



REVISED PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES FOR MARINE WATERS



Dear Friends,

As you may know, the National Park Service is developing a general management plan (GMP) for Everglades National Park and an accompanying wilderness study that is required for the East Everglades Expansion Area, which was added to the park in 1989. On behalf of our planning team, I'm pleased to provide an update on this planning effort. In May 2007, we published a newsletter that presented preliminary alternatives for the future management of the park, including various wilderness options for the East Everglades. We held public workshops and solicited public input about the alternatives between May and July 2007. We received comments from many of you; your feedback and ideas are proof of your deep interest in and concern for Everglades National Park. Based on this input, park managers decided that the best way to move forward with the planning process was to revise the preliminary alternatives for the park's marine waters, because these areas were the focus of strong public interest and concern. Your input has been instrumental so far, and we certainly hope you will stay involved throughout the planning process — as we sincerely value your input.

This newsletter presents four revised preliminary management alternatives **for the marine waters** of Everglades National Park (the elements of the alternatives published in the May 2007 newsletter for all other areas of the park remain valid and will be used in upcoming GMP steps). The revised marine alternatives have been crafted considering the comments and ideas we received and updated scientific information concerning the park's marine waters. (Please see the sections of this newsletter titled "What We Heard From You" and "Recent Research Studies" for more on these topics.)

We have opened another public comment period through May 15, 2009 to gather more input, and we have enclosed a mail-back form for your comments. You may also comment online by going to the Everglades National Park homepage (www.nps.gov/ever) and clicking on the "General Management Plan" link. We will hold public meetings in March and April (see information on the back page) where you can learn more about the alternatives and provide comments. The public meetings are not the only way to talk face-to-face, however — planning team members are available to meet with interested groups and organizations to provide more information and answer questions about the management alternatives, the planning process, and related topics. Please contact Fred Herling, Park Planner, at 305-242-7704 or fred_herling@nps.gov for more information.

We will use your responses to the ideas presented in this newsletter to help analyze the alternatives and develop the preferred alternative. The preferred alternative may incorporate elements of the various preliminary alternatives, as well as new ideas. Comments received by May 15, 2009 will be most helpful for this next phase of the planning process — analyzing the impacts of the alternatives, developing a preferred alternative, and preparing the Draft General Management Plan and accompanying environmental impact statement.

We look forward to hearing your ideas and opinions and working with you on this important step of the general management planning effort. Thank you for your continued participation and interest in shaping the future of Everglades National Park.

Sincerely,

Dan B. Kimball
Superintendent, Everglades National Park

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WHAT WE HEARD FROM YOU

In May 2007, we published a newsletter that presented four preliminary general management plan alternatives for Everglades National Park (alternatives A-D). In June and July 2007, we hosted seven public meetings to gather your opinions and ideas about the preliminary alternatives. More than 1,100 people attended the public meetings, and more than 1,000 written comments from individuals and organizations were received. We also met with a number of stakeholder groups and agencies to discuss the general management plan and gather input on the alternatives.

At the public meetings and on newsletter comment forms, the planning team asked which alternative would (a) best meet your vision for the national park, (b) provide opportunities for your desired experiences, (c) best protect the park’s natural resources, and (d) best protect the park’s cultural resources. We also asked for ideas about managing the areas you are concerned about or most familiar with. Examples of common comments received for support of each alternative are outlined below.



ALTERNATIVE	REASONS COMMONLY GIVEN FOR SUPPORTING EACH ALTERNATIVE
Alternative A (received the most comments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “motorboats should not be excluded from any part of the park”• “current management is fine”• “management by water depth is not enforceable”• “allows shallow water fishing”• “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”
Alternative B	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “enhances opportunities for nonmotorized experiences”• “preserves natural integrity of park’s wilderness”
Alternative C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “offers different experiences for different people”• “don’t need large boats in the park — causes too much environmental damage”
Alternative D	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “better protects the wildness of the Everglades”• “better integrated with other conservation areas”• “preserves larger areas for wildlife habitat”

In addition to comments received on those four alternatives, a group of Florida Keys citizens knowledgeable about the park jointly submitted a proposal for another alternative that they labeled “alternative E.” It focused on education and compliance, resource protection, access, and visitor experience, and included a mandatory boater education program, protection for seagrass and nesting/fledging birds, pole/troll and no-wake zones in selected areas, and more and better-marked channels for boater navigation.

Several months later another group based in the Florida Keys, also very familiar with the park, put forth an alternative that was based on managing Florida Bay based on water depth (similar to alternative D) to protect critical resources. Their proposal also included strong education and enforcement components, a 90-horsepower restriction for boats in the park, and expanded backcountry areas for paddling and fishing.

In general, there were strong concerns expressed about the possibility of boating restrictions intended to protect some of the natural resource values and wilderness for which Everglades National Park was established. The planning team heard the following recurring themes on this topic:

- Boater education is key to protecting resources.
- Better-marked “preferred” boat channels would help prevent

bottom damage from propellers.

- Little scientific evidence was presented to support boating restrictions.
- Preliminary alternatives appear to be an attack on motorboaters.
- Park should preserve opportunities to fish the flats of Florida Bay and Ten Thousand Islands backcountry.
- There should be enhanced recreational opportunities to experience the park’s vast, unique wilderness resources.

Recently completed steps related to these concerns and to the general management plan are as follows:

- Scientific studies have been conducted to gather information about boat use in the park, and about the extent, pattern, and trends of seagrass damage caused by motorboat propellers.
- Revised preliminary alternatives for marine areas of Everglades National Park have been developed based on the results of these studies, other knowledge available about the park, and public comments received to date. (Comments received from the public about the 2007 preliminary alternatives have been noted and will be further analyzed during the next steps in the planning process; see the “What’s Next?” section on page 14.)

RECENT RESEARCH STUDIES

PATTERNS OF PROPELLER SCARRING OF SEAGRASS IN FLORIDA BAY

Everglades National Park encompasses over 500,000 acres of marine environments. All of its marine waters were federally designated as submerged marine wilderness in 1978 (Public Law 95-625) and are part of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness. Florida Bay supports seagrass beds that provide important habitat for many species of fish and other marine animals. Florida Bay is heavily used by recreational boaters for, among other things, access to productive fishing areas. The bay is a complex system of mud banks, flats, and shallow basins, so boaters can easily damage the bay’s sensitive bottom resources. Boat propellers can churn up sediment and bury or scar seagrass. Damage to the park’s vast seagrass beds from motorboat propellers has been a problem for decades, but the extent and severity of the problem had not been well understood or described. During this planning process, the need to better understand seagrass scarring patterns and trends was identified.

