

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

South Florida and Caribbean Parks



SOUTH FLORIDA AND CARIBBEAN PARKS

EXOTIC PLANT MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Draft

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**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

DRAFT EXOTIC PLANT MANAGEMENT PLAN / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

South Florida and Caribbean Parks

Lead Agency: National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Department of the Interior

This draft *Exotic Plant Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (EPMP/EIS) analyzes a range of alternatives and actions for the management of exotic plants in nine south Florida and Caribbean parks. The parks included in this EPMP/EIS are Big Cypress National Preserve, Biscayne National Park, Canaveral National Seashore, Dry Tortugas National Park, Everglades National Park, Buck Island Reef National Monument, Christiansted National Historic Site, Salt River Bay National Historic Park and Ecological Preserve, and Virgin Islands National Park. This EPMP/EIS assesses the impacts that could result from continuation of the current management framework (the no-action alternative) or implementation of either of the two action alternatives.

Alternative A, No Action: Continue Current Management, would continue the existing management framework. The nine parks would continue to treat infestations of exotic plants on an *ad hoc* basis and through currently available funding sources.

Alternative B, New Framework for Exotic Plant Management: Increased Planning, Monitoring, and Mitigation, would apply a systematic approach that would prioritize exotic plants for treatment, monitor effects of those treatments on exotic plants and park resources, and mitigate any adverse effects to park resources as determined through the monitoring program. This alternative would employ an adaptive management strategy, using the results of monitoring to adjust treatment methods or mitigation methods to reach the desired future condition of treated areas in the parks. The effectiveness of efforts to control exotic plant invasion or native habitats would increase as a result of uniform recording and storage of information acquired during monitoring and sharing of that information among the nine park units.

Alternative C, New Framework for Exotic Plant Management: Increased Planning, Monitoring, and Mitigation, with an Emphasis on Active Restoration of Native Plants, the preferred and environmentally preferred alternative, would augment the systematic approach integral to alternative B, but would add an active restoration program to enhance the return of native species to treated areas in selected high-priority areas. The difference between alternatives B and C lies in the restoration plan, with some alterations to the monitoring plan and the criteria used to determine success of treatment. Under alternative C, a decision tool would be applied to determine areas that are appropriate for active restoration, which would occur in park areas that have been previously disturbed and in areas with potential threatened and endangered species habitat or sensitive vegetation communities where a more rapid recovery would be desirable. The active restoration approach for a given treatment area would be determined based on a site-specific evaluation. Other areas in the parks would recover passively as described in alternative B.

Public Comment—If you wish to comment on this Draft Exotic Plant Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement you may submit your comments by any one of several methods. It is important to note that all comments must be postmarked, transmitted, or logged no later than 60 days from the date the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency filing notice in the Federal Register. This deadline will be posted on the National Park Service (NPS) Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ever> and will be published in press release in local and regional newspapers. Written comments can be mailed to

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Reviewers are encouraged to submit comments, ideas, or questions online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ever>.

It is the practice of the NPS to make all comments, including names and addresses of respondents who provide that information, available for public review following the conclusion of the NEPA process. Individuals may request that the NPS withhold their name and/or address from public disclosure. If you wish to do this, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. Commentators using the website can make such a request by checking the box "keep my contact information private." NPS will honor such requests to the extent allowable by law, but you should be aware that NPS may still be required to disclose your name and address pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act.

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