

master plan

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EVERGLADES



NATIONAL PARK / FLORIDA

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EVERGLADES

National Park / Master Plan



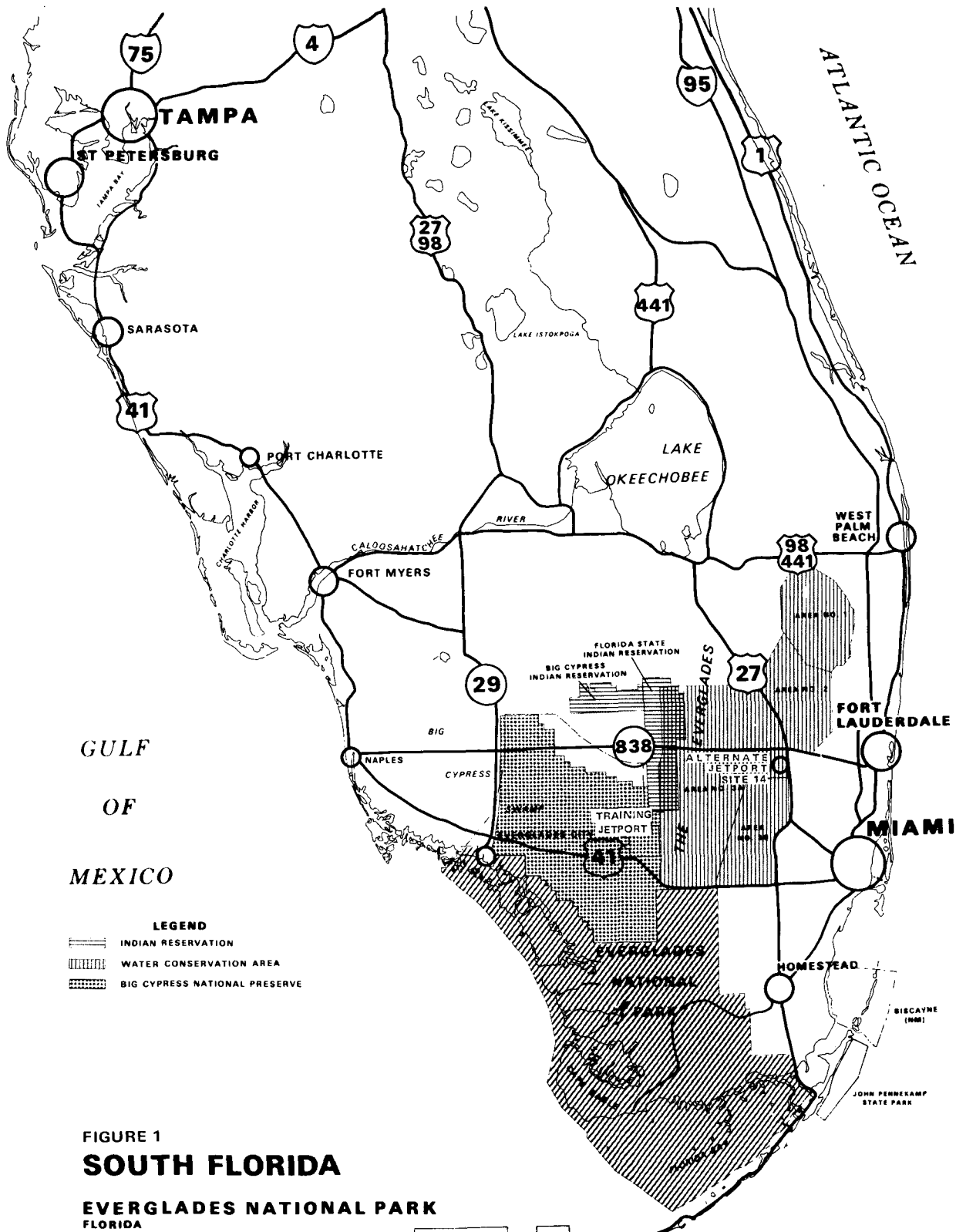
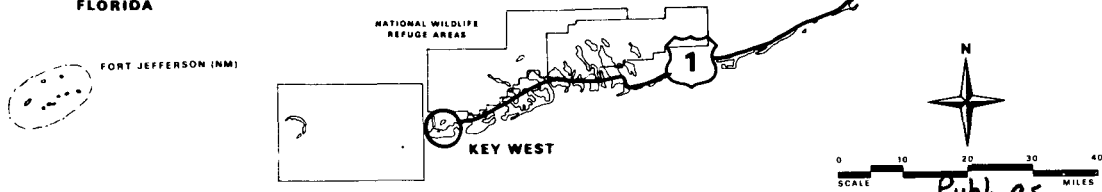


FIGURE 1
SOUTH FLORIDA

EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK
FLORIDA



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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SUMMARY



The third largest of the national parks, Everglades is one of the most unusual wilderness areas on the continent. The park preserves about 7 percent of the immense sweep of the Florida Everglades landscape, which is unique to, and forms the largest expanse of open space in, the South Florida region. But the park is not all part of the Florida Everglades. Two-thirds of the area is part of the marine/estuarine system of the South Florida coast. The park is greatly influenced and shaped by the sea, and contains one of the largest marine preserves in the National Park System.

The dynamic systems in the park change in response to new influences, both natural and manmade. Continuing development and population growth in South Florida have unquestionably accelerated changes in the natural environment; and the components of Everglades National Park – as parts of this environment – are profoundly influenced by the changing regional structure. What happens in the surrounding South Florida region tomorrow, and further into the future, will largely determine whether the park survives.

Although Everglades was not established and dedicated as a national park until 1947, it was authorized by Congress as a project in 1934. The act of 10 May 1934 clearly sets the tone for future management of the park as a natural area:

The said area or areas shall be permanently reserved as a wilderness, and no development of the project or plan for the entertainment of visitors shall be undertaken which will interfere with the preservation intact of the unique flora and fauna and the essential primitive natural conditions now prevailing in this area.

As a result of this and subsequent legislation, 1,400,533 acres in Dade, Monroe, and Collier Counties, including 32 acres in Everglades City and 14 acres in Key Largo, were finally brought within the park's boundaries. Large private inholdings, which existed for many years inside the park, have now been acquired, and virtually all lands are in Federal ownership.

Decisions about development and use of this marine/terrestrial park complex must give highest priority to the preservation of the variety of wilderness habitats and their multifarious wildlife species. And the vulnerability of these natural systems that results from their ties with the rest of the South Florida region renders inadequate any decisions that are not regional in scope. No matter how well the park is planned and managed internally, it cannot survive alone. It will become increasingly important in the years ahead that a sophisticated and innovative park management continue to actively pursue a regional partnership with other interests in South Florida.

Coping with external stresses and increasing numbers of visitors, past planners and managers have sought to achieve a suitable balance between visitor facilities in the park and the capabilities of the park's resources to support them. This effort, with few exceptions, has been successful. Wilderness conditions still remain intact, and in 1978 most of the park was declared legislative wilderness under the Wilderness Act. It is necessary to continue studies and controls to strengthen the protection of wilderness and marine resources, and to determine the park's optimum carrying capacity.

There is no valid reason to change the basic concept of development and use for the entire park. Visitor opportunities in the future will depend on improvements to upgrade and effectively complement what already exists. In this way, the park's interpretive, educational, and recreational potentials can be expanded within the present limits on circulation and use.