To learn more about the problem of seagrass scarring by motorboat propellers and potential ways to address the problem, the park conducted a seagrass scarring mapping project. This study, using 2004 digital imagery that covered all of Florida Bay, found that Florida Bay seagrass scarring

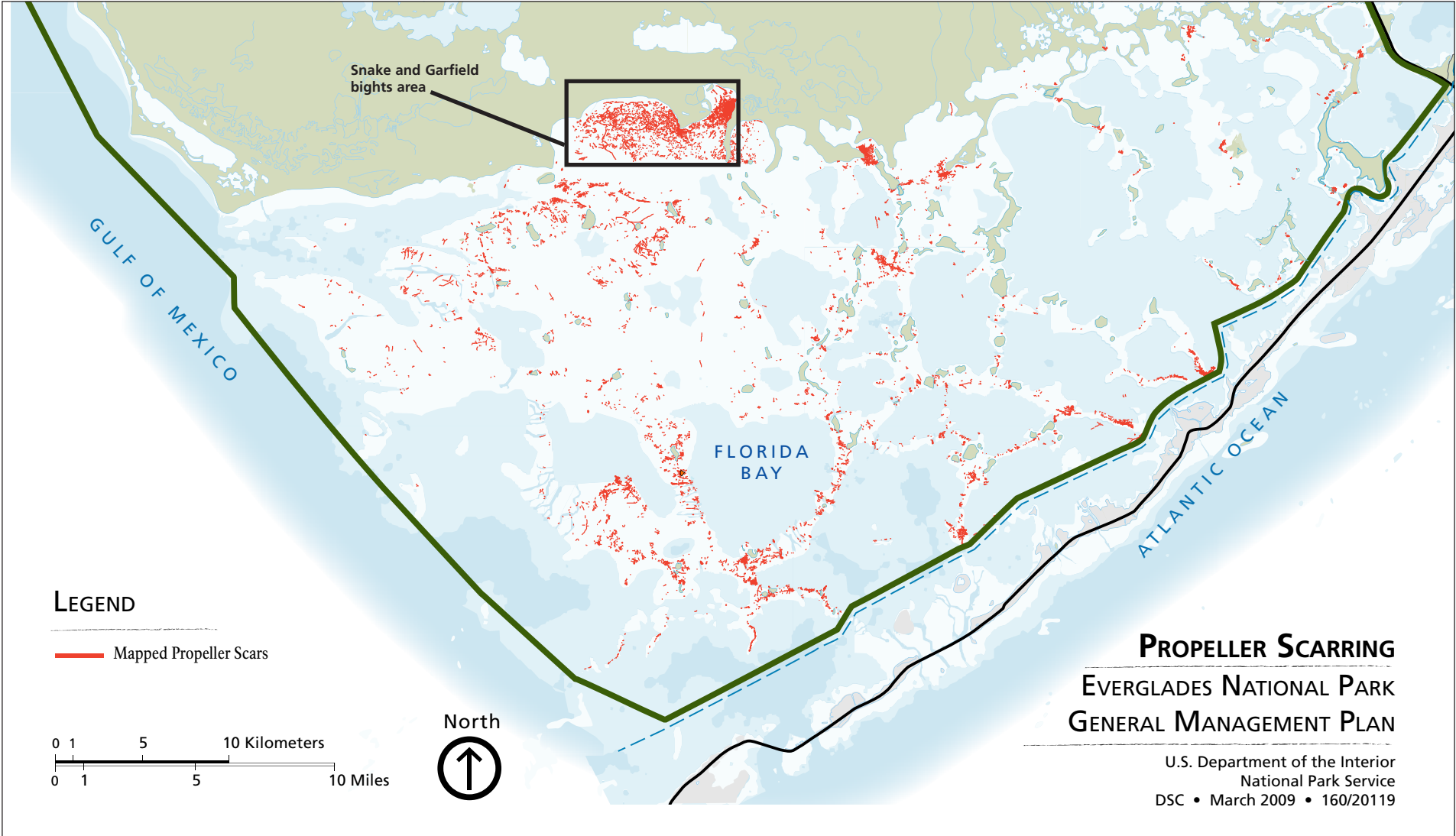
is widespread, with dense scarring found in shallow depths, near all navigational channels, and around areas most heavily used by recreational boats. Dense scarring is more common near marked and unmarked channels and shorelines. Substantially more scarring was identified in the study than in a previous statewide study conducted in 1995, and scarring may be increasing at specific Florida Bay sites. If higher resolution imagery had been available for all of Florida Bay, instead of for just Snake and Garfield bights, more scarring probably would have been documented.

Because the seagrass scarring problem is not improving and may be worsening over time, the study suggests that new management strategies are



RECENT RESEARCH STUDIES (CONTINUED)

needed to protect seagrass beds as part of an overall ecosystem management approach in Florida Bay. Potential management strategies to minimize damage caused by propeller scarring could include a mandatory education program, improved navigation aids, pole/troll zones, idle and speed zones, limits on motorized access by watercraft characteristics, and area-specific seasonal access limits or closures in highly impacted locations. The complete peer-reviewed study, titled, “Patterns of Propeller Scarring of Seagrass in Florida Bay: Associations with Visitor Use Factors and Implications for Natural Resource Management” and a study fact sheet are available via links from the park's home page at www.nps.gov/ever. (Click on the "General Management Plan" and "GMP Documents" links.)



Propeller scarring in Florida Bay, Everglades National Park using best available data sources (2004 digital imagery for all of Florida Bay, plus higher resolution 2006 imagery for Snake and Garfield bights only).

AERIAL SURVEY OF BOATER USE IN EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK MARINE WATERS — FLORIDA BAY AND TEN THOUSAND ISLANDS

A second recently completed research effort related to the general management plan is a study of boat use in Everglades National Park’s marine waters. In 2006 and 2007, an aerial census of vessels in the park’s marine waters, along with a concurrent census of boat trailers at major public boat ramps, was conducted in and around the park. From this information, reliable statistical models for predicting total boater use were developed. The study results allow us to understand current levels and patterns of boating activity in the park, how use has changed during the past 30 years, and most importantly how to accurately estimate boat use in the future from boat trailer counts.

The study found that flats boats accounted for the majority of vessels in park waters (Florida Bay and the Gulf Coast). When flats boats were combined with other small (23 feet and shorter) motorboats, they accounted for 80% to 90% of boats in the park on any given day. Outside park waters, small recreational motorboats were the dominant vessel type, followed by sailboats, flats boats, and commercial fishing vessels. The main vessel types engaged in fishing — both inside and outside park waters of Florida Bay — were flats boats and small recreational motorboats, with commercial fishing vessels accounting for a substantial component of the fishing fleet outside the park on weekdays.

Based on data gathered and statistical models developed in the study, it was determined that recreational boat use in Everglades National Park has increased approximately 200% to 250% during the past 30 years. The complete boat use study, titled “Aerial Survey of Boater Use in Everglades

National Park Marine Waters — Florida Bay and Ten Thousand Islands,” and a study fact sheet are available through links on the park's home page at www.nps.gov/ever. (Click on the "General Management Plan" and "GMP Documents" links.)

Combining boating use information with known vessel groundings and seagrass propeller scarring data helps park staff and the public understand the sources and trends of these problems. It also provides a foundation for managing visitor use in ways that preserve the park’s natural and wilderness values and enhance recreational opportunities for current and future generations.



REVISED MANAGEMENT ZONES FOR MARINE AREAS

Management zoning is the tool used by the National Park Service to map and articulate the appropriate variety of resource conditions and visitor experiences to be achieved and maintained in different areas of a park. Draft management zones for marine areas of Everglades National Park are described briefly below. In all management zones, visitors would be required to comply with applicable park rules and regulations.

To explore the relative advantages of managing marine areas in different ways, four revised preliminary alternatives have been developed (alternatives 1-4) and are presented on pages 5-13. The four alternatives apply these management zones to Everglades National Park’s marine areas in different ways based on each alternative’s overall “vision” or concept for meeting the park’s mission.

