

**Big Cypress National Preserve  
ORV Advisory Committee Meeting  
March 24, 2009  
Big Cypress National Preserve Headquarters  
Ochopee, Florida  
3:30 p.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendance.** Committee members: Present – Wayne Jenkins, Robin Barnes, Franklin Adams, Karl Greer, Ed Woods, David Denham, Chuck Hampton, Barbara Jean Powell, Marsha Connell, Win Everham, Curt Witthoff, John Adornato, Laurie Macdonald. Not present – Manley Fuller.

Preserve staff present: Dennis Bartalino, Ed Clark, Ron Clark, Bob DeGross, Damon Doumlele, Don Hargrove, David Hamm, Brian Paddock, Jill Wilson, Isobel Kalafarski, Delia Clark (contracted facilitator).

Approximately ten members of the public were in attendance.

**Welcome.** Mr. Doumlele announced that Superintendent Pedro Ramos was in San Francisco attending a conference and thanked members of the committee and public for being in attendance. He then turned the meeting over to Ms. Clark, who described how public comments will be received. Written public comments may be received via the Preserve website at [www.nps.gov/bicy/parkmgmt/orv-advisory.committee.htm](http://www.nps.gov/bicy/parkmgmt/orv-advisory.committee.htm) or <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. Mr. Doumlele is the Preserve contact and can be reached at (239) 695-1158. Written comments may also be sent directly to the Preserve at ORV Advisory Committee, 33100 Tamiami Trail East, Ochopee, FL 34141.

Public comments will be heard following committee discussion of identified topics at the following approximate times:

5:15 Trails designation process  
7:20 Corn Dance, Turner River, and Stairsteps trails  
7:45 General comments

**Approval of Minutes.** Minutes were approved as submitted.

**Off-road Vehicle Trail Marking Plan.** Mr. Bartalino updated the committee with the following concerning the draft ORV trail marking plan:

- The plan formalizes the trail marking process by providing uniformity
- Trail markers will be consistent in size, shape, and color and will provide information to the public
- Reassurance markers will help ORV recreationalists identify and remain on the trails to reduce resource impacts
- Galvanized steel will be used as marker posts for sustainability

- Trail marker information will be posted on kiosks at trail access points
- Trail markers in the Turner River Unit will be green in color
- Secondary trail markers will be a different color yet to be determined
- Markers will be used to convey information such as:
  1. Hazard warnings
  2. Allowed usage
  3. Trail identification
  4. Seasonal closures
  5. Distance from trailheads
  6. Trail intersections
  7. Regulatory matters, such as no dispersed use
  8. GPS coordinates
- Markers will be used as infrequently as possible
- Markers affixed to trees will be nailed with aluminum nails
- Individual trail marking plans will be used for each trail
- All other trail markers will be removed once trail markers are in place
- Private property will be marked

***Discussion:***

- A member asked about marking private property. NPS: Private property will be marked to keep the public off private land
- One member stated that areas on the trail are over-marked at present
- Will Preserve staff mark secondary trails? NPS: Yes

Mr. Bartalino stated that primary trails in each unit will have a different color. The committee questioned the need for this and suggested a map with numbered intersections on it to help ORV recreationalists navigate the backcountry.

The committee referred review of the plan to the Education and Public Use Subcommittee, consisting of Ms. Powell, Mr. Adornato, Mr. Witthoff, and Dr. Everham. The subcommittee should decide the date of their meeting.

