albright feared that any attempt to amend the bill would compromise its chances of passage. Yard also shared his proposed amendments with Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., who agreed with their purposes, but questioned the wisdom of attaching them to the authorizing legislation. As it happened, opposition from a group of congressmen led by New York’s Fiorello LaGuardia killed the bill in the House after it had passed in the Senate.¹⁴⁹ The reasons for LaGuardia’s opposition are not clear, but Olmsted, for one, believed that they were political in nature and not related to the bill’s merits. Olmsted did not lament the bill’s failure, believing a delay would give “an excellent opportunity for further study and for attempting to draft a more nearly adequate statement . . . of the functions and purposes appropriate to . . . the area.” He expressed a preference for a positive statement of the park’s functions and purposes rather than burdening the authorizing act with specific prohibitions.¹⁵⁰

With the installation of the new 72nd Congress in March 1931, Congresswoman Owen and Senator Fletcher again introduced bills (H.R. 5063 and S. 475) to authorize Everglades National Park and asked for formal recommendations on them from the secretary of the interior. Interior pronounced itself in favor in December 1931.¹⁵¹

The Olmsted-Wharton Report

In an effort to get an authoritative judgment and put to rest any doubts about the objectivity of previous assessments of the Everglades, the NPA in October 1931 established a subcommittee of its committee on new national park projects. The subcommittee consisted of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and William P. Wharton. Wharton had long been associated with the Massachusetts State Park System and was on the boards of the National Association of Audubon Societies and the American Forestry Association. Olmsted and Wharton spent ten days in the Everglades region, beginning

149 LaGuardia was an “Independent Republican” who frequently opposed the initiatives of Republican President Herbert Hoover and his secretary of the interior.

150 Robert Sterling Yard to Wallace W. Atwood, Jan. 22, 1931, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to Robert Sterling Yard, Feb. 10, 1931, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to Henry Baldwin Ward, March 30, 1931, JCM Papers, box 187; Robert Sterling Yard to Secretary Wilbur, Jan. 27, 1931, Albright to SOI Wilbur, Jan. 27, NARA II, RG 79, Toll Recs., box 4.