MANAGEMENT ZONES

	Boat Zone (Water) darker = deeper	Access (Water)		Idle Speed-No Wake Zone (Water)	Pole/Troll Zone (Water)	Backcountry Zone (Water or Land, Nonmotorized)	Research Natural Area (Water)	Wildlife Habitat Protection Zone (Land)
Overview	This zone provides access to various types of watercraft, including motorboats traveling on-plane.			This marked zone enhances safety, provides more solitude for boaters and paddlers, and protects areas of natural resource concern by requiring that motorboats travel without leaving a wake.	This marked zone protects marine areas where there are natural resource concerns (e.g., seagrass scarring, disturbance of nesting wading birds), while allowing watercraft propelled by paddles, poles, or trolling motors.	This marked zone provides opportunities for safe, tranquil, wilderness experiences (nonmotorized) on land or water.	These are areas of outstanding resource value that are managed to protect the physical structure of habitats and ecological processes, and to serve as ecological benchmarks for research.	This zone is managed to protect sensitive wildlife areas (such as wading bird nesting and fledging areas) from disturbance.
Desired Resource Condition	Aquatic and benthic resources are maintained in a near-natural condition, supporting healthy interaction among human, plant, and wildlife communities.			Aquatic and benthic resources are maintained in a near-natural condition, supporting healthy interaction among human, plant, and wildlife communities.	Aquatic and benthic resources are maintained in a near-natural condition, supporting healthy interaction among human, plant, and wildlife communities.	Aquatic and benthic resources are maintained in a near-natural condition, supporting healthy interaction among human, plant, and wildlife communities.	Aquatic and benthic resources are maintained in a near-pristine, intact condition for the purpose of maintaining a baseline to measure long-term ecological changes.	Key sensitive wildlife areas are protected and preserved, allowing wildlife to thrive and reproduce.
Visitor Opportunities	Motorboating, paddling, fishing, nature/wildlife viewing, camping at designated sites, and guided tours.			Motorboating, paddling, fishing, nature/wildlife viewing, camping at designated sites, and guided tours.	Boating (with propulsion by paddles, trolling motors, or poles), fishing, nature/wildlife viewing, camping at designated sites, and guided tours. Combustion engines must be trimmed up and not in use within this zone.	Hiking, paddling, fishing, nature/wildlife viewing, camping at designated sites, and guided tours. To preserve the wilderness setting, motorboats are not permitted except in emergency situations, such as storms.	Not open to public access, with the possible exception of guided tours.	Not open to public access, including beaching of boats or foot traffic.
Appropriate Facilities	Navigational aids, signs, research facilities, docks, designated campsites and chickees (backcountry platforms).			Navigational aids, signs, research facilities, docks, designated campsites and chickees.	Navigational aids, signs, research facilities, docks, designated campsites and chickees.	Navigational aids, signs, research facilities, docks, designated campsites and chickees, and maintained trails.	Navigational aids, signs, research plot markers, and minor research apparatus.	Signs, research plot markers and minor research apparatus.
Management Activities	As necessary, restoration activities are conducted to restore degraded or damaged areas. Relatively high level of management and visitor education are needed to ensure resource protection and safety, and ensure a range of desirable visitor experiences.			As necessary, restoration activities are conducted to restore degraded or damaged areas. Relatively high level of management and visitor education are needed to ensure resource protection and safety, and ensure a range of desirable visitor experiences.	As necessary, restoration activities are conducted to restore degraded or damaged areas. Relatively high level of management and visitor education are needed to ensure resource protection and safety, and ensure a range of desirable visitor experiences.	As necessary, restoration activities are conducted to restore degraded or damaged areas. Relatively low level of management and visitor education are needed to ensure resource protection and safety, and ensure a range of desirable visitor experiences.	With park permission, research activities such as conducting baseline inventories and resource condition assessments are permitted. Scientific research activities would be non-manipulative.	As necessary, restoration activities are conducted to restore degraded or damaged areas.

ROUTES AND DESIGNATIONS SHOWN ON THE ALTERNATIVE MAPS

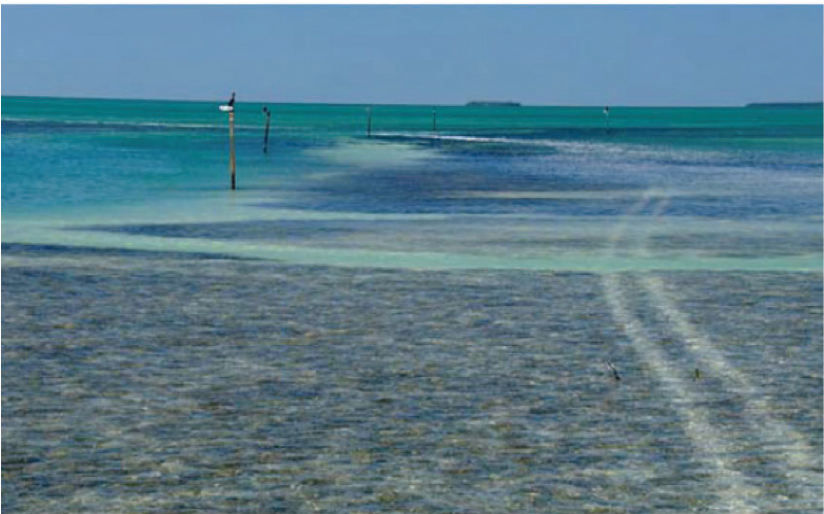
In addition to the management zones described on page 4, several routes and designations (described below) are included in the alternatives on pages 6-13.

“MARKED CHANNELS”

The marked channels designation, included only in alternative 1 (no-action or continue current management), shows the location of existing or previously marked channels where motorboat travel is currently preferred by the National Park Service in order to minimize damage to shallow Florida Bay bottom areas.

“PRIMARY MARKED CHANNELS” AND “PRIMARY ROUTES (UNMARKED)”

The primary marked channel designation, included in alternatives 2, 3, and 4, shows the location of proposed marked channels that motorboats would be encouraged to use to avoid damaging shallow bottom resources. Primary routes (unmarked) would be recommended routes for motorboat travel that would be shown on marine navigation charts, GPS systems, and other navigation tools.



“SHALLOW DRAFT MARKED CHANNELS” AND “SHALLOW DRAFT ROUTES (UNMARKED)”

The shallow draft marked channel designation, included in alternatives 2, 3, and 4, shows the location of proposed marked channels that could be used by motorboats with a shallow draft (1 foot, or less). In alternatives 2 and 3, deeper draft vessels would be strongly discouraged from using these channels due to the risk of Florida Bay bottom damage and/or running aground. In alternative 4, only shallow draft vessels would be permitted to use these channels; deeper draft vessels would be prohibited from using these channels. Shallow draft routes (unmarked) would be shown on marine navigation charts, GPS systems, and other navigation tools used by boaters with shallow draft vessels.

CROCODILE SANCTUARY

The Crocodile Sanctuary, included only in alternative 1 (no-action or continue current management), is an existing designation that was established in 1980 as a temporary measure to protect important crocodile breeding habitat in Everglades National Park. The Crocodile Sanctuary is in the northeast portion of Florida Bay and is comprised of Little Madeira Bay, Joe Bay, and adjacent inland water areas. The Crocodile Sanctuary is currently not open to public access, but scientific research has been permitted in the area.