**Backcountry Trail Volunteer Program.** Ms. Wilson and Ms. Kalafarski gave a presentation on a backcountry volunteer program that will be comprised of 10 to 15 volunteers by 2010. The goals of the program will be to increase visitor safety and compliance with regulations. Backcountry volunteers will:

- Assist in day-to-day operations and in emergencies
- Work in partnership with the NPS
- Be responsible ORV operators
- Assist with trail maintenance

Why the backcountry volunteer program is needed:

- Primarily due to increase in ORVs
- 1518 ORVs sold each day in the United States per 2002 data
- 1589 permits have been sold this year for ORV recreation in Big Cypress to date
- Limited ORV access statewide
- Volunteers help protect the resources and take pride in public lands
- Provide education on ORV regulations
- Provide assistance to ORV recreationalists

To become a backcountry volunteer, the individual must be a good communicator, safety-conscious, have a pleasant demeanor, be tough, and be educated in proper ORV use. The program building blocks consist of ORV training, first aid and emergency training, natural and cultural history training, quarterly backcountry volunteer training, and volunteers must wear approved safety equipment such as helmets, eye protection, and gloves. The next steps will be to finalize the backcountry volunteer handbook and recruit volunteers.

**Discussion.** How many hours would the backcountry volunteers work? NPS: Details such as working hours will be identified in the volunteer backcountry handbook.

Ten to fifteen volunteers seems to be a small amount of people, shouldn't there be 100 or more? NPS: There are inherent costs associated with implementing this program, and the current strategy is to get started and recruit more people to the program as time progresses.

Will volunteers connect with NPS law enforcement? NPS: Volunteers will be supervised by Big Cypress law enforcement, but they are not law enforcement employees.

Will the subcommittee have an opportunity to help draft the volunteer handbook? NPS: Will provide a copy of the volunteer handbook to subcommittee for review and post the document on PEPC. If the subcommittee feels that there is a need to bring the document to the attention of the full committee, then they will do so.

The NPS hopes to have the program up and running by September.

Overall, the committee felt that the volunteer handbook is a good idea.

**Trail Designation Process.** Mr. DeGross gave a follow-up presentation to the trail designation process discussed at the March meeting. As a result of the initial review of the presentation, a member suggested that the NPS describe to the public how destinations are rejected that were recommended to the NPS by the public. NPS: Ron Clark will provide an update on the secondary trail process later during the meeting.

One of the discussions that will take place with the ORVAC during the next or following meeting is the discussion on secondary trails and what is the allowance for the number of secondary trails. Committee: Without some type of clear definition of secondary trails the discussion will be a task. NPS: We might have to go back to the subcommittee and review the

secondary trails that have been completed so far. One NPS objective is to record the reason why a particular trail was dropped per recommendations made by the public. Trails are not dropped from further consideration arbitrarily. Committee: Will the definition of secondary trails be achieved before a decision is made for the Turner River Unit? NPS: Yes, a decision on the definition of secondary trails will be part of the process.

### *Discussion.*

- A reduction in secondary trails is recommended
- Secondary trails should not approach the length of primary trails
- NPS is working on a definition of secondary trails
- Why is the NPS discussing number of secondary trails
- Committee is concerned about the secondary trail mileage issue
- Public is giving up an awful lot of trails, and there should be no reductions
- How will we proceed on the issue of secondary trails? Some say that secondary trails are not identified in the plan, and some feel that the secondary trails are not defined well enough
- Current step is taking a broad concept from ORVAC
- Definition of a secondary trail will apply to other units. Should more people be involved with the process
- Subcommittee has the authority to broaden the subcommittee and invite other people into the group
- NPS told the public that there was an unlimited number of secondary trails
- NPS said hunting areas are legitimate reasons to designate hunting locations as destinations
- NPS told the public that there are certain activities that are considered high impact
- Public needs to know if BICY has the authority to make changes
- Member asked for trails to Mullet Slough to be reinstated
- Subcommittee needs to evaluate wording of the ORV plan and minutes of public meetings and other sources of information on the subject of secondary trails
- Historical trails should not be lost, and the committee requested an evaluation of historical trails to determine if they meet the requirements for designation as traditional cultural resources
- What is important is to determine what are the destinations that the secondary trails are attempting to reach, which is described in the ORVMP, and the committee should stop placing so much emphasis on the number of miles of secondary trails
- Turner River Unit is one of only four units that allow ORVs, there are 2,000 ORV permits available to the public, and there should be an appropriate number of pull-offs and secondary trails to accommodate 2,000 vehicles if they are all in the backcountry at one time
- The secondary trail issue will never be resolved
- Hope the committee can come to a consensus on a shared vision of what secondary trails and destinations are, then there will be a fight over every secondary trail that is placed in the system
- Ms. Clark reminded the committee that the ORVAC is a microcosm of all of the interests out there, and that they are all watching the progress of the committee
- Concerned about the disabled among us. It is the ORVAC's job to get those people to destinations for whatever reason that they desire