151 H.R. 5063 and S. 475.

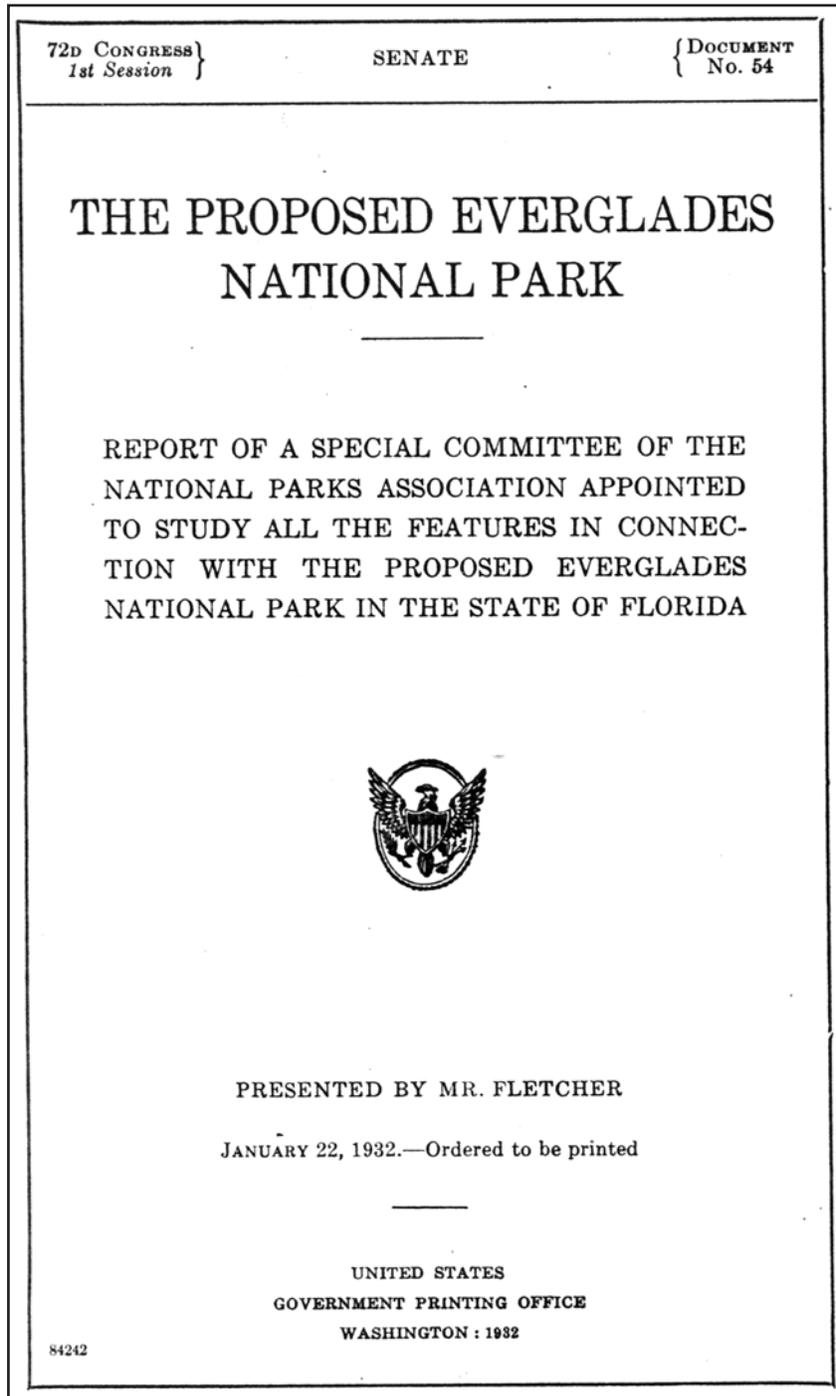


Figure 3-9. Cover of Olmsted and Wharton report

January 4, 1932. They viewed the area from a Goodyear blimp and a small airplane and spent a full week in boats, working their way from Key Largo to Everglades City, with excursions into Alligator Lake and Whitewater Bay, the upper reaches of the Shark River, and the lower reaches of Rogers River. The two walked extensively over the Cape Sable area, visited Royal Palm State Park, and spoke with many fishermen, guides, hunters, and trappers. Olmsted and Wharton submitted their report to the NPA board of trustees, which adopted it on January 18, 1932. The NPA sent the report to the Senate, which arranged to have 6,000 copies printed (figure 3-9, Cover of Olmsted-Wharton report). Excerpts from the report appeared in the March 1932 issues of *American Forests* and the *Bulletin of the Garden Clubs of America*. Mrs. William A. Lockwood, president of the Garden Clubs of America, arranged for the printing of 4,000 copies of the excerpted article, which were distributed to all NPA members and other conservationists.¹⁵²

Olmsted and Wharton concluded that the Everglades had extensive areas that had all of the inspirational qualities of existing national parks and was so different from other parks “as to have a special force of novelty.” They deemed it “highly desirable” that a national park be established. The two believed that the coastal mangrove forests and “the abundance of many species of wild bird life not commonly found in other parts” of the U.S. were particularly noteworthy. Although unwilling to advance specific recommendations about future park development, they were firm in believing “that the primitive character of the region should be protected to the utmost.” Because of the “intricate and unstable” ecological balance in the area, Olmsted and Wharton urged “prolonged and intensive study by . . . botanists, zoologists, and geologists” before any plan of park development was adopted. It is interesting to note that they understood the importance of the flow of water to the proposed park from north of the Tamiami Trail and urged that a way be found to keep that area from being drained, if it were not included as part of the park. In sum, Olmsted and Wharton gave a ringing endorsement to the Everglades park project.¹⁵³

In the 72nd Congress, the Everglades National Park bill again easily passed in the Senate but languished in the House. The country was three years into the Great Depression, and many believed that keeping a tight rein on government spending would help to get the economy going again. On November 8, 1932, the Democratic ticket of Franklin D. Roosevelt and John Nance Garner won the presidency in a landslide, winning 472 electoral votes to Herbert Hoover’s 59. Garner, who was still Speaker

152 *The Proposed Everglades National Park: Report of a Special Committee of the National Parks Association Appointed to Study All the Features in Connection with the Proposed Everglades National Park in the State of Florida*, Sen. Doc. No. 54, 72nd Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1932); Minutes of NPA board of trustees meeting, Jan. 18, 1932, Minutes of NPA annual meeting, Apr. 23, 1932, NPCA papers, series 1, box 13.