REVISED PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES FOR MARINE AREAS

The revised preliminary alternatives for marine areas of Everglades National Park presented on the following pages are new and are based on public input and new information gathered since the last round of public meetings. They are labeled as alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 and are different from the alternatives that appeared in previous newsletters. Each is intended to meet a variety of desired conditions for the national park’s marine areas. These desired conditions can be broadly summarized as follows:

- protect aquatic and benthic habitats
- protect wildlife habitat
- protect wilderness conditions
- protect natural resource conditions
- provide quality visitor experiences, including wilderness experiences



ELEMENTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES (ALTERNATIVES 1, 2, 3, 4)

- Improve national park boundary marking, channel marking, and navigational aids including recommended channel network and transit corridors/routes in Florida Bay
- Continue current management of Florida Bay keys; to protect nesting and rookery areas, all keys remain closed to recreational use except North Nest, Little Rabbit, Carl Ross, and Bradley keys
- Establish a seagrass restoration program for submerged marine wilderness resources and sites/areas damaged by groundings and propeller scarring
- Approach resource management from an ecosystem perspective, considering outside influences (e.g., Everglades restoration efforts, climate change, and socioeconomic considerations) on resources and ecosystem processes
- Implement the approved Flamingo Commercial Services Plan:
 - Rebuild Flamingo facilities — an elevated lodge, elevated cottages, ecotents, RV campground with electric hookups, houseboats, and two backcountry camping platforms or chickees in Florida Bay — in a sustainable manner.
 - Provide increased education and recreational opportunities based out of Flamingo.
 - Provide additional land- and water-based transportation options at Flamingo, including circulator shuttle, bicycles, canoes and kayaks, and land and water trails.
 - Establish new, long-term concession contract for Flamingo.

ALTERNATIVE 1 =		
ELEMENTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES	+	ELEMENTS LISTED BELOW

ALTERNATIVE 1 CONCEPT (CONTINUE CURRENT MANAGEMENT)

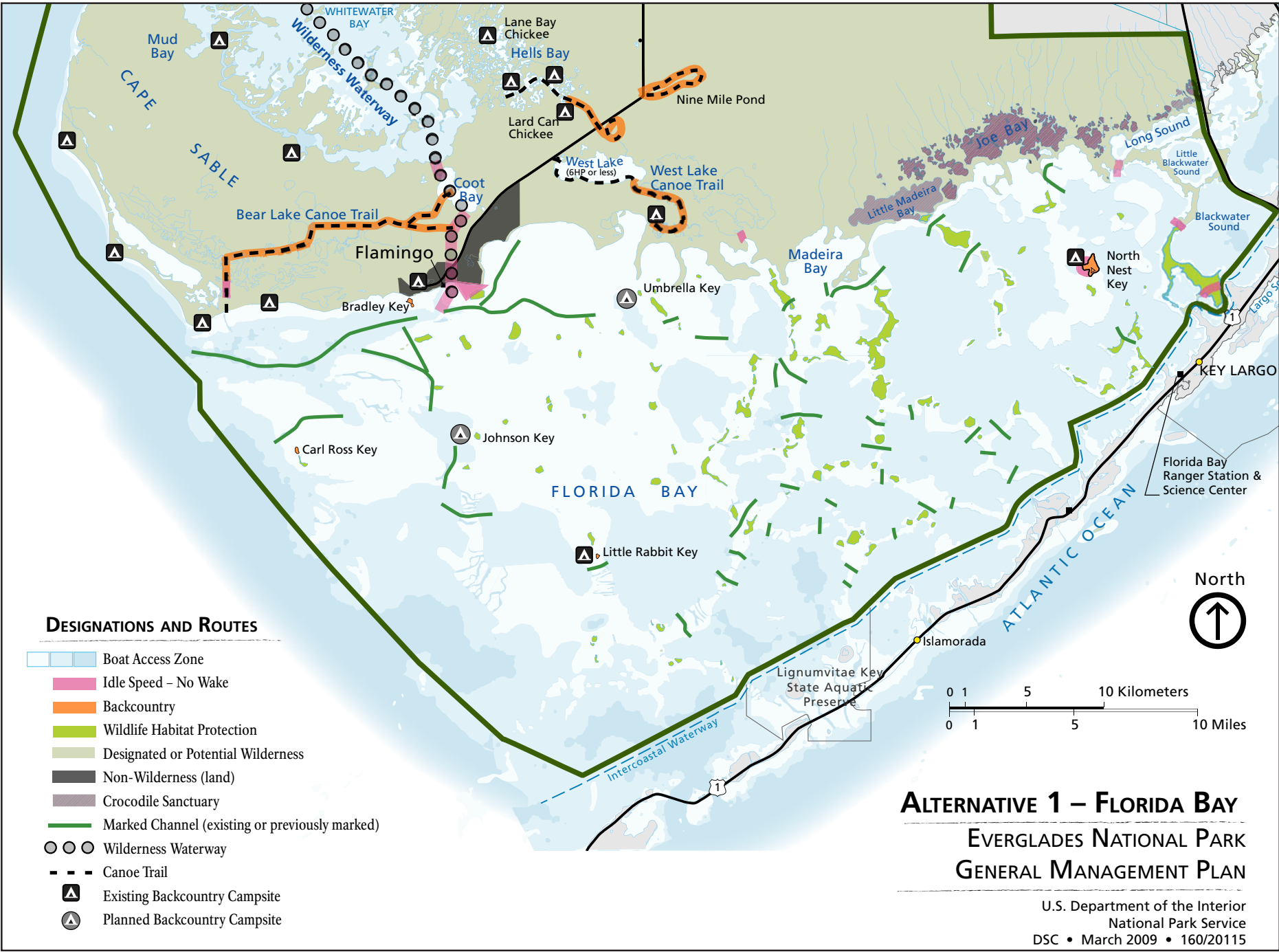
Alternative 1 would continue the current management direction. It is provided as a baseline against which to compare alternatives 2, 3, and 4.

FLORIDA BAY AND THE KEYS

- Continue to retain visitor and operational facilities.
- Continue to manage Florida Bay as it is now, with recommended motorboat routes identified on NOAA charts and in the “Florida Bay Map and Guide”; maintain existing idle speed-no wake zones.
- Continue to manage Little Madeira Bay, Joe Bay, and adjacent smaller water bodies as a wildlife management area — commonly known as the Crocodile Sanctuary — that remains closed to public use.

GULF COAST

- Continue to retain visitor and operational facilities.
- Continue to manage marine areas of the Gulf Coast as they are now — with most areas, including the “wilderness waterway,” open to motorboats, and with some routes designated as canoe trails.