Ms. Clark recommended that the ORVAC stop talking about the destinations of secondary trails and begin to discuss process. The following decisions were made:

- The Turner River Trails Subcommittee will work on secondary trails and bring their recommendations to the full committee
- The subcommittee will meet in a public forum

The subcommittee will focus on the definition of secondary trails. Issues that the subcommittee will face include:

- Definition of a “destination”
- Definition of a “short distance”
- Whether a loop trail can be considered a secondary trail
- Whether there is a sense of a total mileage for secondary trails

The question was asked if the subcommittee will open up to other members of the public, and the ORVAC response was no. A member felt that a moderator would be helpful to facilitate the meeting. The public will have an opportunity for input during the full committee meeting.

#### ***Public Comment.***

Lyle McCandless passed out a letter dated August 20, 2008, to the ORVAC from the Big Cypress Sportsmen’s Alliance (BCSA). The following are highlights of his letter and ensuing discussion:

- Importance of the recommended trail system submitted for review by the NPS
- BCSA strongly urged the ORVAC to forward recommended trails as submitted by the public to the NPS for review
- The only way the BCSA would accept a reduction in the number of trails to be submitted to the NPS for review is that the subcommittee had substantial factual reasons for eliminating any trails for final review by the NPS
- He contacted, at that time, Acting Superintendent Pedro Ramos to discuss with him the issues surrounding the trails system
- 400 miles of trails were forced on the public due to a Record of Decision (ROD)
- The only way that an effective trail system can be created is to take full advantage of the parameters of the secondary trail system
- Noted that Mr. Ramos referenced the ORV plan that confirmed that there were no mileage limits for secondary trails
- Secondary trails could be up to one and one-half mile in length
- At this late time he resents the ORVAC’s struggle with this issue that he thought was resolved
- ORVAC has not been given a clean ball to play with
- Hunting is allowed by an act of Congress, ORVs are allowed by an act of Congress, which is the law of the land

- The Yellow Trail was closed in Bear Island because of pressure from the lawsuit
- The public is waiting on a trail use decision
- He tore a page out of the Florida Biodiversity Project settlement agreement dated October 25, 1995, that was completed five years before the ORV plan ROD. The document stated that the NPS would come forward with a designated trail system and/or use areas. That language did not make it into the final decision of the ORV plan
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has been shut out of this process and they should be involved
- NPS has no idea where the old cultural trails are located
- The subcommittee meeting on secondary trails should be open to the public
- Feels that far too many meetings are being held behind closed doors, and it makes him angry

Frank Denninger:

- Concerned about the aesthetic effects of signage
- Signage should be placed as necessary
- Volunteered to serve on the committee that addresses cultural history
- Believes volunteers serving on the backcountry trails volunteer program should be allowed to use their personal equipment
- Big Cypress has more potential to develop a reasonable trail system than any other park in the country
- Believes that the ORVAC is in the toughest part of the process now in determining the meaning of the definitions

Christian Mogelvang:

- Designated trails are not consistent with the understanding that we would have traditional use
- You cannot have 100 percent designated trails and penalize individuals who may stray a foot off of the trail
- Designated trails take away the traditional sense of freedom and personal responsibility

Matthew Schwartz, Sierra Club:

- 1.2 million members of the Sierra Club nationwide
- Wonders if the group can reach a decision
- General purpose of the ORV plan is to protect the natural resources of the Preserve that have been degraded by a high level ORV use
- Lots of people use the Preserve, and the Sierra Club took hundreds of people, young and old, on walks this year
- The ORVAC is not diverse enough to represent user interest other than ORV use
- No park is set up for exclusive use by one group

