



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the
Interior

Big Cypress
National Preserve

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Big Cypress News Release

Release: **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
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Big Cypress National Preserve Seeks Public Scoping Comments on Air Tour Management Plan

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), in cooperation with the National Park Service (NPS), has initiated development of an Air Tour Management Plan (ATMP) and associated Environmental Assessment (EA) for Big Cypress National Preserve (Big Cypress), pursuant to the National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000.

An ATMP is being developed to provide measures to mitigate or prevent significant adverse impacts, if any, of commercial air tour operations at Big Cypress, including impacts on natural and cultural resources, visitor experiences, and tribal lands. It should be noted that the ATMP has no authorization over other non-air-tour aircraft such as military and general aviation aircraft.

One air tour operator currently provides commercial air tours over and within ½ mile of Big Cypress. Flights originate out of Everglades Airpark. The operator has the authority to conduct a maximum total of 1260 air tours per year, though in recent years, operations have likely been below this level. While the air tour visitor experience varies depending on weather conditions and the desires of the air tour client, the primary attractions for air tour visitors are viewing wildlife such as alligators and birds, as well as the diverse ecosystems within Big Cypress.

The FAA and NPS are now inviting the public, agencies, tribes, and other interested parties to provide comments, suggestions, and input regarding the Big Cypress ATMP. Generally speaking, the agencies would like to know about any concerns or ideas the public has regarding commercial air tour operations at Big Cypress and their management. Questions to consider when providing input include: Are there any significant issues the agencies need to consider during the planning process? How do you feel air tours may affect natural, cultural, and historic resources at Big Cypress or adjacent tribal lands.

A Public Scoping Document that describes the project in greater detail is available at:

- http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/arc/programs/air_tour_management_plan/park_specific_plans/big_cypress.cfm
- http://parkplanning.nps.gov/BICY_ATMP

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PUBLIC SCOPING:

Scoping Period: The 30-day scoping period will begin on April 19, 2011. Please submit any comments you may have no later than May 19, 2011.

SUBMITTING COMMENTS:

Comments on the scope of the Environmental Assessment can be sent electronically via the electronic public comment form on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment System at: ***http://parkplanning.nps.gov/BICY_ATMP***

All comments must be submitted within 30 days of date of this notice.

Written comments may also be submitted to Keith Lusk (Air Tour Management Plan Program Manager, Special Programs Staff, AWP-1SP, FAA) via mail (P.O. Box 92007, Los Angeles, California 90009-2007).

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