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Everglades National Park  
Florida

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Project Schedule

Steps	Planning Activity	Dates	Public/Agency Involvement Opportunities
1	Scoping: Identify planning issues and opportunities	Public comment period June 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Attend public scoping meeting</li><li>Submit written comments by June 12, 2009</li></ul>
2	Prepare <i>Draft Environmental Impact Statement</i>	May 2009-September 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Agency and tribal consultations</li></ul>
3	Publish and distribute <i>Draft Environmental Impact Statement</i>	December 2009-February 2010 60-day public comment period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Review the <i>Draft Environmental Impact Statement</i> and provide comments to the National Park Service</li><li>Attend public meeting(s)</li></ul>
4	Publish and distribute <i>Final Environmental Impact Statement</i>	June 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Review final document</li></ul>
5	Federal decision anticipated	September 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Review NPS decision</li></ul>

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Dear Friends,

*The National Park Service (NPS), in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), plans to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for modifications to the Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41) to restore flows and ecological conditions in Northeast Shark River Slough in Everglades National Park (the park).*

*The 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act directed the secretary of the Department of the Interior, acting through the National Park Service, to immediately evaluate the feasibility of additional bridge length, beyond that to be constructed pursuant to the Modified Water Deliveries Project. Modifications to the Tamiami Trail could include a continuous bridge, additional bridges, or some combination of bridge and road elevation. The purpose of the modifications would be to restore more natural water flow to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay and restore habitat in the park and the ecological connectivity between the park and the Water Conservation Areas. This project is intended to ensure that future Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan projects, such as the “river of grass” effort, will not require additional modifications to the trail.*

*The National Park Service is the lead agency for this Northeast Shark River Slough Restoration Project; however, the National Park Service has requested the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Highway Administration to be cooperating agencies on this effort. The National Park Service will also seek input from other federal, state, and local agencies and stakeholders, including you.*

*The purpose of this newsletter is not only to provide you with information about the project and related issues, but to ask for your help. This project is critically important to the future of Everglades National Park, and your input is invaluable. We are seeking your input on the proposed project and the alternatives and issues to be included in the environmental impact statement. Please plan to attend a public meeting to be held at the South-Dade Regional Library (1st floor) on June 2, 2009, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. You will have the opportunity to speak with park staff, ask questions, and comment on this project. If you cannot attend the meeting, you may also submit comments electronically, or by mail (see page 3).*

*Please provide your input on or before June 12, 2009. We look forward to hearing from you.*

Sincerely,

Dan B. Kimball  
Superintendent, Everglades National Park



Aerial view of the Tamiami Trail.

Project Background

In December 1989 the Everglades National Park Protection and Expansion Act authorized the secretary of the army to improve water deliveries to Everglades National Park and to take steps to restore natural hydrologic conditions to the extent practicable. Alternative means for restoring more natural hydrologic conditions have been evaluated several times, beginning in 2003, under the auspices of the Modified Water Deliveries Project authorized by the 1989 act. Concerns about probable damage to the Tamiami Trail resulted in the development of the “Revised General Reevaluation Report” (2005 report) that examined alternatives to improve the conveyance of water from Water Conservation Area 3B to Northeast Shark River Slough (the slough) in the park.

You are invited to attend a public meeting on

June 2, 2009

South-Dade Regional Library

1st Floor

10750 SW 211th Street

Cutler Bay, FL 33189

5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

The first hour of the meeting will be an open house and NPS staff will be available to discuss the project, answer questions, and record public comments. At 6:00 p.m. there will be a brief presentation on the project, followed by a public comment session.



The preferred alternative in the 2005 report included additional bridging and road elevation, but by 2007 when Congress was considering funding for the project the original cost estimate had increased substantially. Congress requested reevaluation of the 2005 report and asked for the development of less costly alternatives. The result was the “2008 Limited Reevaluation Report” (2008 report). Although the recommended alternative in the 2008 report would likely improve environmental conditions in the slough, it would not provide the full level of water flow and ecological connectivity needed to accomplish restoration of the slough.

As a result of the limited environmental benefits that the 2008 report recommendations would provide to the park, Congress included language in the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act that directs the National Park Service to evaluate additional bridge length and raising the Tamiami Trail to restore more natural water flow to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. The direction to evaluate the feasibility of additional bridging and improving ecological connectivity in the Omnibus Act is a congressional acknowledgment that the modifications to the Tamiami Trail contained in the 2008 report are not sufficient to restore more natural flows or restore ecological conditions in Everglades National Park. Although the 2008 report modifications would begin the process of improving flows to and ecological conditions in the park, this new evaluation will identify modifications needed to meet the flow and connectivity targets associated with full restoration.