Bill Clark, BCSA:

- Asked to discuss the Yellow Trail and the lawsuit on it

- Has not heard anything from the committee that informs the public of what is happening with the lawsuit;
- Sees no need for a backcountry volunteer program that in his opinion is additional bureaucracy

Lyle McCandless referenced a previous discussion on the 2,000 ORV permits that are sold and made the following statements:

- On November the 15<sup>th</sup> the opening day of general gun hunting season, the BCSA counted a total of 255 ORV trailers of trucks with ramps to accommodate an ORV or airboat trailers in BICY
- By Sunday, 90% of the vehicles were gone
- The number of ORV trailers counted throughout hunting season declined similarly until the end of hunting season
- The BCSA had similar numbers for black powder season as well
- The impacts from ORVs on the Preserve is overly exaggerated, and ORV recreationalists using the backcountry can ride for days without seeing another ORV
- Asked the ORVAC to please keep in mind that the total number of hunters using buggies in the Preserve at one time is far less than what they think and that the vehicle impacts are very much overly exaggerated

Eric Kimmel: Referenced the trail designation process and said that he did not appreciate so many of the secondary trails being dismissed from further consideration without due process.

Frank Denninger:

- Data gathered by the NPS showed that there was approximately 22,000-29,000 miles of trails in the Preserve
- ORV recreationalists are allowed on 1/100<sup>th</sup> of 1% of the land area that was available for ORV use
- From 22,000 to 400 miles of trails is a 99% reduction in the amount of trails available for public use
- It would not matter at this point if one mile or 500 miles were added to each unit--the ORV community would not have anything close to the access they once had in the Preserve
- A 99% reduction is enough mitigation for anything

### **Follow-up to Miami-Dade Jetport OHV Park**

Mr. Doumlele referenced the previous ORVAC meeting, in which representatives from Miami-Dade County spoke of their plans to develop an ORV trail system and facilities at their Jetport property.

- NPS did not feel that the ORVAC had adequate time to ask questions about the project with Miami-Dade representatives
- Miami-Dade County Park and Recreation Department is working on a site plan for OHV

trails, camping, fishing, and outdoor recreation on 1,550 acres within Collier County south of the runway at the Jetport

- The preliminary site plan is expected from the consultants by the end of March
- County staff will review the site plan and provide an estimate for probable cost for development of OHV trails at the Jetport
- This project is funded by the T. Mark Schmidt OHV grant program administered by the Florida Division of Forestry and will be completed by June 2009
- Miami-Dade plans to submit a growth management plan amendment to Collier County Community Development and Environmental Services by the due date of April 3, 2009
- The amendment will seek approval by Collier County to allow motorized recreation for OHV vehicles at the Jetport, currently characterized as conservation
- Miami-Dade plans to coordinate with Collier County and BICY through the land use amendment concept
- Miami-Dade applied for a grant from Florida Division of Forestry for FY 2009 – 2010. If accepted, this grant request will provide funding to support work needed for the Collier County Growth Management Plan amendment that is necessary prior to development of OHV trail system

Mr. Doumlele told the committee and attending audience that he has provided the most up-to-date information on the subject available to him.

### ***Discussion.***

- A member said he would like to see the development at the Jetport to take place and asked the ORVAC and public to raise their hand if they favored the project. Three members of the public and seven ORVAC members were in favor of the project
- The Florida Department of Community Affairs has a problem with the project
- How did this project come about? As explained by Ms. Connell, Miami-Dade County applied for a grant to look at various locations to determine what areas would be suitable for ORV recreational purposes and went through a process of elimination of alternative sites
- A panel member asked if it was possible to get the list of alternative sites that were rejected, and Ms. Connell replied yes

