

**Big Cypress National Preserve  
ORV Advisory Committee Meeting  
March 18, 2008  
Everglades City Community Center  
Everglades City, Florida  
3:30 p.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendance.** Committee members: Present – Win Everham, Wayne Jenkins, Robin Barnes, Manley Fuller, Franklin Adams, Karl Greer, David Denham, Chuck Hampton, Barbara Jean Powell, Marsha Connell, Ed Woods, Curt Wittholf, Steve Thompson. Not present – Gary Lytton.

Preserve staff present: Karen Gustin, Pedro Ramos, Ed Clark, Ron Clark, Dennis Bartalino, David Adams, Bob DeGross, Frank Partridge, Damon Doumlele, Don Hargrove, David Hamm, Delia Clark (contracted facilitator).

Approximately 14 members of the public were in attendance.

**Welcome and explanation of public comment periods.** Ms. Gustin welcomed attendees and introduced the committee. She emphasized that all should be cognizant of the time in order to stay on schedule and that there will be three public comment periods as specified in the agenda. Those wishing to speak may fill out a card and submit it at the sign-in desk.

Ms. Clark discussed the meeting agenda and public comment period structure. Public comments will be limited to three minutes during three periods interspersed throughout the meeting. The first comment period will be from approximately 5:00 – 5:20, and comments will be limited to the discussion on committee protocols. The second comment period will be 6:15 – 6:30, with comments related to ORV access point relocation to Burns Lake Campground. Near the end of the meeting from approximately 7:15 -7:45, general comments will be taken, including future recommendations for agenda items. Recommendations for future agenda items may be sent to the agenda subcommittee or mailed to the Preserve.

**Approval of November 29, 2007 minutes.** Mr. Everham said that he arrived a little late for the previous meeting and should be listed as having been present.

Mr. Adams stated that he did not do as much survey work as stated in the minutes, but he did do quite a bit of work in the area. He also stated that he represented the environmental community and was not employed by the oil industry as a member of the Big Cypress Swamp Advisory Committee.

Ms. Powell corrected the name of public commenter “Rodney Larkins” to “Mike Larkins.”

Ms. Connell noted that she had previously submitted corrections in writing.

The minutes were approved as corrected.

**Meeting schedule.** Meetings in 2008 will alternate between Mondays and Tuesdays and will be held from 3:30-8:00 p.m. at the Everglades City Community Center. The 2008 meeting schedule was published in the *Federal Register* as follows:

- Tuesday, March 18
- Monday, May 12
- Monday, July 21
- Tuesday, September 23
- Monday, November 17

Ms. Clark asked the committee if they had any suggestions for the 2009 meetings. The group decided to see how well the 2008 meeting schedule goes before considering 2009.

**Public interface.** The committee discussed interfacing with the public. Ms. Clark thanked Ms. Powell for the work she put into the draft media protocols and read them to the committee. The draft protocols stated that the committee will follow the following guidelines:

- The NPS is the agency charged with arriving at positions and the ORVAC will make recommendations;
- The NPS will most likely be the entity who communicates with the media in most circumstances; this does not preclude the committee or individuals of the committee from making statements to the media;
- Content and manner of public statements may affect the ORVAC's ability to function constructively or to reach a consensus; therefore, the ORVAC agrees to adhere to the following guidelines as they pertain to media communications:
  1. No committee member shall make statements to the media on behalf of the committee, unless the person is specifically authorized by the committee to be an official spokesperson for the ORVAC, nor unless the general content of the statement is approved in advance by the committee and the NPS.
  2. Committee members may exercise their right to communicate with the media as individuals but will not attempt to characterize the motives, views, comments, or opinions of other members or of the committee as a whole.
  3. Committee members will not use the media as a tool to influence committee deliberations.

Discussion on media and public interface ensued, and questions were asked on 1) what happens if the committee feels that someone has violated ground rules, and 2) how will the committee deal with the problem? Concern was expressed as to how the committee's credibility could be damaged if it is perceived that individuals are behaving

inappropriately and the committee fails to take action. One member related his personal experiences of how the media sometimes failed to accurately report information provided through interviews. The committee accepted the draft media protocols.