ELEMENTS COMMON TO ALL ACTION ALTERNATIVES (ALTERNATIVES 2, 3, 4)

- **Develop a mandatory education program/permit system** to promote shared stewardship for marine resources, including shallow bottomlands, seagrasses, and wildlife. Operators of motorboats and paddled boats would complete a mandatory education program to obtain a permit to operate vessels in the park.
 - **Manage boat transit within Florida Bay** based on a new system of marked channels and identified routes.
 - **Enhance backcountry wilderness opportunities** by providing additional backcountry camping platforms or “chickees” (Florida Bay and Gulf Coast).
 - **Develop an “alternative wilderness waterway”** for improved wilderness experiences (Gulf Coast).
 - **Work cooperatively with other agencies and partners** to improve access for motorized and nonmotorized watercraft.
 - **Establish improved/new launch sites** (main park road and 18-mile stretch).
 - **Improve canoe trail accessibility**, including opportunities for persons with disabilities.
 - **Increase law enforcement presence** to enhance visitor
- understanding of, and compliance with, marine management zones.
 - **Provide enhanced educational and recreational opportunities** in Florida Bay and Gulf Coast waters related to the park's natural and cultural history.
 - **Plan and construct the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Visitor Center in Everglades City.**
 - **Provide additional multi-agency visitor services**, including information and education services, in the Upper Keys and Gulf Coast gateways to the park.
 - **Develop and implement a formal adaptive management process** designed to (a) evaluate the success of management actions in achieving desired resource and visitor use conditions, and (b) modify management strategies as needed to improve success at achieving desired conditions.
 - **Establish an Everglades National Park Advisory Committee** comprised of diverse stakeholders to help park managers consider various perspectives on issues such as management of fisheries, access and visitor use, and protection of endangered species during adaptive implementation of the general management plan.

ALTERNATIVE 2 =				
ELEMENTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES	+	ELEMENTS COMMON TO ALL ACTION ALTERNATIVES	+	ELEMENTS LISTED BELOW

ALTERNATIVE 2 CONCEPT

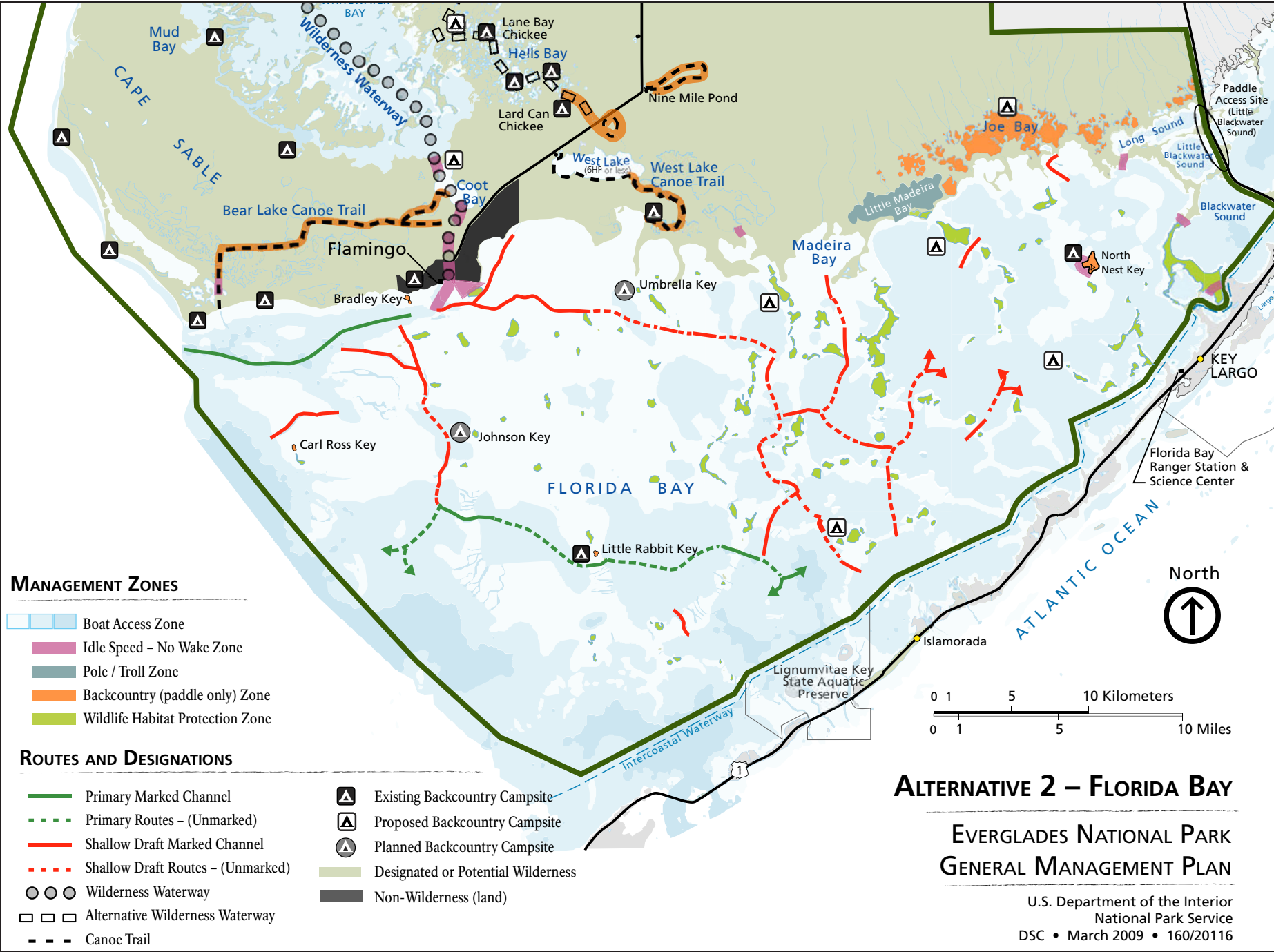
Alternative 2 would rely on a mandatory education and permit system to educate visitors about: park resources and how their behavior can help protect them, visitor and wildlife safety, navigation challenges, the spectrum of desired visitor experiences, and visitor/boating etiquette. This alternative relies primarily on well-educated park users to protect the park’s natural and cultural resources.

FLORIDA BAY AND THE KEYS

- Maintain existing idle speed-no wake zones.
- Manage Little Madeira Bay as a pole/troll zone, with fishing allowed.
- Manage Joe Bay and adjacent smaller water bodies as a backcountry zone (paddle only), with fishing allowed.

GULF COAST

- Continue to manage most marine areas of the Gulf Coast as they are now, including the existing wilderness waterway.
- Establish alternative wilderness waterway route.
 - Identify a new, alternative route between Everglades City/Chokoloskee and the Flamingo area that provides boaters the opportunity to have a truer wilderness experience. This new route would be available to both paddlers and motorboaters, and would be highlighted in the mandatory education program, in marine navigational charts and GPS systems, and in other products that highlight park recreational opportunities.