**Status of Stairsteps Zones 2-4.** Chief Ranger Ed Clark provided a brief overview of trail designation.

- According to the ORV plan, Zone 2 is open to use by swamp buggies and ATCs
- There are approximately 10 miles of designated trails in Zone 2
- Approximately 5.95 miles of designated trails are designated for use by swamp buggies and ATCs on the Monroe South Trail
- In Zone 3, ATCs, airboats, and swamp buggies would be allowed on approximately 25 miles of designated primary trails
- So far, Sig Walker Strand has approximately ten miles of trail currently being used by a single landowner as access, but the trail has not been designated for general use yet

- Paces Dike was designated at the same time as Monroe South, and approximately 2.94 miles of trail have been designated for use by ATVs and swamp buggies
- In Zone 4 only airboats are allowed, and only on designated primary trails
- Approximately 57.7 miles of primary trails have been designated in Zone 4 since early implementation of the ORV plan
- The ORV plan does not allow for secondary trails in Zone 4
- In response to user input concerning access to Zone 4, the NPS embarked on a re-evaluation of the trail system in 2006 and 2007
- To date the following have been completed:
  1. Conducted public meetings to identify destinations and prospected existing trails
  2. Completed ground-truthing for identified trails;
  3. Created a preliminary trail routing alternative
  4. Project was suspended temporarily pending resolution of the Bear Island lawsuit

***Discussion:***

- Why are airboats being discriminated against? Airboat access is so limited that they don't have the option of secondary trails. Why has this happened? Chief Clark: What he described to the committee are stipulations in the ORV plan; he is unaware how they got there
- Believe the ORVAC should look at the issue through adaptive management
- Concerned that the opportunity to address this issue may pass if the ORVAC does not take action
- There is no update on the Bear Island litigation
- Is there discussion between the litigants
- Committee was told that litigation issues cannot be discussed
- On the issue of why there are no secondary trails in Zone 4, a committee member found language in the ORV plan on page 34 that described the allowance of secondary trails if better data were to become available
- Has the committee and NPS discussed if that data is being collected and how it may be evaluated? Chief Clark: There are a number of places in the plan that would allow for re-evaluations if more data is made available
- Because of low mileage in the Stairsteps Unit it was decided that the unit would be the last to be evaluated
- A lot of the groundwork has already been done in Zone 4; traditional airboat users must carry poling skiffs on their boats and walk or pole to their preferred destinations. How long do they have to wait for an NPS decision
- Litigation is preventing the NPS from fulfilling their obligations
- Are there limitations on poling and skiffs? NPS: No
- Some people have had heat strokes from using pole boats in Zone 4 from the amount of effort that is needed to transport their equipment to preferred sites
- A member asked if there is a preconceived sequence in which the committee will engage other units or is that something that will be decided. NPS: Turner River Unit is being addressed now, and this year we will be opening up for public comments for the Corn Dance

## Unit

- An observation was made on the long history of airboat use in the Stairsteps Unit that described 50-60 years of unlimited access to that section of the Preserve. Some time ago Stairsteps was opened to commercial interests that virtually trashed the area, and the unit was closed to recreational use to those who did not cause the problem. The area was never reopened; similar to swamp buggies, airboats have had a history of losing access in the Preserve.

**Corn Dance Unit ORV Trails.** Mr. Doumlele provided a brief introduction to the Corn Dance Unit. He identified the major trails that transverse the area on a map that provided a pictorial overview of the boundaries of the unit.

- The Jetport property occupies 37 square miles within the Corn Dance Unit
- There are approximately 64.2 miles of primary trails in the unit
- The process that is ahead of the Committee is very similar to the process that is taking place for the Turner River Unit
- NPS plans to hold a public meeting sometime this summer for the Corn Dance Unit
- NPS will request input from the public for suggested trails and destinations
- Information will be taken and provided to the ORVAC to develop a designated trail network
- The ORV plan allows approximately 60 miles of primary trails in the unit

**Discussion.** A discussion on available access points to the Corn Dance Unit took place, and Mr. Doumlele pointed out the access point that Miami-Dade authorities proposed north of the Jetport.