**Agenda items.** Meeting agendas are currently set by an agenda subcommittee consisting of Ms. Powell, Mr. Denham, and Mr. Fuller. Members of the public who have agenda item recommendations may submit them to the Preserve or someone on the agenda subcommittee. Since meetings will take place every two months, the agenda subcommittee will meet within one month to develop a draft agenda. The draft agenda will be approved by the Preserve. Once approved, the agenda will be sent out to the full committee for approval.

Items placed on the agenda should be related to the implementation of the ORV Management Plan. Items will include topics such as trail stabilization techniques and constructing backcountry access points. Ms. Gustin stated that the ORV Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement would not be reopened and that agenda items must stay within the scope of the plan.

The goal of the plan is protection of resources and establishment of designated trails. Further discussion focused on how the committee interacts with Preserve management when setting the agenda, and methods used are described as a collaborative effort between the agenda subcommittee and superintendent's office.

The committee asked if there were specific timelines that must be met or any federal guidelines involved in the committee posting an agenda. In addition, is it necessary to place the agenda in the *Federal Register*? Damon Doumlele replied that the specific agenda is not published in the *Federal Register* meeting notice, but the notice states that the agenda will be published by press release prior to the meeting. Ms. Clark said that the committee and the public will receive the finalized agenda approximately three weeks prior to the meeting.

The committee recommended the development of a mechanism to respond to the public for issues that should be placed on the agenda. Discussion centered on how to deal with instances where the public agenda item requests are not within the scope of the ORV plan for the upcoming meeting and how the committee should inform the interested party when his/her item of interest will be placed on the agenda.

**Decision:** Ms. Gustin recommended developing a checklist within the next two weeks to answer those questions. The checklist will be sent to the committee for review.

It is very important for the committee to be totally transparent and to put forth a good-faith effort. People need to understand where their suggestion went and when it will be addressed.

A discussion on agenda subcommittee membership followed, and current subcommittee members were asked if they wished to continue serving. Mr. Fuller said that it would be difficult for him to continue, and Mr. Adams will take his place.

**Decision:** The new agenda subcommittee consists of Ms. Powell, Mr. Adams, and Mr. Denham.

The NPS representative on the agenda subcommittee will be one or more of the following: Damon Doumlele, Karen Gustin, Pedro Ramos, and Delia Clark.

**Process of receiving written comments from the public.** The following rules were adopted for receiving public comments:

- The minutes will reflect a brief synopsis of what individuals say during their allotted time to speak;
- Speakers who want their oral comments recorded verbatim must submit them in writing at least one week in advance of the meeting. Comments should be sent to:

Big Cypress National Preserve  
Attention: ORV Advisory Committee  
33100 Tamiami Trail East  
Ochopee, Florida 34141

The committee suggested that there should be a process in place for people who either cannot attend meetings, or who would prefer not to speak at meetings but would like to submit written comments for consideration. The committee recommended that public comments be sent to the above address by hardcopy or by email, and that they be distributed to the ORVAC. Timing of committee review of public comments was discussed, and two options were considered. 1) The committee felt that it would be advantageous to receive public comments for review in advance of the meeting; and 2) a suggestion was made to limit written comments to one side of a piece of paper or write an executive summary. Ms. Powell felt that the public should not be limited on the extent that they can communicate with the ORVAC, and that the earlier the comments are received in advance of the meeting, the better.

The committee asked if they should receive public comments, such as the ones recently sent by Eric Kimmel, at their personal email addresses. The committee decided that they should not, and prefer that comments be sent to a central email address at the Preserve and then forwarded by staff to the committee as a whole. Ms. Gustin asked Information Technology Specialist David Hamm if it would be possible for the Preserve to set up an email account for the NPS and the committee to receive public comments in this manner. Mr. Hamm said that he could set up the account, but a decision on the name of the account must be made, and all emails must be sent to the Preserve. This method of communicating would fulfill the need of providing suitable public access for communication.

