

National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior

Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Parks

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Everglades News Release - UPDATE

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Date: October 18, 2013

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Public Comment Period Extended on Draft Florida Bay Seagrass Habitat Restoration Management Plan

October 18, 2013: Due to the federal government shutdown between October 1 and 16, the public comment period for the draft Seagrass Habitat Restoration Management Plan has been extended through Friday, October 25, 2013. The link to review and comment on the plan is: http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=40553. Thank you for your continued interest and support of Everglades National Park.

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Please Note – Original P\press release issued August 20, 2013 is included below for reference.

Everglades National Park Seeks Public Comment on Draft Florida Bay Seagrass Habitat Restoration Management Plan

Everglades National Park is seeking public comment on its just completed Draft Seagrass Habitat Restoration Management Plan for Florida Bay. The draft plan was released today for public review, and comments will be accepted through Friday, October 4, 2013.

Everglades National Park Superintendent Dan Kimball stated, "I view this plan as providing the park and its many partners with an important tool to better protect Florida Bay. The goal of the plan is to provide a concise and easily applied process for evaluating seagrass damage, determining the appropriate restoration action, implementing restoration projects, and evaluating the success of resource recovery. With the support of the South Florida National Parks Trust, in particular its Florida Bay Stewardship Fund, we have been able to develop an approach to improve resource conditions and visitor enjoyment of the bay. We're pleased to have reached this important milestone. We now look forward to hearing from the public and working together to meet some of the challenges associated with the numerous boat groundings and propeller-scarred areas in the bay."

The public is invited to attend a meeting about the draft plan on Monday, September 16, 2013 (6:00 to 8:00 p.m.) to learn more about the project, ask questions and provide comments and recommendations. The meeting will be held in Founders Park at the Community Center building, located at 87000 Overseas Highway, Islamorada, FL 33036 (mile marker 87, bay side).

The preferred method to view and comment on the plan is via the internet at the park's website: www.nps.gov/ever or http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=40553. A limited number of paper copies of the draft plan are also available upon request by contacting Everglades National Park at 305-242-7700. Written comments may also be mailed to: Everglades National Park, Attn: Florida Bay Seagrass Plan – Fred Herling, 40001 State Road 9336, Homestead, Florida 33034.

Superintendent Kimball said, "Much of Florida Bay supports submerged aquatic vegetation comprised of seagrass, providing vast areas of habitat for important fish, mammals and invertebrates. Florida Bay is also designated critical habitat for several endangered species and is a premier shallow-water recreational fishing destination. The portion of Florida Bay within Everglades National Park was federally designated as submerged wilderness in 1978. While the park's General Management Plan is being finalized to provide overall long-term direction to managing Florida Bay and other areas of the park, this plan will establish an easy-to-follow management framework to restore and conserve seagrass habitats within Florida Bay. The plan provides guidance for projects big and small, some of which can be accomplished with dedicated volunteer groups that are so vital to the stewardship of Everglades National Park."

After the public review period ends on October 4, comments will be reviewed and analyzed, and the Final Florida Bay Seagrass Habitat Restoration Management Plan will be issued in early 2014.

This project was made possible through the generous funding from the Florida Bay Stewardship Fund of the South Florida National Parks Trust.

More information on Everglades National Park can be found on the park website at http://www.nps.gov/ever/

About the National Park Service: More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 401 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.