- Is the Jetport allowing other types of ORV use on their property? NPS: Miami-Dade has proposed a higher-impact type of activities and equipment for use in the southern portion of the Jetport property, and the northern portion would be restricted to more traditional use
- The old ox cart historical trail should be evaluated
- The two loop trails that come out of the Turner River Unit should be counted in the Turner River Unit; there is no other access than what is available from the unit of origin
- The ORVAC should recommend that any trail that originates in a unit should be counted in that unit's total mileage
- NPS should think about keeping access road to Raccoon Point
- The Herald Sign Road, Seminole War Road, logging roads, etc. should be evaluated

**Turner River Trails.** Ron Clark provided an overview of the trail evaluation process. He focused on BICY efforts in ground-truthing the network of recommended trails provided by the ORVAC.

- In regards to the resource management evaluation of the recommended trails, primary trails are approximately 99% done in the Turner River Unit
- NPS is conducting the same activity for secondary trails, which is approximately 50% completed

**Discussion.**

- A discussion on trails ensued that referenced past discussions with BICY staff who agreed that trails should not be on individuals' private properties
- Committee requested secondary trails that lead up to the boundary of the Addition
- NPS and ORVAC will have to get together and get the suggested trail map and the recommended trail map that was generated by the trails subcommittee for comparison purposes to determine what trails were eliminated
- Recommended keeping meticulous records on the identification of trails and why they were removed from the list as recommended by the public
- In regards to putting in trails, has the NPS dismissed any trails based on them being a loop trail or trails that lead off and reconnect with a primary trail? Mr. Clark: He has not disallowed any trails because he is not the decision-maker
- ORVAC was confused about the process of trail ground-truthing and asked if BICY staff or Pedro has eliminated any recommended trails due to ground-truthing. Mr. Clark: Not to my knowledge
- Was there any consideration for designating the trail across from Fire Prairie Trail as a hiking trail? Mr. Clark: I haven't accessed the trail for that purpose
- Please don't over-develop the trails. NPS: Currently using spot treatment of trails

***Public Comment.***

Lyle McCandless:

- A pattern is being set and followed because everything in the Preserve is being isolated from the Addition Lands
- Afraid that the NPS will say connections cannot be made to the Addition Lands once the Addition Lands management plan is completed because the total mileage of allocated trails for each unit is exhausted
- Insists that a trail connect to the boundary of the Addition Lands from Bear Island, Turner River, and Corn Dance Units
- Asked if there was any news from the ORV Specifications Subcommittee. NPS: No
- It was unbelievable that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has not been involved with this process
- Asked Mr. Doumlele for clarification on continued closure of the of Bear Island trails. NPS: Trails were closed due to resource damage, and in order to make those trails sustainable, NPS needs to modify their existing permits with the South Florida Water Management District and the Army Corps of Engineers to stabilize the trails. One application goes to both agencies, and that application has not been finalized

Frank Denninger:

- Lots of discussion took place on the Jetport property in the Corn Dance Unit
- He is a member of the Jetport Conservation and Recreation Club, and they have plans to deal with Miami-Dade County on their own
- The swamp buggies stored at the Jetport are located there to assist in search and rescue in

case of an aircraft crash

- His club also assists the U.S. Army when requested
- Oasis is the primary access to the Corn Dance Unit, and people should expect lots of east/west trails
- He read comments presented to the committee by Steve DeLine, who does not wish for his camp to be seen from trails, and recommended that a current survey of private landowners' property to ensure that their property is not located on any of the existing trails

Harley Balman:

- There are no secondary trails in Zone 4. It is discrimination. All hunter groups do south of the loop is go to the end of trails and stop
- Pole boats are a joke and he would like to see others do it
- If it is the intention of the NPS to flush them out, then they are doing a heck of a job in accomplishing that task
- Everyone that uses Zone 4 is disgusted and tired of what the NPS is doing
- Mr. Balman's father has given up on hunting Zone 4, and he and his father are disgusted with the current process
- Participation in opening day of hunting season in airboat country has been drastically reduced

**Discussion:** The committee encouraged Mr. Balman to continue coming to the meetings and that at some time the ORVAC will be looking at Zone 4 network of trails. Mr. Balman's grandmother hauled timber into Miami on an ox cart, he is a full-blooded Gladesman and married a full blooded Gladeswoman, and his children are 5<sup>th</sup> generation. His request is a cultural preservation issue.