The question was asked if the Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website could be used for the purpose of providing a space for public comments, and Damon Doumlele said PEPC is designed to post documents for public review and is not really a communication device. Mr. Hamm said that he could have comments sent to a single address, and upon receipt, the documents could be routed to the committee, but there would not be a filter placed on the comments. The committee voiced concern over the obvious difficulty of appropriately responding to written public comments containing questions related to multiple issues; a filtering mechanism would be quite useful in this instance. Ms. Powell was uncomfortable with the term “filtering.” Ms. Clark explained that the term “filtering” was used to describe a method of reviewing public comments in advance, because in the past obscenities had been received that should not be provided for the committee’s review. Bob DeGross recommended setting up a website where a public interaction page will be located. One person could receive comments at the Preserve, filter them, and forward comments to the committee. Certain precautions should be taken to prevent public comments from being sent directly to committee members, because individual firewall software in use may identify incoming messages as spam and automatically discard them.

Discussion summary:

1. The committee would like to read everything that is sent to them and do not want information cut out.
2. It is better to send all information to one email address at the Preserve and comments will be forwarded to committee members.
3. If there is a useful comment that someone at the Preserve notices, they might make a note of it as a helpful comment to you but not pre-read everything and issue a comment on each e-mail.
4. The public should be provided a guide on how to submit public comments to the committee (e.g., acceptable time to submit, preferred single topic, and whether their topic will be discussed during the next meeting).
5. The committee would like the upcoming agenda and comments two weeks prior to next meeting.

**Decision:** Make it clear in the subject line that public comments are for the ORVAC.

**Preserve action:** Comments will be placed on the PEPC website, and the ORVAC will be provided paper copies of comments received.

The committee suggested that provisions be made to access PEPC during meetings but reached no decision. Members pointed out the need for read-ahead material to be sent separately from public comments, and Ms. Gustin made a distinction between general comments and read-ahead information. Read-ahead material is related to the agenda, and public comments would come independently.

Mr. Doumlele said that he could set up a public comment link in PEPC, but it would be up to the committee to periodically check it.

The committee continued discussing miscellaneous methods of receiving public comments and recommended that it be an agenda item for the next meeting.

**Alternate members.** Craig Faanes from Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve was sent as a representative for absent committee member Gary Lytton.

***Decisions:***

- Representatives for absent committee members shall not sit in at the table with committee members.
- Alternates must be appointed by the Secretary of the Interior.
- Stand-in committee members may sit in the audience and present written statements or express an absentee member's opinion.

**Subcommittees.** The committee discussed subcommittee guidelines drafted by Ms. Powell and agreed to the following:

- Subcommittees should be established as needed.
- Subcommittees may receive guidance from the committee.
- Subcommittee membership must be approved by the committee.
- Subcommittee members may be members of various organizations or the public.
- Subcommittee members must agree to work by the working principles and ground rules established by the committee.
- A FACA paragraph should be added.
- Subcommittee meetings do not have to be published in the *Federal Register*.
- Subcommittees are not authorized to make decisions, but to gather information, make recommendations, and report back to the committee.
- Subcommittee members will be appointed by the committee to a finite term.
- Subcommittees can be established and disestablished by the committee.

**Working principles and ground rules.** The committee discussed draft working principles and ground rules prepared by Ms. Powell and Ms. Connell. The question as to whether individuals involved in active litigation against the NPS should be appointed to the committee came up. Preserve response: By agreeing to serve on the committee, potential litigation issues that members could be involved in must be pushed aside, and members should focus on the issues at hand. They must set aside any potential adversarial relationships that may exist between the NPS and themselves. A suggestion was made that members establish specific criteria to serve on the committee.

The committee agreed to the following working principles and ground rules:

1. Use the committee to build cooperative working relationships among Big Cypress stakeholder communities that will last far beyond the life of the committee. Set aside past conflicts or adversarial relationships to help the committee move forward toward lasting outcomes.