ALTERNATIVE 3 =				
ELEMENTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES	+	ELEMENTS COMMON TO ALL ACTION ALTERNATIVES	+	ELEMENTS LISTED BELOW

ALTERNATIVE 3 CONCEPT

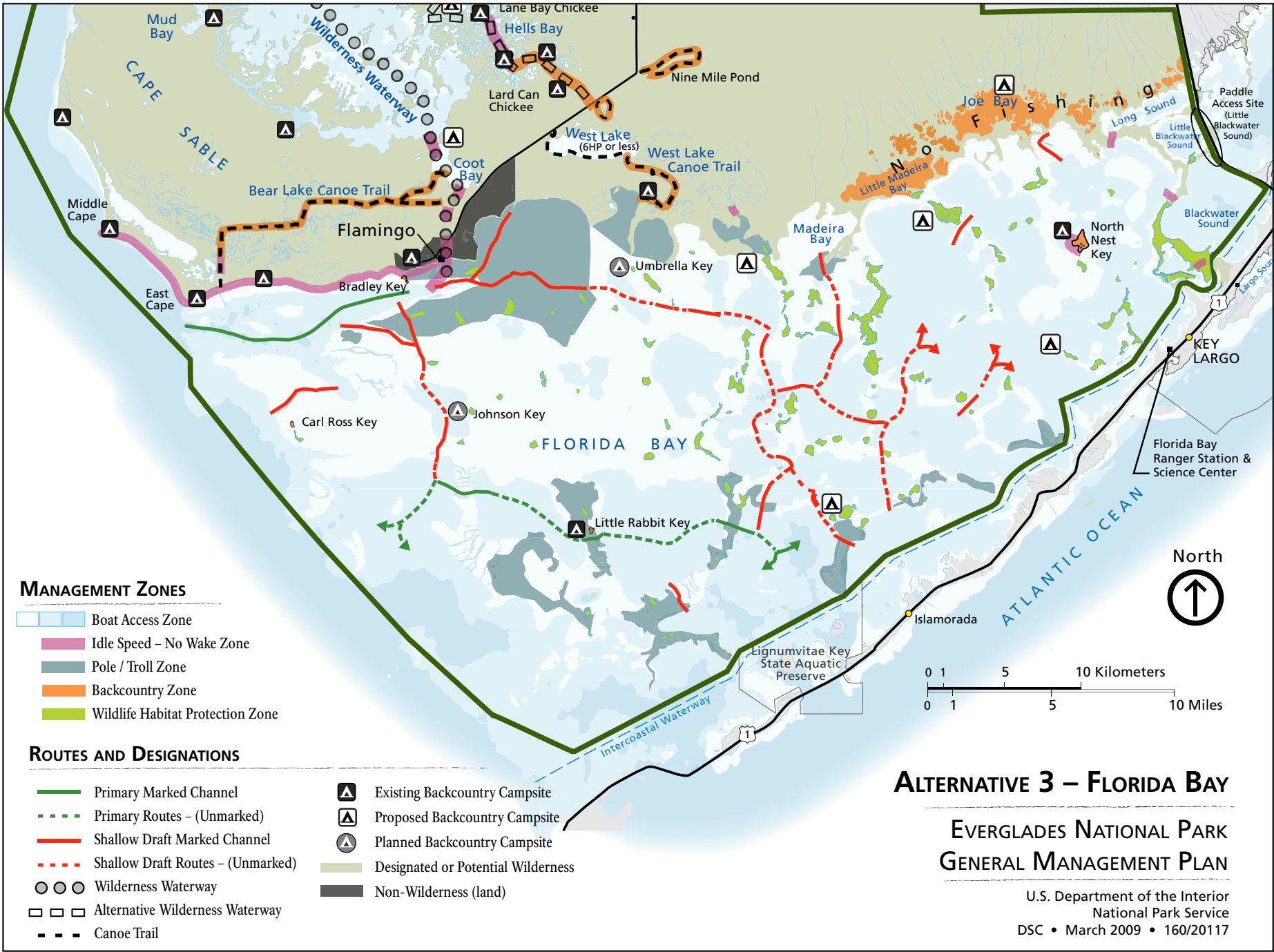
Alternative 3 builds on the education concept described in alternative 2 by adding measures to enhance natural resource protection and visitor experiences. Florida Bay marine waters would be zoned to better protect shallow water areas having high levels of documented damage to seagrass resources (see page 3 map of propeller scarring in Florida Bay). Implementation of an alternative wilderness waterway would provide increased resource protection and an increased range of water-based recreation experiences.

FLORIDA BAY AND THE KEYS

- Maintain existing idle speed-no wake zones (except those within the pole/troll zone described below).
- Manage Little Madeira Bay, Joe Bay, and adjacent smaller water bodies as a backcountry zone (paddle only); fishing would not be allowed in these areas so that they can continue to serve as reference sites for scientific study and areas where enhanced sport fish production may spill over into adjacent areas.
- Along the shoreline between Flamingo and Middle Cape, establish a 300-foot-wide idle speed-no wake zone to enhance resource protection, visitor experiences, and visitor safety.
- Manage high use areas and areas with highest documented propeller scarring, boat groundings, and bottom damage within Florida Bay as pole/troll zones. Within pole/troll zones, motorboats may travel using combustion motors only within marked channels

GULF COAST

- Continue to manage most marine areas of the Gulf Coast as they are now, including the existing wilderness waterway.
- Establish alternative wilderness waterway route to provide an enhanced opportunity for a quiet, tranquil wilderness experience:
 - Manage some segments as the boat access zone (counting on continued, relatively infrequent use of these segments by motorboaters).
 - Manage other segments as idle speed-no wake zones based on water bodies’ narrowness, shallowness, low clearance due to mangroves, and/or available alternate routes of access for motorboats to nearby waters.
 - Manage the very narrow, shallow Wood River segment in the central portion of the route as the backcountry zone (paddle only).
 - In the Hells Bay area, continue to manage the full portion of the route between its terminus and the Hells Bay chickee as backcountry (paddle only), and manage the portion of the route between Hells Bay chickee and Lane Bay chickee as an idle speed-no wake zone.
 - In the upper Turner River area (to where the Turner River leaves Everglades National Park) — and in adjacent portions of Hurdles Creek/Cross Bays and Left-hand Turner River/Halfway Creek — manage the route as an idle speed-no wake zone. Manage the lower Turner River as the boat access zone.
 - Notes related to the alternative wilderness waterway:
 - Where the boat access zone is on both sides of a marked backcountry or idle speed-no wake zone, motorboats would be able to cross over, using common courtesy and respect for other recreationists.
 - Where a backcountry zone or idle speed-no wake zone occurs within the following areas, these zones would be limited so that motorboat use could occur elsewhere in these bays: Hells Bay/Lane Bay area, northeast portion of Whitewater Bay, bays between Hurdles Creek and Lopez River, and bays between Onion Key and Willy Willy campsite.
- Expand idle speed-no wake zone on Gopher Creek to enhance wilderness experiences.



ALTERNATIVE 4 =				
ELEMENTS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES	+	ELEMENTS COMMON TO ALL ACTION ALTERNATIVES	+	ELEMENTS LISTED BELOW