Matthew Schwartz:

- NPS released a report on the reduction in bird populations and he believes that a reduction in resources due to human overpopulation is the reason for the problem. He said that south Florida is overbuilt in new housing projects etc.
- There is a city almost the population of New York City and many of them would like to get away for recreational purposes
- In the 185,000-acre Turner River Unit there is not one designated hiking trail
- Hiking trails should be incorporated into this process so that at the end there is something that people can buy into
- Many feel that ORV trails make great hiking trails, but that point of view is incorrect for hikers
- Hikers do not want to hike on buggy trails
- The ORV plan says that trails should be laid out on terrain that is judged as sustainable
- Trails need to be consistent with the ORV plan and should not require any type of stabilization

Charles Barley:

- Big Cypress has been farmed and logged and has had lots of other activities on it, and it continues to grow back
- Asked the committee to not be too stingy with the network of trails

Eric Kimmel:

- There is no need for a certified hiking trail anywhere in Big Cypress
- No matter where you walk you can have a buggy trail all by yourself
- 90% of his time is spent on foot, but he enjoys airboats and buggies
- Finds peace and solitude on foot without the use of special trails

Bill Clark:

- If there were no buggy trails, there would be no hiking trails
- Any time of year a backcountry visitor would have a difficult time seeing another buggy
- Buggy trails are perfectly suitable for hiking

### **General Public Comments.**

Frank Denninger:

- Hopefully, the committee will be open to public review by the Gladesman traditional cultural property survey that is being conducted by the U.S. Army regarding the CERP Master Recreation Plan in south Florida that extends from the Kissimmee River to the Keys
- They will be commenting on the plan and that would be the appropriate time to recommend additional TCPs to be considered
- Preserve interpretation programs should focus heavily on the cultural Gladesman community
- Has a lot of respect for people like Mr. Schwartz, although he and Mr. Schwartz do not agree on a lot of subjects
- Went on a hike with Mr. Schwartz in the Addition Lands on a swamp buggy trail
- Explained the difficulty of walking in this country and recounted occasions of missteps ending in an encounter with an alligator
- Believes that some primary and many secondary trails would make beautiful hiking trails

Harley Balman:

- In Big Cypress there are areas that allow walk-in hunting only where hikers can find solitude
- Bird and small mammal population decline is probably due to pythons
- We need to take care of our kids
- Don't place 4-wheelers at Jetport; place them at Thompson Park
- Ms. Powell interrupted and expressed her concerns for the ability for parents to ride with their children on ATVs. She asked Mr. Balman the availability of equipment that would allow two riders to ride at once, and Mr. Balman stated that Arctic Cat makes a model for two riders that costs approximately \$12,000

- Asked that the subcommittee add equipment for children's use in the Preserve and consider use of special racks that allow a second rider
- Ms. Connell agreed to e-mail the State statutes that provide guidelines for children's use of ATVs in the State of Florida.

Lyle McCandless:

- Asked for a response from the NPS if there was a specific reason why in all units there is an obvious plan to stop all of the trails a mile or two short of any boundary, because there will come a time soon that trails should be connected, and he has no faith in the secondary trail concept. NPS: Trails cannot cross closed areas
- In all areas ORV trails fall short of allowing units from being connected
- Buffer zones should be eliminated from this process. NPS: Buffer zones are in the ORV plan and they are in there for a reason. Anything done to change those closed areas will require the reopening of the NEPA process
- There are no buffer zones from Turner River to Corn Dance Unit, so why are there no trails that connect the two units, and why are there no trails shown in the Addition Lands alternatives showing connection to Bear Island
- Mr. McCandless described the effort by the Big Cypress Sportsmen's Alliance to ground-truth trails in the Bear Island unit that were never reopened; he asked why is it that the FWC was not participating in this process
- Two people from the NPS ground-truthing trails is not fair and is a one-sided situation
- The public should be involved in this process and he would like to know why the public has not been involved. If there is a specific rule that would disallow public input, he would understand
- There is not one person in the NPS that had an idea of where the old trails are located and he and his Sportsmen's Alliance members located each one of them. Taking that fact in mind, why are they not involved in the ground-truthing in the Turner River Unit