2. Commit to participate in good faith and devote the time necessary to contribute meaningfully to the process, including attending meetings faithfully and reviewing material provided in advance so as to arrive prepared.
3. Recognize that each participant brings to the table different perspectives, interests, and values. Be open-minded and receptive of the ideas and views of fellow committee members and the public, and be honest, transparent, and specific about your own concerns or interests.
4. Listen! Be attentive and respectfully listen to fellow committee members and the public, even a lone voice.
5. Never engage in personal criticism or harassment. Focus on issues, not personalities.
6. Speak only when recognized and allow others to finish speaking without interruption before seeking recognition. Be concise and deliver comments succinctly so all will have an opportunity to speak.
7. Avoid assigning or presuming another person's intentions. Seek clarification.
8. Take personal responsibility for reviewing committee notes and minutes to assure your comments are accurately recorded.
9. If not in agreement with a proposed recommendation, solution, or outcome, present an alternative that reflects and incorporates, to the extent possible, the needs and desires of other committee members. Build upon the ideas of others in a collaborative manner.
10. Stay focused on the official agenda for each meeting. If you have other issues to bring up, explain how they connect to the agenda, or request that they are placed on an addendum to the agenda (time permitting) or on a future agenda.
11. Turn off or mute cell phones before the meetings start. Do not accept or make phone calls unless they relate to an emergency. Request this of the public as well.
12. (Dealing with the media will be listed here.)

During committee discussion, a concern was again voiced concerning an individual's ability to effectively serve on the ORVAC while currently in litigation against the NPS. Ms. Gustin stated that such individuals should recuse themselves from the discussion if there is a perceived conflict of interest. She emphasized that the committee will not be involved in any particular issues related to the current lawsuit.

**Public comments.** Frank Denninger requested to speak on the Burns Lake ORV trail access point issue, due to his need to leave the meeting early. He was concerned that there has not been a clear distinction made on the true function of the ORVAC. He asked for clarification on whether the intent of the committee is to implement the ORV plan or to manage ORVs. He would like the committee's intent to be made clear at some point. Mr. Denninger said that the trailhead relocation from Burns Road would result in the loss of one mile of trail of the remaining 20 miles of trails in the Turner River Unit. He does not support formal backcountry campsites in the Preserve.

Tommy Barton is a local resident and has lived in the area his entire life. He does not want public comments to be filtered by the NPS and does not trust the federal government or the National Park Service. In his opinion, leaders in the federal

government change their mind whenever they want to. Mr. Barton cautions the creation of subcommittees, because participants may not be able to go out and do the necessary research. Subcommittee membership could possibly be comprised entirely of individuals who think similarly, and that could flaw data provided to the committee. He believes that people who are involved with lawsuits against the NPS should not be involved in this process until the lawsuit is settled.

Craig Faanes is a land manager at Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Preserve attending on behalf of committee member Gary Lytton. Mr. Faanes shared his past experience in which he served on a committee to resolve issues related to complex water use and rights issues on the Platte River in Nebraska. He said that the committee he served on was very similar to the ORVAC, and he disclosed how their formerly adversarial relationship was transformed into an effective working unit. He predicts that over time the ORVAC will probably come to a similar conclusion.

**Decision:** The committee agreed to make room for other people who cannot attend the meeting to get their comments heard.

Interaction with the media was discussed in depth, and opinions ranged from a preference for one person acting as the sole contact for the media to any member of the committee exercising his/her rights of freedom of speech. One member felt that committee members could exercise their right to speak their opinion but not compromise the committee; they should be mindful of other issues. Other comments included an opinion that the media should be handled carefully and strict regulations applied by the committee. A recommendation was made that committee members may exercise their right to communicate with the media but will do so with discretion. Further, some felt that a muzzle should not be placed on them. This discussion continued until Ms. Clark suggested that the topic be deferred to a later meeting.

Ms. Powell submitted a list of tips to be used when dealing with the media.

**Decision:** Media interaction decision will be deferred to a later meeting.

**Access to Burns Lake Campground.** A slide presentation was given by Preserve Chief Ranger Ed Clark, who provided background on the ORV access on Burns Road and description of the proposed new access point at the north end of Burns Lake Campground. The proposal would involve closure of the existing Burns Road trailhead and relocating the trailhead to the north side of Burns Lake Campground, requiring the closure of approximately 0.6 mile of trail currently in use. One committee member felt that the 0.6 mile of trail should remain open for use, while another member pointed out the benefit of removing unlicensed vehicles from a public road and reducing current parking problems. A parking area, signage, restroom, and other amenities would be located at the campground.

Private landowners on Burns Road signed a petition to remove the current access and believe that it creates a safety hazard for them and their families. A Fire Department

retiree who is a resident of Burns Road explained that people frequently park their trucks and trailers in front of his driveway during hunting season. He explained that buggies often drive at unsafe speed on the road, and the buggies are not equipped with brakes. In his opinion, an accident is imminent. He said that it would be much safer if the access point could be shifted to the campground. Resident complaints centered on buggy speeds, driveway blockage by trucks and trailers, and firearms being discharged in close proximity to their homes. Ms. Clark suggested that all public comments be heard after Mr. Clark's presentation.