ALTERNATIVE 4 CONCEPT

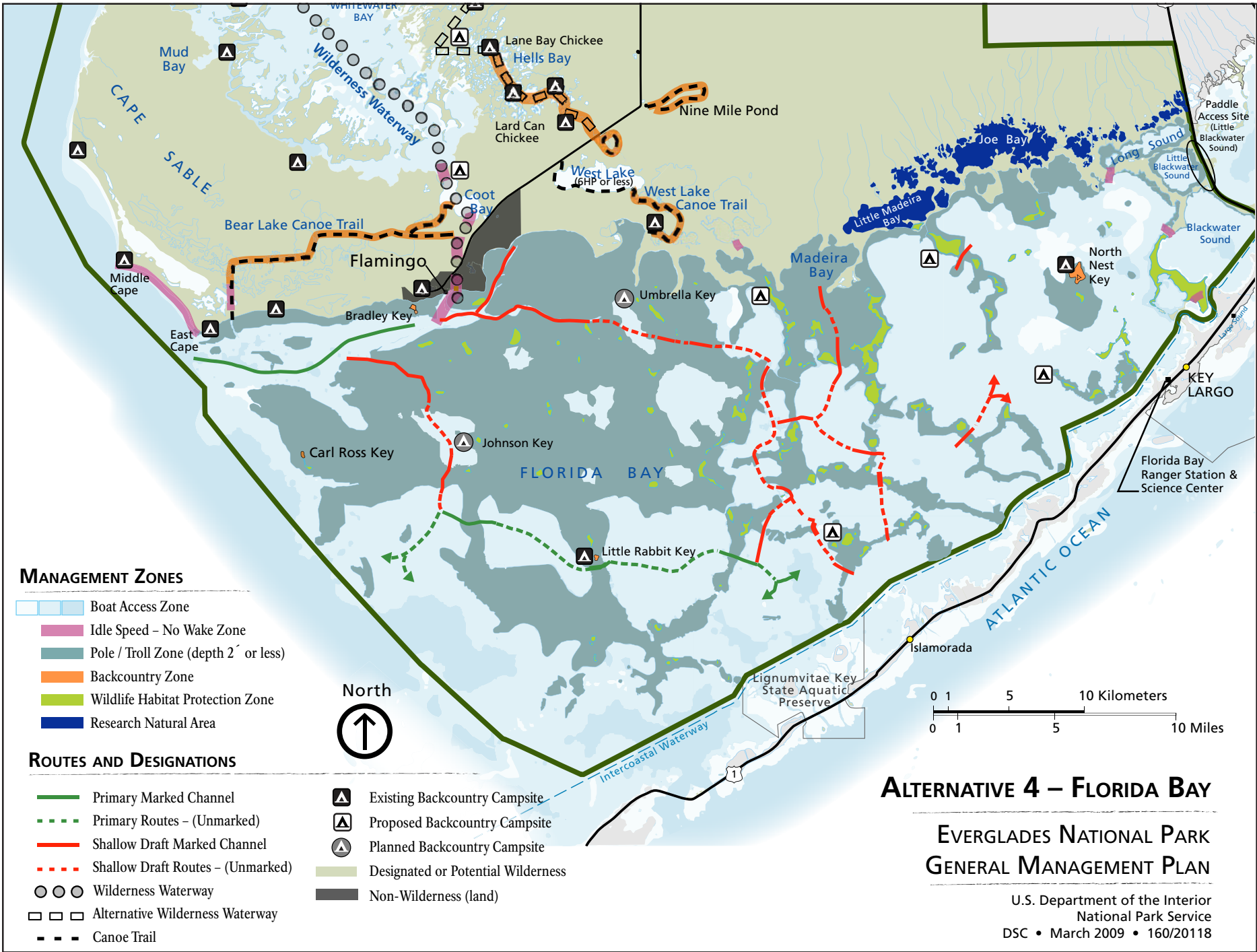
Alternative 4 builds on the education, resource conservation, and visitor experience concepts described in Alternatives 2 and 3 by adding elements to further enhance natural resource protection and visitor experiences. This alternative would take a more cautious approach, erring on the side of resource conservation when it comes to potential resources at risk, including seagrass habitats. It would provide a greater degree of natural resource protection than the other alternatives and a wider range of quality visitor experiences. It would rely on mandatory compliance with measures implemented to protect sensitive resources and provide quality wilderness experiences.

FLORIDA BAY AND THE KEYS

- Maintain existing idle speed-no wake zones (except those within pole/troll zone described below).
- Manage Little Madeira Bay, Joe Bay, and adjacent smaller water bodies as a research natural area (a baseline for long-term ecological monitoring and restoration efforts); these areas would remain closed to public use.
- Manage areas within 300 feet of Florida Bay keys shorelines as pole/troll zones to reduce wildlife habitat disturbances (excluding the four keys that would remain open to public use).
- Along the shoreline between East Cape and Middle Cape, establish a 300-foot-wide idle speed-no wake zone to enhance resource protection, visitor experiences, and visitor safety.
- Manage all areas that are *at risk* of bottom damage within Florida Bay — not just those that are already scarred — as pole/troll zones. Based on the results of the propeller scarring study, the areas at most risk for prop scarring coincide with waters in Florida Bay with a depth of 2 feet or less at mean low water. Within pole/troll zones, motorboats may use combustion motors *only within marked channels*.

GULF COAST

- Continue to manage most marine areas of the Gulf Coast as they are now, including the existing wilderness waterway
- Establish alternative wilderness waterway route to provide an enhanced opportunity for a quiet, tranquil wilderness experience:
 - Manage some segments as the boat access zone (counting on continued, relatively infrequent use of these segments by motorboaters).
 - Manage other segments as idle speed-no wake zones based on water bodies’ narrowness, shallowness, low clearance due to mangroves, and/or available alternate routes of access for motorboats to nearby waters.
 - Manage the very narrow, shallow Wood River segment in the central portion of the route as the backcountry zone (paddle only).
 - In the Hells Bay area, manage the route between its terminus and the Lane Bay chickee as a backcountry zone (paddle only).
 - In the upper Turner River area (to where the Turner River leaves Everglades National Park), manage the route as a backcountry (paddle only) segment. Manage the lower Turner River, and adjacent portions of the Hurdles Creek/Cross Bays and Left-hand Turner River/Halfway Creek, as an idle speed-no wake zone.
- Manage Gopher Creek segment as a backcountry zone (paddle only) to enhance wilderness experiences.



GULF COAST (CONTINUED)

- Notes related to the alternative wilderness waterway:
 - Where the boat access zone is on both sides of a marked backcountry or idle speed-no wake zone, motorboats would be able to cross over, using common courtesy and respect for other recreationists.
 - Where a backcountry zone or idle speed-no wake zone occurs within the following areas, these zones would be limited so that motorboat use could occur elsewhere in these bays: Hells Bay/Lane Bay area, northeast portion of Whitewater Bay, bays between Hurddles Creek and Lopez River, and bays between Onion Key and Willy Willy campsite.

[illegible]

New Research, Backcountry Management, and "Adaptive Management"

Everglades National Park staff continue to conduct scientific research and gather other information that, like the propeller scarring of seagrass study and the boat use study mentioned earlier, will help the park make informed resource management and visitor use decisions within the context of Everglades National Park and its larger ecosystem. For example, park scientists are working to learn more about seagrass conditions and scarring in the park’s Gulf Coast region, as well as in other shallow water marine habitats, to determine conditions, trends, and potential management options. The park also continues to examine ways to improve backcountry boating safety and wildlife protection.

Adaptive management is a way of improving management policies and practices using the following basic steps:

- identify desired outcomes and develop strategies to bring about those outcomes,
- monitor conditions to determine how well the outcomes are being met, and
- modify strategies as needed to improve performance.

An adaptive management system allows the flexibility to change management strategies as new information becomes available. The

system also builds in a commitment to use these adaptive management principles over the life of a plan. The GMP team will continue to consider and incorporate new information into the general management planning process as it becomes available. Beyond that, the National Park Service intends to build the principle of adaptive management into the GMP implementation process so that the plan is dynamic and responsive to changing conditions, new information, and ideas from the public.



What's Next?