Frank Denninger:

- Sincerely thanked the ORVAC for their candid conversation
- Supports the committee during a time when they must make courageous decisions
- Recognizes that the ORVAC job is tough and the committee works hard to make recommendations. They still may not see the fruits of their labor because the NPS can either take or leave their recommendation

Eric Kimmel:

- Thanked the NPS and ORVAC for the opportunity to discuss access to Zone 4 in the Stairsteps
- Requested NPS to follow through on the Muse Patterson study for historical airboat access to Zone 4 south of the Loop
- The evaluation and ground-truthing that was completed in 2007 was turned over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and at the first ORV Advisory Board Meeting the

superintendent assured Mr. Kimmel that once FWS had completed their review of the plan, airboat access would be restored to Zone 4

- He and others offered their help consistently to the NPS to supply airboats and other equipment, but they never received a response
- Because of lawsuits for buggy trails in Big Cypress, the airboat community has now lost a couple of seasons of traditional airboat use south of the loop; FWS is held up because BICY has committed to placing the plan on the table and now their hands are tied
- FWC is now asking for a resolution considering the lack of cooperation by the NPS with FWC.
- After reviewing photos of the Bear Island trail that received ORV damages that triggered the lawsuit, Mr. Kimmel believes that there was no need for litigation. Maintenance would be appropriate, but litigation is a total waste of our taxpayer dollars
- After all that has occurred, he and others are still locked out of their public lands
- Requested that the NPS please get the airboat access restored south of the loop before they lose yet another season of traditional cultural activities
- Using the Bear Island lawsuit as an excuse does not hold water, not only because the lawsuit does not have merit, but traditional use is passive; all of the studies have shown that
- Asks the NPS and superintendent to make an executive decision on no further delay on Zone 4
- Florida law allows minors to take an ORV safety course that is recognized by the State of Florida and that children under the age of 15 can operate an ORV
- NPS has refused to acknowledge that fact. By not allowing children to participate, NPS is killing their culture
- He and others once could take trails from Cooperstown to Chokoloskee by cutting through the park
- Traditional airboat community would love to regain access to Ochopee Prairie
- For future agenda items, he will bring the issue of youth back because they are our future
- Would like to reestablish airboat and buggy access for traditional use at Sig Walker's landing
- Will bring up restoring airboat access at New River and Ochopee Prairie
- Asked that the NPS stop renaming areas in the Preserve
- Thanked the ORVAC for their time and efforts

Charles Barley:

- Thanked the committee for their hard work
- Locals are emotionally tied to Big Cypress, he has many family photos in the Preserve, and his father breathed his last breath at their camp in Big Cypress
- Locals have a connection to the Preserve that they cannot get from someplace else
- Asked the committee to please consider the content of what they have to say
- Thanked the committee again for their time.

### **Agenda for Next Meeting.**

- Adaptive management for airboats
- Historical routes

Mr. Jenkins mentioned that the Turner River trails are going to be a problem. He explained that campers will be unable to get off of the trail to set up camp, and he does not know how to address the issue.

Ms. Clark asked the committee for guidance on how to handle public comments because there is a need to be fair with each public participant. She said that everyone is allowed to speak for themselves. She felt that she did not handle members of the public fairly, and next time she would like to do a better job.

Ms. Clark announced that there are three subcommittees that need to set up a time to meet:

- Turner River Trails
- Agenda
- Education and Public Use