Mr. Clark continued to list the benefits of relocating the access point to improve safety on Burns Road. He described the truck and trailer parking options at the campground and gave a description of the 10.5 mile trail route that would use high ground and existing disturbed areas and trails whenever possible. A committee member asked Mr. Clark if campers can be permitted for convenience and equipment security to park their ORVs at their individual camp sites, and if so, how can possible user conflicts be avoided or minimized while driving the ORVs between the camp sites and backcountry access point. Mr. Clark responded that there are engineering solutions for providing a perimeter ORV access road on the back side of a number of the camp sites that would lead directly to the new backcountry access point. If this can be implemented, campers with ORVs can exit through the back of their camp sites directly to the ORV access road, thus avoiding entirely the general use road running through the center of the campground. He discussed a proposal to avoid or minimize user conflicts by separating various user groups in the design of the campground access.

The committee was told that the maximum number of miles of primary trails allowed by the ORV plan was 400 miles, and that this level has not been reached yet. Currently, there are approximately 200 miles completed. The need for ORV storage and expanded parking at Monroe Station was raised, and equipment security and other issues were identified as problems that would need to be addressed. The committee asked if there were any problems associated with various user groups at other campgrounds in the Preserve and suggested that Burns Lake Campground be managed similarly. The committee was in agreement that precautions should be made to minimize interactions between campers and ORV recreationalists.

**Public comment.** Jan Brock is a resident of Burns Road dating back fourteen years. She is a hunter and an ORV user and is not "anti-anything." She spoke of trespass problems on her property. She is very supportive of moving the current ORV access point on Burns Road to the Burns Lake Campground and would appreciate a no-hunting restriction or buffer zone placed around her property.

**Committee discussion.** Mr. Adams stated that he appreciated Ms. Brock's comments and said that it was unfortunate that they cannot legislate common sense. He said that it was probably a better arrangement to get people off the county road and that the current arrangement is a real safety issue. Other members mentioned that there were no problems at the Bear Island Campground and requested that the committee consider this fact before building another road around Burns Lake to separate user groups as described

during Mr. Clark's presentation. Private landowner issues should also be considered, and the question was asked as to what type of hunting buffer is currently being used. It was determined that current regulations show a ¼-mile buffer.

**Decision:** The buffer zone topic was tabled for a future meeting.

Bob DeGross explained to the committee the Preserve's efforts in applying for two grants from the Office of Greenways and Trails. As part of those grants, the NPS is proposing to place two designated backcountry camping areas along the Burns Lake trail, near the northern and southern ends. Five campsites per area will be constructed and equipped with solar-powered, composting toilets. Dispersed backcountry camping will not be eliminated.

**Decision:** The committee supported the initiative to relocate the trailhead and construct backcountry camps.

**Briefing: Street Legal 4x4 Vehicles – Ed Clark.** Mr. Clark gave a briefing on the status of 4x4 vehicles as permitted by the ORV plan.

- Street legal 4x4 vehicles are restricted to Bear Island.
- There is no difference in tire tread width requirements between street legals and buggies; both require 9-inch tread width.
- Current regulations for tire size are 9-inch minimum tread width.

The committee discussed the current allowance for street legals in the Bear Island unit and their prohibition in the Turner River and Corn Dance Units. They discussed past use of street legal 4x4s in the Preserve and said that the criteria for legal vehicles could be tire tread size and vehicle weight. Guidelines should be created to distinguish the two types of vehicles. Weight limitation was identified as the major factor in determining appropriate vehicles for use in the Preserve. Ground pressure measured in pounds per square inch (psi) was considered in the past as the determining factor but was cumbersome. Ms. Powell suggested that the topic be handled as a project for a subcommittee, and all agreed. No decisions were made as to whether street legals should be allowed in other units of the Preserve.

**Briefing: Four-wheeler Operators in Big Cypress – Franklin Adams.** Mr. Adams gave a briefing on the problems caused by four-wheelers (ATV operators).