Purpose and Need of Project

The National Park Service has been directed by the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act to restore more natural water flow to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay for the purpose of restoring habitat within the park and restoring ecological connectivity between the park and Water Conservation Area 3B (see below). Specifically, the 2009 Appropriations Act directs the National Park Service to immediately evaluate the feasibility of additional bridge length and modifications of the eastern section (10.7 miles) of the Tamiami Trail, also known as U.S. Highway 41, beyond

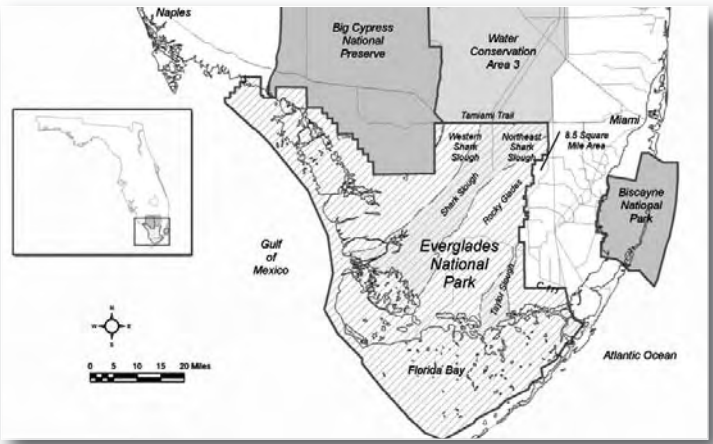


Figure 1. Water Conservation Area 3B.

that proposed in the 2008 report, to restore the natural resources and physical processes in the Northeast Shark River Slough.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

The environmental impact statement will evaluate the potential environmental effects of modifying the Tamiami Trail and reevaluate and modify the alternatives in the 2005 report. In addition, the environmental, engineering, real estate, and cost estimates will be revised. A range of alternatives will be considered, including a no-action alternative. At the conclusion of the process, the National Park Service will make a decision about modifying the Tamiami Trail pursuant to the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act.

Proposed Project Objectives

- Restore Natural Water Flow to Everglades National Park
  - Construct additional bridging of the Tamiami Trail to provide for unconstrained flows to Northeast Shark River Slough and Florida Bay.
- Restore Ecological Connectivity
  - Improve ecological connectivity by removing obstructions to sheet flow between Water Conservation Area 3B and Northeast Shark River Slough.
  - Reduce highway-caused mortality of wildlife moving across the Tamiami Trail.
- Restore Habitat within the Park
  - Restore historic slough vegetation and the deep-water sloughs.
  - Restore slough vegetation and the deep-water sloughs.
  - Restore processes that produce and maintain ridge and slough communities in Everglades National Park east of the L-67 Extension.

Scope

This study will consider impacts on health and safety, aesthetics and recreation, cultural resources, socioeconomic resources, hydrology, water quality, ecosystem habitat, fish and wildlife resources, threatened and endangered species, and construction costs.

The National Park Service is the lead agency on this federal action; however, the National Park Service has requested the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Highway Administration to be cooperating agencies on this effort. As the lead agency, the National Park Service will have decision authority over implementation. This project is complex and involves many agencies and stakeholders. Therefore, to develop a realistic plan, the National Park Service will seek

input from other resource and technical agencies and stakeholders, including, but not limited to the following:

- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Florida Department of Transportation
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Florida State Historic Preservation Office

- Miami-Dade County
- Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida
- Seminole Tribe of Florida
- Seminole Tribe of Oklahoma
- South Florida Water Management District
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U. S. Geological Survey
- U. S. Corps of Engineers

How You Can Participate

At this time, the superintendent of Everglades National Park is announcing a public comment period to solicit public feedback on this project. During this period, the public is invited and encouraged to comment on the proposed project and identify any issues or concerns so that the National Park Service can appropriately consider them.

There are a number of ways to participate in this process and make your voice heard. You may submit your comments electronically by going to the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov>

Once on the website, select “Everglades NP” from the drop-down box, then “Northeast Shark River Slough Restoration,” and finally “Open for Public Comment.” A paper copy of this newsletter may be requested by calling the park at 305-242-7700. If prompted by voice mail, press “2” at the first prompt and “5” at the second prompt to leave mailing information. Please state that you are requesting the newsletter for the **Northeast Shark River Slough Restoration Project**.

If you are unable to access this website, please submit written comments by June 12, 2009, to

National Park Service  
Attention Pat Kenney  
Denver Service Center, Planning Division  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, CO 80225-0287

Finally, we invite you to attend the following public meeting to be held on:

June 2, 2009  
South-Dade Regional Library  
1st Floor  
10750 SW 211th Street  
Cutler Bay, FL 33189

5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

The first hour of the meeting will be an open house and NPS staff will be available to discuss the project, answer questions and record public comments. At 6:00 p.m. there will be a brief presentation on the project, followed by a public comment session.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment — including your personal identifying information — may be made publicly available at any time. Although you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

