

Recommendation of WRAC Recreation Issues Workshop, June 28, 2007 Re:
East Everglades Expansion Area

WILDERNESS DESIGNATION

- Wilderness designation should be precluded
- Night lights visible from adjacent urban areas (Miami, Kendall, Homestead, Florida City, including the Miccosukee Hotel and Casino and automobiles traveling Tamiami Trail)
- Sound from highway traffic; commercial and private aviation over flights; and agricultural pumps and farm equipment.
- Impacts to the resource from prior agricultural activities
- The need for mechanized access for assertive wildlife and ecosystem management (wildfire suppression, prescribed burns, protected species monitoring and management, exotic flora and fauna eradication.)
- Expansion Area should serve as a natural buffer area between the Park's Wilderness and developed areas.

PRIMITIVE BACKCOUNTRY DESIGNATION

- Should be precluded for applicable reasons listed above
- If implemented, accommodations must be made for reasonable exercise of legislatively authorized commercial and private airboat activities.

COMMERCIAL AIRBOAT OPERATIONS

- Commercial airboat operations must be preserved.
- Commercial airboat rides are an important cultural icon that is part of Miami's identity, featured on commercials and television shows and publications.
- Travel information throughout the world promote the airboat rides as a tourist destination. Thousands of visitors from all over the world come to see and appreciate the Everglades via these rides.
- The rides provide an enjoyable opportunity to expand public knowledge of the Everglades ecosystem, and to expand advocacy for healthy natural resources.
- Coopertown reportedly qualifies for historical listing.

PRIVATE AIRBOATING

- The Expansion Act provides for the grandfathering of airboaters (on designated routes) who used the area prior to the enabling legislation.
- As the NPS failed to document individuals who qualify for grandfathering, we recommend that all applicants must have been at least 16 years old (the average age for the cultural rite of passage for airboaters to operate

- independently) on the stipulated date. The need for specialized boats for the habitat and prohibition of hunting or frogging will limit the applicants.
- Request designated routes leading to areas of significance to the Gladesman culture, in consultation with area airboaters.
 - Request a designated public boat ramp for permitted airboaters and paddle boats at Tamiami Trail.
 - Request a designated public boat ramp on the eastern boundary, south of Chekika.
 - Request authorized private access from the Airboat Association of Florida property.
 - Request ingress and egress route from the Airboat Association of Florida property to any future bridge, the elevation of which is sufficient for vessel passage to Tamiami Trail and/or the Water Conservation Areas.