- Originally four-wheelers were not permitted in the Preserve.
- Many users are OK, but the "mudders" are a problem.
- Most mudding places near the Preserve have been closed.
- Locks to Preserve access points are frequently cut or broken.
- Mudders generally have no place to go and are now using the Preserve to recreate.
- A significant increase in the number of four-wheelers has been seen recently in the backcountry, and many of them have no permits to operate in the Preserve.

Mr. Adams described mudders as people who do not respect the resources and have frequently been seen trashing the Preserve. He suggested that the committee consider limiting the number of ATV users. It was suggested that perhaps ATV numbers should be limited in the Preserve or more stringent penalties be imposed on those who break the laws by confiscating their equipment. Further discussion described methods of capturing illegal actions on film through placement of trail cameras. Committee members unanimously agreed that a current fine of approximately \$50 is not a deterrent. The committee discussed potential future problems that would arise if ATV users outnumber the traditional swamp buggy users and diminish the traditional users' opportunity to recreate. Some felt that camp owners should form neighborhood watch groups, because they felt that the types of people who violate laws are the type to vandalize.

**Decision:** Look at the number of total vehicles and the vehicle specifications to see if they are flexible.

**Decision:** Revisit the issue to determine how the committee will address unwelcome conduct.

**Briefing: Education and Enforcement Efforts – Bob DeGross.** Mr. DeGross described current Preserve educational and enforcement programs.

- ORV trails should be engineered correctly so that users will stay on trail.
- Education is important to enable user groups to understand the boundaries in which they may operate their vehicles.
- Enforcement of regulations is an integral component of protecting resources.

Four permits are required to provide legal access to the backcountry:

1. An operator's permit, similar to a driver's license, is issued to those who take the required ORV course at the Oasis Visitor Center. This course provides important information, such as staying on designated trails, avoiding open prairies, and the location of trail access points. The permit is good for the life of the operator. At a future time the committee may consider refresher course requirements for this permit.
2. A vehicle inspection sticker is supplied once the user passes the ORV course and Preserve staff inspects the vehicle. ORVs must meet specific standards to pass inspection. VIN numbers, title or certificate of title, tire specifications, and working safety equipment are required. Swamp buggies, ATVs, airboats, and street legals all must meet special requirements. The inspection sticker is good for three years, and the ORV must be inspected at the end of three years to ensure that it has not been modified.
3. An annual vehicle permit is the only permit requiring a fee. The fee is \$50 and is good for 13 months. The permit may be purchased in January of each year and is

valid through January of the following year. The Preserve allows 2,000 ORV permits throughout the year; last year's total reached 1,930. The Preserve has never reached the 2,000-permit limit. Once the 2,000 threshold has been reached, the Preserve will switch to a lottery system to dispense permits.

4. Backcountry permits are available at trailheads. Visitors are required to fill out the backcountry permit, regardless of their activity, for safety and visitor use data collection purposes.

Funding has been earmarked for updating the current ORV operator's orientation presentation, and a more interactive presentation will be created for training purposes. The ORVAC may be asked for recommendations in this process. ORV users will be provided maps and other printed material, and annual distribution of an ORV newsletter will be distributed annually. Input from the committee would be greatly appreciated.

Orientation kiosks will be strategically placed at access points to inform the public of the Tread Lightly message, speed limits, and other trail use information.

The Preserve is attempting to create a Backcountry Ranger Program that would be staffed by volunteers. A university study will be conducted in the Preserve to determine how the Tread Lightly message is being received by the ORV community across the country. During the May ORVAC meeting there will be a presentation provided by the Tread Lightly study group. A question was raised on the procedure for leaving backcountry information if the permits are not there, and the Preserve staff response was, "you can't." Staff have been told that some visitors take a handful of permits for future use when they visit the backcountry, and the box is sometimes empty. There is, however, an effort to provide electronic backcountry access permits for public use.

A recommendation was made to move the backcountry permit box at Oasis to a more accessible and visible location that could be used by Florida Trail hikers and motorized recreationalists. A comment was made that the ORVAC should look hard at ORV training requirements and do not require retraining, with the exception of potential violators.

The access point at Monroe Station is recommended to be extended 50-75 feet due to the difficulty in stopping a buggy when crossing U.S. 41. Design of the entrance could help to mitigate this problem.