153 *The Proposed Everglades National Park: Report of a Special Committee*, 1, 5-8, 11.

of the House until his inauguration as vice president, held the key to the Everglades bill's chances in the House. Outgoing Secretary of the Interior Wilbur visited the Everglades in late December 1932. He reiterated his strong support for a park in the Everglades and urged Congress to authorize it. Ernest Coe marshaled all the forces of the Everglades National Park Association and its allies to lobby for passage. In the waning hours of the 72nd Congress on March 4, 1933, Speaker Garner refused to allow the Everglades bill to come to a vote, writing to Florida Congressman Herbert J. Drane "in view of the fact that our national government is confronted with a deficit of huge proportions, I do not feel that it would be wise to enact this legislation at this time."¹⁵⁴ Once again, the Everglades bill had failed, but not on its merits.

In the spring of 1932, while the Everglades bill was pending in Congress, Ruth Bryan Owen had faced a challenge in the Democratic primary election from West Palm Beach attorney J. Mark Wilcox. In the Solid South of this period, the Republican Party had few adherents, and the winner of the Democratic primary was virtually assured of victory in the general election. Ernest Coe somehow got the idea that the Everglades bill would have a better chance of passage if someone other than Owen sponsored it. Director Albright assured Coe "if Mrs. Owen can not [sic] get it through then it can not be gotten through." Coe apparently continued to insinuate that Owen was letting her ego get in the way of the bill's passage, and Albright wrote to Associate Director Cammerer, "After I wrote him [Coe] the last time, he cracked Mrs. Owen again. I am pretty nearly thru [sic] with him." Although she had significant support from Florida newspaper editors and enthusiastic crowds at her campaign rallies, Owen lost to Wilcox by 12,000 votes in June 1932. She was surprised and embittered by her defeat and accused Coe of permitting rumors to circulate that she had "insisted on claiming credit and pushing my name forward to the detriment of the [Everglades National Park] bill." Coe wrote Albright that Owen "had used unfortunate judgment," but that he in "no way consciously aided in her defeat." Coe's attacks on Owen more likely revealed his poor judgment. In the end, Owen's performance on the Everglades bill was not a factor in the election. Wilcox had made the repeal of prohibition his number one issue, and Owen's unwillingness to compromise on that issue led to her defeat. Once in office, Wilcox proved a strong supporter of the Everglades park project.¹⁵⁵

154 "Florida Park Tour Takes Wilbur on 1,200-mile Trip," *Baltimore Sun*, Dec. 28, 1932; "Mrs. Owen Thanks Supporters as Term Ends," *Cocoa Tribune*, March 9, 1933. The *Sun* noted that "the proposed Everglades National Park in Florida holds a record for official visitations, particularly in the winter time."

155 Sally Vickers, "Ruth Bryan Owen: Florida's First Congresswoman and Lifetime Activist," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 77/4 (Spring 1999):467-469; Dir. Albright to Assoc. Dir. Cammerer, Ruth Bryan Owen to Director Albright, June 7, 1932, Ernest F. Coe to Dir, Albright, June 21, 1932, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 231.