Following completion of the public meetings, stakeholder meetings, and the current public comment period (which ends May 15, 2009), our next step will be to review public and agency comments about the revised preliminary alternatives. Using that information, other comments received to date, and an analysis of the probable impacts of the various alternatives, the planning team will develop a preferred alternative to include in the Everglades National Park Draft General Management Plan/ East Everglades Wilderness Study/Environmental Impact Statement. The preferred alternative may turn out to be similar to one of the preliminary alternatives, but it is more likely to combine elements from two or more of the preliminary alternatives.

The alternatives in this newsletter are referred to as “preliminary” because public comment or other considerations may lead the planning team to decide not to include one or more of the preliminary alternatives in the Draft General Management Plan. The alternatives that are ultimately carried forward into the draft plan are referred to as “draft alternatives,” with one identified as the NPS “preferred” alternative. The draft plan is currently scheduled for publication in 2010, and will be followed by a public comment period including public meetings and hearings.



Project Schedule		
Approximate Time Frame	Planning Step	Public Involvement Opportunities
Summer 2007	Preliminary Alternatives Present preliminary alternatives for managing Everglades National Park, including a range of wilderness options for East Everglades	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read Newsletter #4• Public comments received through July 31, 2007• Participate in public meetings
2008	Conduct Research Studies Conduct boat inventory and propeller scarring studies to better understand certain marine resource impacts	
Spring 2009 WE ARE HERE	Revised Alternatives for Marine Areas Present revised preliminary alternatives for managing marine areas of the national park	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read Newsletter #5• Send your ideas and comments• Participate in public meetings
Fall 2009	Develop a Preferred Alternative Based on public comments, preliminary impact analysis, and other considerations, develop a preferred alternative and wilderness proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check the general management plan link on the park’s home page for information updates
2010	Prepare and Publish Draft Plan Prepare and publish the Draft General Management Plan/ East Everglades Wilderness Study/ Environmental Impact Statement, which describes the alternatives and the impacts of implementing each	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the draft plan• Send your ideas and comments• Participate in public meetings/hearings
Spring 2011	Prepare and Publish Final Plan Based on public and agency comments, revise the draft plan to produce a Final General Management Plan/ East Everglades Wilderness Study/ Environmental Impact Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the final plan, including NPS responses to substantive public comments and official letters on the draft plan
Summer 2011 and Beyond	Implement the Approved Plan Issue a Record of Decision and implement the general management plan as funding allows	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with Everglades National Park staff to implement the plan

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

Park purpose statements are based on the specific legislation and associated legislative history for each park.

Significance statements capture the essence of the park’s importance to our country’s natural and cultural heritage. Significance statements represent the park’s distinctiveness and help to place the park within its regional, national, and international context.

PARK PURPOSE

Everglades National Park is a public park for the benefit and enjoyment of the people. It is set apart as a permanent wilderness preserving essential primitive conditions, including the natural abundance, diversity, behavior, and ecological integrity of the unique flora and fauna.



PARK SIGNIFICANCE

Everglades National Park is national and internationally significant because it:

- Is a unique subtropical wetland that is the hydrological connection between central Florida’s freshwater ecosystem and the marine systems of Florida Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. It is the only place in the United States jointly designated an International Biosphere Reserve, a World Heritage Site, and a Wetland of International Importance.
- Comprises the largest subtropical wilderness in North America. The park contains vast ecosystems, including freshwater marshes, tropical hardwoods, pine rockland, extensive mangrove estuaries, and seagrasses, which support a diverse mixture of tropical and temperate

- plants and animals.
- Serves as a sanctuary for the protection of more than 20 federal and 70 state-listed threatened and endangered species as well as numerous species of special concern. Many of these species face tremendous pressure from natural forces and human influences in the South Florida Ecosystem.
- Provides important foraging and breeding habitat for more than 400 species of birds (including homeland to world-renowned wading bird populations), and functions as a primary corridor and refuge for migratory and wintering wildlife populations.
- Includes archeological and historical resources spanning approximately 5,600 years of human history, revealing adaptation to and exploitation of its unique environment.
- Preserves natural and cultural resources associated with the homeland of Native Americans of Florida (including the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, the Independent Traditional Seminole Nation of Florida, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma).
- Preserves the remnants of a nationally significant hydrologic resource that sustains South Florida’s human population and serves as a global experiment in restoration.
- Provides the public with the opportunity to experience Everglades’ wilderness for recreation, reflection, and solitude in proximity to a major metropolitan area.

General Management Plan Statutory Requirements consistent with the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 and National Park Service management policies:

1. The types of management actions required for the preservation of park resources
2. Types and intensities of development for public enjoyment and use
3. Visitor carrying capacities and implementation commitments for all areas of the park
4. Potential modifications to the external boundaries of the park, if any, and reasons for proposed changes



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INVITATION TO PUBLIC MEETINGS

Please join us for public meetings on the revised preliminary alternatives for Everglades National Park’s marine waters. For your convenience, we have scheduled seven meetings in various locations. Specific dates and locations are listed below. **Each meeting is scheduled from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.** Meetings will begin with informal discussions among the public and park staff at 5:30 p.m., followed by a 6:00 p.m. presentation by the National Park Service and a formal public comment period. Following the comment period, park staff will be available to meet with the public until 8:30 p.m. If you are unable or prefer not to attend one of these meetings, you can still provide input to the planning team or view the webcast. Please see “How to Comment” section to the right.

	Location	Address and phone	Date
Week 1	Key Largo Grande Hotel	97000 Overseas Highway, Key Largo, FL 33037 305-852-5553	Monday, March 30, 2009
	Everglades City School	415 School Drive, Everglades City, FL 34139 239-377-9800	Tuesday, March 31, 2009
	South Dade Public Library	10750 SW 211 th Street, Miami, FL 33189 305-233-8140	Wednesday, April 1, 2009
Week 2	Key Largo Holiday Inn*	99701 Overseas Highway, Key Largo, FL 33037 305-451-2121	Monday, April 13, 2009
	John D. Campbell Agricultural Center	18710 SW 288 th Street, Homestead, FL 33030 305-248-3311	Tuesday, April 14, 2009
	Edison College Building J	7007 Lely Cultural Parkway, Naples, Florida 34113 239-732-3707	Wednesday, April 15, 2009
	Int’l Game and Fish Assoc. Fishing Hall of Fame	300 Gulfstream Way, Dania Beach, FL 33004 954-922-4212	Thursday, April 16, 2009
Web- cast	* The April 13, 2009 meeting at Key Largo Holiday Inn will be webcast starting at 6:00 p.m. To access the webcast, go to the park's website: www.nps.gov/ever and click on the "General Management Plan" link.		

For travel directions to any of the meetings, call the phone numbers listed above or go to: <http://maps.google.com>

TO REQUEST A COPY OF NEWSLETTER 5

Call Everglades National Park at 305-242-7700. If prompted by voice mail, press "2" at first prompt, and "5" at the second prompt; leave mailing information and a request for the newsletter.

HOW TO COMMENT

The planning team welcomes your comments at any time, but comments on this newsletter would be most helpful if received by May 15, 2009. We hope you are able to attend one of the public meetings listed to the left. Regardless of whether you are able to attend, we encourage you to submit your comments online by going to the park’s home page (www.nps.gov/ever) and clicking on the “General Management Plan” link.

Of course, you may also comment by filling out and mailing the enclosed comment form or by sending a letter to the planning team at: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Everglades Planning Team, PO Box 25287, Denver, CO 80225-0287. We look forward to hearing from you.

