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EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

DRAFT

FLAMINGO COMMERCIAL SERVICES PLAN/ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

November 2007



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SUMMARY

The largest developed area within Everglades National Park is the Flamingo area, located at the southernmost mainland point of the park. In 2005, the Flamingo area sustained heavy infrastructure damage as a result of two consecutive hurricanes, Katrina and Wilma. These storms caused overwhelming impacts to already aged facilities, and many of the visitor uses and services in Flamingo had to be shut down or reduced. The Flamingo Lodge buildings, the 24 cottage units, the Flamingo Restaurant, the gift shop, and Buttonwood Cafe were closed due to the damage caused by strong winds and six to eight foot storm surges. Historically, Flamingo was the only area in the park providing overnight accommodations, beyond tent and recreational vehicle camping, to park visitors.

Due to the loss of services and accommodations at Flamingo, the National Park Service (NPS) was asked by the public to expedite the process for determining the site's future. As a result, the park embarked on a planning process in October 2006, through the development of a Commercial Services Plan and Environmental Assessment (CSP/EA), to identify options and make decisions about Flamingo. The CSP will determine necessary and appropriate commercial services for the Flamingo area in accordance with all applicable laws and policies, while providing a viable long-term business opportunity for the concessioner(s) ultimately selected to operate the facilities. In addition, the plan seeks to integrate principles of sustainability in site and facility design, and energy conservation, while minimizing impacts to natural and cultural resources.

Based on the analysis of necessary and appropriate services, and public input related to alternatives and desired services, the NPS developed and discussed a range of alternatives. Three alternatives were carried forward for analysis in this EA:

- **Alternative A – No Action Alternative.** This alternative is required to provide a baseline to measure the impacts of the action alternatives on park resources and visitor experience. Concessions at Flamingo would function according to current uses, which primarily focus on day users. Only the campground and limited marina slips would be available for overnight use. Projects that have been approved for emergency hurricane funding (two replacement backcountry campsites, replacement employee housing, replacement maintenance facility, replacement amphitheater) or are necessary to provide current levels of basic services are also included in alternative A.
- **Alternative B – “Flamingo Rebuilt”.** This alternative replaces the concessions and services that existed prior to the 2005 storms at Flamingo and bring back services offered in years past, but incorporates more modern conveniences and sustainable practices. The facility layout within the Flamingo area would generally remain the same, and the buildings and services offered would reproduce the “Old Flamingo” ambiance of the area. There would be a number of new facilities built including: lodge, cottages, swimming pool, and restaurant, located west of the visitor center to reduce the developed footprint in rebuilt areas.
- **Alternative C – “Flamingo Redesigned”.** This alternative would offer a “New Flamingo” with a greater variety of structures and land- and water-based services (providing services offered in the past as well as new services), and would establish the area as an eco-tourism destination. Overnight accommodations would include a new lodge, cottages, as well as ecotents. A creative set of sustainable principles suited to Flamingo's particular environment would be used, including site design, energy management, water supply, waste prevention and “green” architecture. The site would be redesigned to consolidate related uses, minimize the need for utility extensions, and facilitate pedestrian and bicycle circulation.

Several elements would be **common to all the alternatives** considered, including the no action alternative. These include:

- Demolition of the Flamingo Lodge buildings and cottages
- Reconstruction or replacement of certain facilities damaged by past hurricanes (amphitheater, an NPS employee housing structure, maintenance office and repair shops, a concessioner housing structure, and two backcountry campsites in Florida Bay)
- Restoration of areas within the Flamingo developed area that are no longer needed for structures or facilities to natural conditions
- Maintenance of Flamingo marina complex including fueling stations
- Preservation of historically significant Mission 66 facilities such as the Visitor Center and Service Station
- Incorporation of 2004 Florida Building Code requirements for the High Velocity Hurricane Zone and design to accommodate effects of potential sea level rise/global warming
- Incorporation of accessibility design requirements and sustainable design principles in the construction of new structures
- Use of Integrated Pest Management and sustainable maintenance practices

The park has not yet selected a preferred alternative. All alternatives are financially viable, but alternative C is the most financially advantageous alternative, while alternative A has little long-range revenue potential. Alternative C has been identified as the environmentally preferred alternative. None of the alternatives have any major adverse or beneficial impacts to the resources or values evaluated. Selection of a preferred alternative will follow analysis of public comment received on this draft CSP/EA. Once a preferred alternative has been identified, there will be a 30-day public review period before the Finding of No Significant Impact is issued. The selected alternative (and final CSP) will be incorporated into the park's General Management Plan (GMP), which is currently underway. Implementation of the CSP will begin as funding becomes available. Although there will be additional design, site planning, permitting and consultation necessary to implement components of the selected alternative, this EA serves as the environmental compliance document for the actions identified in the CSP.

Public Review and Comment

This draft CSP/EA will be on public review for more than 45 days. If you wish to comment, you are encouraged to submit your comments directly on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website. The other option is to mail comments to the name and address provided below.

Please **email comments** through the NPS PEPC planning website: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>, select "Everglades National Park" from the drop down box, and follow the links for the Flamingo Commercial Services Plan/EA. The "Open For Public Comment" link on the left column provides access to the draft CSP/EA.

The "Document List" link provides a list of S. Florida libraries that have paper copies available for review. The public may also contact the park at 305-242-7700 to find out South Florida library locations or to request a CD of the draft CSP/EA. If prompted by voice mail, press "2" at 1st prompt and "5" at 2nd prompt to leave mailing information. A limited number of paper copies of the Draft Plan are also available.

Please **mail written comments** to:
Everglades National Park
Attn: Fred Herling, Flamingo CSP
40001 State Road 9336
Homestead, FL 33034

Please note that names and addresses of people who comment become part of the public record. **If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment.** We will make all submissions from organizations, businesses, and individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses available for public inspection in their entirety.

The NPS will hold three public workshops to present information about the draft CSP/EA and solicit public comment. Each workshop will take place from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m., with a presentation by Superintendent Dan Kimball at 7:00 p.m. Before and after the presentation, the public will be able to view informational displays, meet with park staff, and provide comments.

Monday December 3, 2007 International Game Fish Association Hall of Fame
(954) 927-2628 300 Gulfstream Way, Dania Beach, FL 33004

Tuesday December 4, 2007 South Dade Regional Library
(305) 233-8140 10750 SW 211th St, Miami, FL 33030

Thursday December 13, 2007 Key Largo Holiday Inn*
(305) 451-2121 99701 Overseas Highway, Key Largo, FL 33037

*There will be a live web cast of portions of this workshop, including Superintendent Kimball's presentation and the public question and comment period that follows. To view and participate in the broadcast, beginning at 7:00 p.m., go to the Everglades National Park website: www.nps.gov/ever and look for the link on the homepage. From December 17, 2007 through January 25, 2008 (the end of the public comment period), to help inform the public about the project a tape of the web cast will be accessible from the park's website via a link on the homepage.

ALL COMMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY Friday, January 25, 2008.

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