The Final Push for Authorization

When President Roosevelt took office in March 1933, he enjoyed tremendous Democratic majorities in both houses of the 73rd Congress. The advantage was 23 votes in the Senate and nearly 200 votes in the House of Representatives. Roosevelt was on record as a firm supporter of a national park in the Everglades, as was his secretary of the interior, Harold L. Ickes. Not far into the Roosevelt Administration, the NPS would have a new director, as well. Horace Albright had achieved his goals of reorganizing the agency and having it assume the administration of battlefields and other historic sites from the War Department. Albright announced that he would retire. Associate Director Arno B. Cammerer took over as director on August 10, 1933.¹⁵⁶

Once the new 73rd Congress was in place, Senator Fletcher again introduced the Everglades authorization bill and Congressman Wilcox introduced a companion measure in the House (H.R. 2837). On May 29, 1933, the Senate bill passed unanimously. In June 1933, the Bureau of the Budget notified the secretary of the interior that it would approve the Everglades bill only if it were amended to provide that no federal funds would be expended on “administration, protection, or development” of the park for five years from the date of enactment. Congressman Wilcox reluctantly agreed to this amendment in order to obtain committee approval. As reported out of the Committee on Public Lands on June 14, 1933, H.R. 2837 contained the five-year ban on federal outlays and the clause protecting the rights of the Seminole Indians, but it did not contain any mention of wilderness values.¹⁵⁷

Discussion among conservationists on how best to protect the flora and fauna of the Everglades had continued after the authorizing legislation failed in the 72nd Congress. Committees of both the National Parks Association and the American Forestry Association (AFA) were at work on suggested amendments to the bill as introduced in the new 73rd Congress. The AFA committee consisted of Dr. John C. Merriam, Mr. George D. Pratt, and Mr. Ovid Butler. Members of the NPA committee were Dr. Merriam, William P. Wharton, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., and Wallace W. Atwood. In essence, the leading lights of the American conservation community were looking for language that would go beyond the NPS Organic Act in ensuring that the NPS would protect the wilderness values of the Everglades.

Wallace Atwood proposed a rather long-winded amendment in April 1933:

¹⁵⁶ The position was first offered to Newton Drury, executive director of the Save-the-Redwoods League, but he declined. Swain, 230-232.

¹⁵⁷ Chronology, Everglades National Park – Florida, EVER 22965; L. W. Douglas, Dir., Bureau of the Budget, to SOI, June 10, 1933, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 232; Ernest F. Coe to Gov. David Sholtz, Gov. Scholtz papers, box 40.

A considerable part of the Everglades area might be shut off from all but the most exceptional use or penetration. Other areas could be open for entrance by special canoe paths or trails, largely or entirely under guidance of regularly authorized persons. Carefully selected areas so situated as to give a view of features of great interest would be entered by good roads and well constructed trails open to all visitors without guides, but under stringent regulations as to injury of plants and animals. The regions open to the whole public should be chosen for their special interest, and the approaches carefully planned on the basis of biological and landscape studies.¹⁵⁸

Olmsted, while in favor of a statement of general policy regarding preservation of wilderness conditions in the legislation, believed there was not nearly enough scientific knowledge of the area to justify “*detailed and specific* limitations” on development in the law [Olmsted’s emphasis].¹⁵⁹ By July 1933, the NPA committee was proposing:

It is the intention of Congress that the greater portion of the Everglades Park shall be permanently preserved as a wilderness area, and that no development of the project or any plan for the entertainment of visitors should be undertaken which will interfere with the preservation of the unique flora and fauna, and the essentially primitive natural conditions now prevailing in this area.¹⁶⁰

This version clearly shows the hand of Olmsted, who preferred general, positively stated guidelines, rather than specific prohibitions. With some minor edits, this became Section 4 of the authorizing act (see appendix A for the full text of the act). It is of interest that Olmsted by this point was convinced that Coe’s proposed scenic highway along the coast was a mistake, believing it would introduce “an unbroken zone of sophistication completely interrupting the continuity of primitive conditions.”¹⁶¹

The House Committee on Conservation of Wild Life held hearings on the Everglades bill on March 19, 1934. The AFA testified that its support of the bill was contingent on the addition of Section 4. The AFA was backed up in this stance by the NPA, the Garden Clubs of America, and Dr. Henry Baldwin Ward. Director Cammerer and Secretary Ickes soon gave their approval to Section 4. Both believed that the section was not needed, viewing it as nothing more than a restatement of the principles of the NPS Organic Act. They also surely understood that there would be howls of protest from the conservation community if the language were not included. In addition, Director Cammerer verbally consented to the appointment of “representatives of interested organizations as a committee advisory to the National Park Service on

158 Wallace W. Atwood to NPA committeemen, Apr. 10, 1933, JCM papers, box 14.

159 Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to William P. Wharton, Apr. 11, 1933, JCM papers, box 137.

