

Hunting Management Plan / Environmental Assessment

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Cypress National Preserve



Big Cypress National Preserve Hunting Management Plan / Environmental Assessment

Public Scoping Meetings

Collier County – August 30, 2011

Broward County – August 31, 2011

Hunting Management Plan / Environmental Assessment

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Cypress National Preserve



Proposed Project Timeline

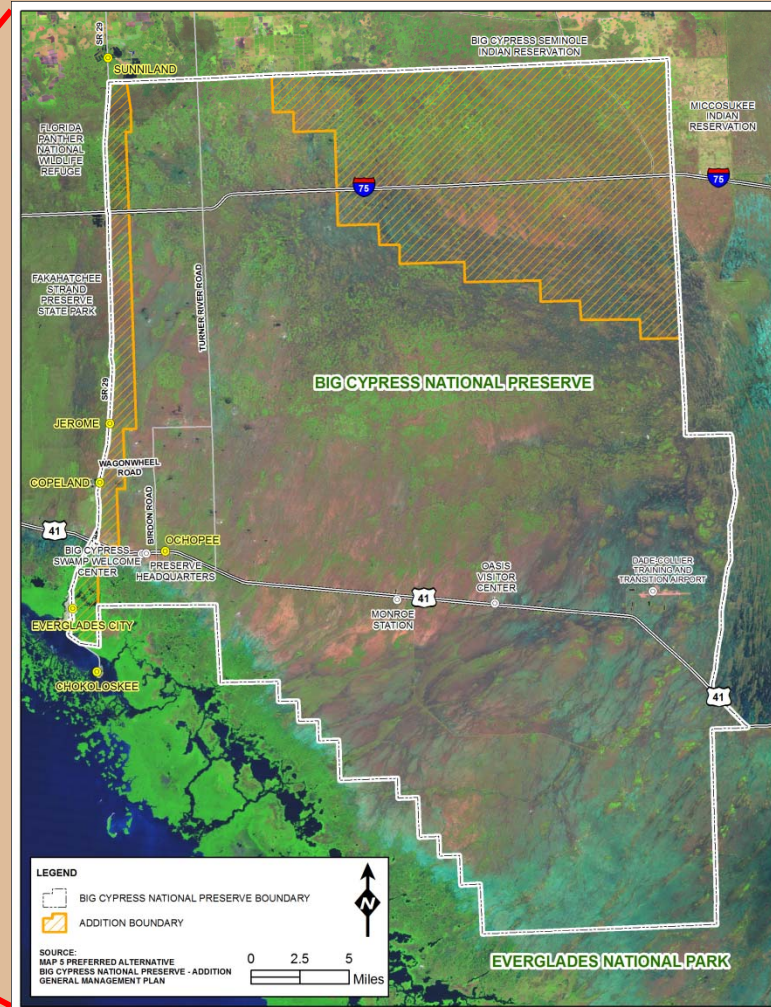
Milestone	Date
Public Scoping Comment Period	August 8 – September 16, 2011
Public Meeting – Collier County	August 30, 2011
Public Meeting – Broward County	August 31, 2011
Public Draft EA	February 2012
Draft EA Public Comment Period	February – March 2012
Draft EA Public Comment Workshops	Late-February 2012
Decision Document	Late-March/Early-April 2012

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Location Map





Big Cypress National Preserve Timeline

1974

Big Cypress created
by Congress
(PL 93-440)

1988

The Addition
approved by
Congress
(PL 100-301)

2010

Addition GMP
Completed

2011-2012

Hunting Management
Plan / EA



Project Background - Hunting

- Enabling Legislation – “The Secretary shall permit hunting, fishing, and trapping on lands and water under his jurisdiction within the Preserve and the Addition in accordance with the applicable laws of the United States and the State of Florida, except that he may designate zones where and periods when no hunting, fishing, trapping, or entry may be permitted for reasons of public safety, administration, floral and faunal protection and management, or public use and enjoyment.”
- Hunting is currently permitted within the original boundaries of Big Cypress
 - Hunting is currently managed cooperatively by the NPS and FFWCC
- The Addition has never been open to public hunting



Project Background

- Actions and decisions by the NPS to manage hunting constitute a federal action and NEPA compliance would be needed



National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

- Requires all federal agencies to prepare detailed statements assessing the environmental impact of and alternatives to major federal actions significantly affecting the environment



Draft Purpose

To develop a hunting management plan for the Big Cypress National Preserve / Wildlife Management Area, that allows the superintendent of the Preserve to provide for hunting opportunities in the Preserve in a manner that is in the best interest of the Preserve's resources (e.g., habitat, wildlife, protected species) and the visiting public, while meeting the requirements set forth by the National Park Service, the Preserve's enabling legislation, the National Park Service/Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Cooperative Partnership Agreement, and all federal, state, and local laws and regulations.



