



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Cypress National Preserve  
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## Big Cypress National Preserve News Release

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### **National Park Service Issues Record of Decision on the Big Cypress National Preserve Backcountry Access Plan, Wilderness Study**

OCHOPEE, FL – Big Cypress National Preserve today issued the [record of decision \(ROD\)](#) for the Preserve's Backcountry Access Plan / Wilderness Study / Environmental Impact Statement. The ROD identifies the alternative selected for implementation and concludes the environmental review process. The selected action serves as a blueprint to guide the NPS's management of the Preserve's backcountry access and use and will provide new access to the Preserve while protecting natural and cultural resources and providing for public enjoyment.

The selected action described in the ROD is identical to the preferred alternative (Alternative 4) presented in the [Final EIS \(FEIS\)](#). The selected alternative:

- Increases access for both motorized and non-motorized users.
- Balances increased public access with resource preservation by identifying routes that can best withstand ORV use.
- Responds to concerns about wilderness designation received through public comments, submitted by stakeholders, and expressed by Tribes during Tribal consultation.

Public and agency engagement and feedback have been vital to the development and refinement of this plan and the selected action.

Established as one of the first National Preserves, Big Cypress represents a unique management concept where resource protection, public recreation, and specific uses stipulated within its enabling legislation are managed concurrently. The selected alternative will establish a secondary off-road vehicle (ORV) trail network providing access to destinations suitable for recreational activities, such as camping, photography and hiking; and will establish a permanent route for the Florida National Scenic Trail and other hiking opportunities. The selected alternative also includes a wilderness study that concluded no areas in the original Preserve be recommended for the NPS Director's proposal for wilderness designation.

Prior to release of the final EIS and ROD, the NPS signed a programmatic agreement with the Florida State Historic Preservation Office and the Seminole Tribe of Florida to support the implementation of the selected action while identifying and protecting important archeological and traditional cultural sites within the preserve.

The NPS initiated environmental planning in 2013 and released a draft EIS in the fall of 2020, both with formal public comment periods and public meetings. A supplemental draft EIS was released in 2022 in response to comments received on the draft EIS, also with associated public comment and meetings. The NPS released the FEIS in November of 2024. The NPS developed the selected action in consultation with the Florida State Historic Preservation Office, consulting Tribes, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Documentation of the entire planning process for the Big Cypress National Preserve Backcountry Access Plan / Wilderness Study is available on the NPS website at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/bicybap>.

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*About the National Park Service. More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 430+ national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Learn more at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov), and on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).*