FDOT was contacted in the past to determine if a slow speed or flashing light could be placed at the Monroe Station access point, and FDOT refused the request.

The group was informed that once funding is provided, a parking area would be constructed on the north side of U.S. 41 at Monroe Station.

The committee requested that an agenda item be established for the ORVAC to review the proposed updated ORV training presentation to allow them to become familiar with

its contents. Preserve staff said that the ORV training presentation will be copied to a CD and sent out to the ORVAC.

Committee: “Are ATV violators or mudders typically seen using the 2-wheel-drive racing style ATVs, or are they using the 4x4 type ATVs that are preferred by hunters?”

Preserve staff: “We don’t know if the racing style models would meet our ORV standards, and regulations require use of 4x4 models.” Committee: “Do we have regulations for group use of ORVs in the Preserve?” Staff: “National policy does not specify a group size. Group size may impact resources differently in each park, and special use permits are issued for this purpose.” Committee: “Is it possible for the ORVAC to get several years’ worth of backcountry trip ticket data?” Staff: “Not everyone fills out the information correctly, and we are currently working with FWC to begin processing the data.”

The Preserve will provide the ORVAC the requested data upon completion of the data processing project.

**Briefing: Culture – Barbara Jean Powell.** A social science study on the benefits of ORV recreation in the Preserve was conducted in the development of the ORV plan, and Ms. Powell said that the study speaks for itself. The area’s rich hunting and fishing culture is deeply rooted in the people of the region and is recognized by the Florida legislature, along with Floridians’ right to hunt and fish. Regional planning teams recognize the Gladesman culture. Federal planning should take this culture into consideration. Gladesmen have a strong sense of place, and names such as Diamond Head have special meaning. Another example is the Austin Cow Camp, representative of the of the Florida cowmen culture that was removed by the NPS. She said that fence posts, cross ties, and other artifacts that remain in the Preserve are remnants of the Gladesman culture, and she questioned how they can be saved from possible destruction. Ms. Powell felt that it is important as a committee to remember these places that reflect the culture and history of the area, as well as the need to provide continued public access.

The current complicated permitting system makes it difficult for inholders to visit and recreate with their neighbors, families, and friends. Ms. Powell asked that action be taken to the extent possible to preserve the Gladesman culture. She said that she is not against regulations, but the traditional users should not feel oppressed when they visit the Preserve, and should not have to worry about violating rules which are not clearly defined or which place unnecessary constraints on traditional culture uses.

**Public Comment.** Bud Houston misses the availability of swamp buggy storage in the Preserve and requested that a central storage location for buggies be identified for future use.

Eric Kimmel’s written comments were reviewed by the committee. The question of youth use of ATVs was not understood, and Ed Clark provided background on the issue as it relates to the ORV plan. In consideration of youth ATV use, the Consumer Product Safety Commission recognizes placards placed on ATVs in an effort to mitigate

accidents. In consideration of manufacturer's recommendations, The Preserve took the position of requiring youth to obtain a driver's license and operator's permit to operate ORVs in the Preserve. The issue of youth operating ORVs with adult supervision may be addressed through the adaptive management provisions of the ORV plan. State regulations do not allow two riders on an ATV that was not designed for that purpose. The committee decided to table discussion on the 10:00 p.m. curfew referenced in Mr. Kimmel's comments.

**Agenda for next meeting.** The committee listed possible topics for discussion at the next meeting:

1. Committee exchange media
2. Youth access to the Preserve
3. Buggy storage – permitting
4. Group events – enhance recreational values
5. Tread Lightly survey – resource protection (education/enforcement)
6. 4-wheelers
7. Vehicle specifications: psi/weight
8. Caps on vehicle subcategories
9. Volunteer “rangers”
10. Education
11. Street legal 4x4 access
12. Lottery system

These topics were prioritized by member preference:

(1 - X), (2 - 3), (3 - 2), (4 - 1), (5 - X), (6 - 6), (7 - 2), (8 - 6), (9 - 0), (10 - 5), (11 - 1), (12 - 2)

X = education & enforcement, permitting, enhancing recreational values, resource protection.

Ms. Gustin thanked all participants for attending and adjourned the meeting at 8:11 p.m.