Draft Need

A hunting management plan is needed for the Big Cypress National Preserve / Wildlife Management Area:

- To provide clear and informational guidance for safe and responsible hunting within the Preserve to the visiting public
- To provide for a visitor use experience that complies with the enabling legislation for the Preserve
- To protect the resources (e.g., habitat, wildlife, protected species) present in the Preserve



Draft Need

- To provide a framework for hunting management within the Preserve that meets the requirements set forth by the National Park Service, the Preserve's enabling legislation, the National Park Service/Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Cooperative Partnership Agreement, and all federal, state, and local laws
- To provide consistency between National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission regulations



Draft Objectives

1. Provide guidelines for hunting within the Big Cypress National Preserve / Wildlife Management Area that satisfy all National Park Service regulations, the Preserve's enabling legislation, the National Park Service/Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Cooperative Partnership Agreement, and all federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
2. Provide a programmatic framework for facilitating agency communications and goal-setting that provides guidance over a number of years.



Draft Objectives

3. Utilize science-based resource management (e.g., habitat, wildlife, and protected species) for adaptive decision-making for:
 - The National Park Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to collaborate and cooperate on the rule-making process regarding hunting
 - The National Park Service to take action independently for resource protection or public safety in certain cases (i.e., high water events, fires, threatened and endangered species issues), which may have an effect on hunting within the Preserve



Draft Objectives

4. Provide the public with clear and understandable information regarding:
 - Hunting management within the Preserve
 - Safe and responsible hunting practices
5. Provide for a positive visitor use experience for hunters and non-hunters.
6. Provide an array of access options to allow for a diversity of hunting opportunities within the framework of existing regulations and funding.



Alternatives

- Alternatives are at the heart of NEPA's planning process
- Alternatives:
 - Provide options for decision-makers
 - Require a creative approach because they must alleviate impacts to several resources
 - Are based on environmental differences, rather than technical, logistic, or economic difference
 - Must be reasonable



Alternatives

- Alternatives must meet the objectives to a large degree, while resolving the purpose and need
- Alternatives that could not be implemented if they were chosen, or that do not resolve the need for action and fulfill the stated purpose in taking action to a large degree, should be eliminated as unreasonable before impact analysis begins



Alternatives

- NEPA requires that the NPS examine a range of reasonable alternatives
- Council on Environmental Quality has defined reasonable alternatives as those that are economically and technically feasible, and that show evidence of common sense
- Unreasonable alternatives may be those that are:
 - Unreasonably expensive
 - That cannot be implemented for technical or logistic reasons
 - That do not meet park mandates
 - That are inconsistent with carefully considered, up-to-date park statements of purpose and significance or management objectives
 - Conflict with the enabling legislation, NPS Management Policies, or the Organic Act
 - That have severe environmental impacts



Draft Alternative #1

No-Action –

Apply Current Joint NPS/FWC Management to the Addition

Under this alternative, the current process utilized to manage hunting within the original Preserve boundaries would be applied to the Addition. Current hunting management would continue within the original Preserve boundaries. Existing regulations employing the current communications, coordination, and regulation modification process would be implemented throughout the Preserve. This alternative could trigger the National Environmental Policy Act process for changes in hunting management protocol within the Preserve.



Draft Alternative #2

No Hunting in the Addition

Under this alternative, there would continue to be no hunting in the Addition. Current hunting management would continue within the original Preserve boundaries, using the existing regulations and employing the current communications, coordination, and regulation modification process between National Park Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. This alternative could trigger the National Environmental Policy Act process for changes in hunting management protocol within the Preserve.



Draft Alternative #3

New Joint NPS/USFWS/FWC Adaptive Management Strategy

Under this alternative, an adaptive management strategy would be utilized. A clear decision-making and communications framework would be established between the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to manage hunting in the entire Preserve. Wildlife Management Area regulations would be reviewed at least annually through the decision-making framework established in the National Park Service/Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Cooperative Partnership Agreement that would provide:

- A process by which the elements of the hunting regulations could be modified, which includes public participation
- A communications protocol to change regulations

This alternative would allow for changes in hunting management protocol within the Preserve without triggering the National Environmental Policy Act process.



Summary of Draft Alternatives

- **Alternative #1 – Annual consultation with FWC would be applied to the Addition**
- **Alternative #2 – No hunting in the Addition (baseline conditions)**
- **Alternative #3 – Joint NPS/USFWS/FWC adaptive management strategy for entire Preserve**



How to Comment (PEPC)

To comment on the project via the NPS website:

1. Go to: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>
2. Click on Big Cypress National Preserve
3. Click on the “Open for Comment” link on the left
4. Select the document to review and comment
5. Click on “Comment on Document”
6. Respond to the questions provided or provide other comments you may have on the project

Comments must be submitted no later than September 16th



How to Comment (Comment Form)

To comment on the project via comment form:

1. Drop off here or
2. Mail to:

Superintendent

Big Cypress National Preserve

33100 Tamiami Trail East

Ochopee, Florida 34141-1000

Comments must be postmarked no later than September 16th

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Questions?