160 Ernest F. Coe to Augustus E. Houghton, July 11, 1933, Gov. Sholtz papers, box 40.

161 Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to Ovid Butler, May 1, 1933, JCM papers, box 137.

selection of lands to constitute the national park.”¹⁶² Some legislators kept up their opposition to the end. Congressman Allen Treadway, a Massachusetts Republican, quipped, “You can’t get there any other way [than swimming]. And if you swim, there will be alligators hanging on to your legs, and snakes after your body.” In spite



Figure 3-10. Pen used by President Roosevelt to sign 1934 Everglades National Park authorization

of these aspersions, the Everglades bill passed the House on May 24, 1934. On May 30, 1934, President Roosevelt signed into law the act authorizing the eventual establishment of Everglades National Park as P.L. 73-267, with a maximum boundary embracing 2,164,480 acres (3,382 square miles) (Figure 3-10, pen used by Roosevelt to sign 1934 act).¹⁶³

Ernest F. Coe was in Washington almost continuously from February 18 to June 30, 1934, consulting and lobbying Congress. At times, Director Cammerer believed that Coe was doing more harm than good by personally lobbying legislators. At one point he wrote Coe that “we do not think it advisable to broadcast letters of this sort to Congress at this time. All is going well with the project and we are anxious that it be not complicated as a result of propaganda.” Coe nonetheless buttonholed legislators in the Capitol’s elevators and in late March sent a three-page letter to every member of Congress. Coe had incredible energy and perseverance, but failed to understand that at some points in the legislative process, silence was the best tactic. Shortly after the act’s passage, former NPS Director Horace Albright paid tribute to Coe in these words, “[W]hen the history of this great new park is written your name must be at the head of the list of those who worked for its establishment. I have never seen such devotion to a cause as you lavished on the preservation of the Everglades.” Coe, however, was not entirely satisfied. Three months after the law passed, in August, he wrote Director Cammerer pleading to have “Tropic” restored to the name of the park. Associate Director Arthru E. Demaray gave a patient reply, citing five reasons why this was not possible, among them that it would require another act of Congress.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² It took more than ten years for the state of Florida and the DOI to agree on a minimum park boundary. By then, both the NPS and the NPA had new leaders, and Cammerer’s commitment to an advisory committee seems to have been forgotten.

¹⁶³ G. H. Collingwood, American Forestry Assn., to Mrs. William A. Lockwood, Garden Clubs of America, Mar. 28, 1934, JCM papers, box 70; Dir. Cammerer to Asst. Solicitor Poole, Apr. 2, 1934, SOI Ickes to Louis R. DeRouen, Chair, House Committee on Public Lands, Apr. 9, 1934, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, boxes 232, 233; P.L. 73-267; Sen. Duncan U. Fletcher to Augustus Houghton, May 28, 1934, Houghton papers, box 23; Minutes of NPA executive committee meeting, Apr. 5, 1934, NPCA papers, series 1, box 13.

¹⁶⁴ Dir. Cammerer to Ernest F. Coe, Feb. 2, 1934, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 922; Ernest F. Coe Report to ENPA Executive Council, Nov. 1, 1934, Dir. Horace Albright to Ernest F. Coe, July 9, 1934, Gov. Sholtz Papers, box 40; Ernest F. Coe to Dir. Cammerer, Aug. 1, 1934, Acting Dir. A. E. Demaray to Ernest F. Coe, Aug. 8, 1934, NARA II, RG 79, NPS CCF, box 233; “House Votes to Make U.S. Park Out of Florida ‘Alligator Farm,’” *Washington Post*, May 25, 1934.