

**Big Cypress National Preserve  
ORV Advisory Committee Meeting  
April 20, 2010  
Big Cypress Swamp Welcome Center  
Ochopee, Florida  
3:30 p.m.**

**Minutes**

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

Preserve staff present: J.D. Lee, Damon Doumlele, Valerie Clark, Dennis Bartalino, David Hamm, Don Hargrove, Kit Carrington, Ed Clark, Delia Clark (contracted facilitator).

Approximately five members of the public were in attendance.

**Welcome.** In the absence of Superintendent Pedro Ramos, Damon Doumlele welcomed members of the ORVAC and the public. Damon stated that the Welcome Center was open to the public and that there was a successful grand opening on March 20, 2010. He said that the NPS was working on extending the terms of committee members whose terms would soon be expiring and that new members' names would be forthcoming, probably at the June meeting. He announced that a public meeting would be held on April 28, 2010, from 5-7 p.m. at the Oasis Visitor Center to receive comment on proposed improvements to Loop Road. Damon introduced Blazena Huskova from the Czech Republic, who was visiting with Delia Clark for several months to observe public interaction. Damon announced that as a result of discussion in previous meetings, BICY sent a letter to FDOT on April 9, 2010, requesting a meeting to discuss safety concerns at Monroe Station. Delia explained the process for the public to express their comments during and after the meeting and gave an overview of the agenda.

**Update on Funding and Planning for ORV Program—Bob DeGross.** Bob stated that BICY had put in a funding request to manage the ORV program. Funding has been approved and the organizational chart will be modified to allow BICY to hire six additional staff next fiscal year, including a recreational planner and maintenance, resource management, and law enforcement personnel. This year the funds will be used to purchase equipment such as swamp buggies and dump trucks.

**Approval of 2/2/10 Meeting Minutes.** Barbara Jean Powell pointed out the correct spelling of Pekel. Delia announced that Damon and Don Hargrove were considering changing the minutes format to more of a summary of what is said, which is more in line with minutes of other organizations in the state. The minutes were approved as corrected.

**Update on Permit System—Ed Clark.** Ed gave a presentation on the permit program, outlined at attachment 1, and statistics from 2002 to 2010, at attachment 2. During discussion of permit sales statistics, Ed pointed out that UTVs were lumped in the same category with swamp

buggies. The committee expressed interest in separating these out, and Kit Carrington agreed to do this and provide a breakdown at the next meeting.

**Update on Access Points—Dennis Bartalino.** Dennis gave a synopsis of funding BICY has received this year and the next for five of the 15 ORV access points (attachment 3) described in the ORV management plan: 1/1A – Bear Island, 3 – Concho Billie, 5 – Burns Lake, 10 – Monroe Station, and 14 – Mitchell’s Landing (Red Bird Lane). Improvements would include parking, toilets, signage, informational kiosks, and RV sites for volunteers to operate the access points. Some sites, e.g., Concho Billie, will require design, compliance, and right-of-way permits. No decision has yet been made to keep the Monroe Station access where it is or to move it north of the highway or to Monument Lake Campground. The committee discussed the need for development at Mitchell’s Landing and how camper/ORV use at Monument Lake Campground would be accommodated, should the Monroe Station access point be moved there. Draft plans for the access points will be brought to the ORVAC for comment.

**Trail Marking and Signage.** Delia explained that the Education and Public Use Subcommittee had reviewed the BICY draft sign plan and has brought their recommendations to the full committee for approval (attachment 4). She read through all of the subcommittee’s recommended changes and then opened the floor for discussion. The committee agreed with the subcommittee’s recommendations in addition to the following:

1. GPS coordinates on signs should be in latitude/longitude units, since most people are familiar with this system, and it is the one used by rescue and law enforcement personnel.
2. GPS coordinates, but not elevations, will be placed on all primary trail markers.
3. Trail numbers should be on markers in addition to trail names.
4. Trail marker colors for primary and secondary trails should match map colors.
5. Trail blazes may be nailed to trees with aluminum nails; however, cypress trees should be used when available.
6. The words “such as prairies and” should be deleted from page 5.

**Public Comment: ORV Program, Permit System, Access Points, Trail Marking/Signage.**

Lyle McCandless (Big Cypress Sportsmen’s Alliance) said that a count in 2008 revealed an average of 122 ORV trailers in the Preserve each week during general gun season, or one ORV per 4,565 acres. He felt that UTVs were improperly put in the same permit class as swamp buggies and that this was being used by the NPS to eliminate buggies in the Preserve. Some trails are appropriate for buggies only, and signage should indicate this.

Frank Denninger noted that swamp buggies in the 60s were generally smaller than those today. He agreed that GPS coordinates should be on signs and preferred both lat/long and UTM units. He disagreed with changing the minutes format.

Robert Rose believed trail access should be reestablished at Monument Lake. He would also like to see ORV access along SR 29 south of Sunniland. He did not believe trail conditions need to be posted on signs.

**Committee Discussion.** The ORVAC recommended posting GPS datum information at

trailhead kiosks. The committee adopted the Education and Public Use Subcommittee's recommendations as amended.

**Turner River Primary and Secondary Trail Development—Bob DeGross.** Bob reported little change from the previous meeting due to wet field conditions. All the ORVAC-recommended trails have been checked from a resource management standpoint and found suitable. An estimated 50% of the trails still need to be checked for sustainability. All recommended primary trails have been ground-truthed and some have been marked. Rock has also been staged at various locations in the Turner River and Corn Dance units to be used for stabilization once ground conditions improve. BICY continues to get secondary trail suggestions from the public, but priority is being placed on the ORVAC's recommendations.

**Managing Trail Pull-offs—Ed Clark.** Ed explained that once BICY goes to a designated trail system, there will be a question as to how far someone can pull off the trail and still be considered on the trail or in the trail corridor. Ed listed camping, hunting, hiking, and sightseeing as examples of activities that need to be addressed (attachment 1). Delia asked the committee for topics to consider, and the subject of primitive camping was discussed. Wayne Jenkins suggested that where a trail goes through a pine island or oak hammock, camping be allowed within 100 yards of the trail. Issues included designated or identified camping sites or areas, minimum camping distance from trails, and game retrieval. Delia agreed to email the topic list to the committee for further discussion at the next meeting.

**Public Comment—Turner River Trail System and Managing Trail Pull-Offs.** Charles Barley noted that law enforcement should consider resource damage and not just distance from the trail when enforcing trail pull-offs. He agreed that the term "primitive camping" should be used, not "primitive campsites." He did not feel camping should be restricted to upland areas only, since other areas may be dry enough to camp in at certain times of the year. If more secondary trails are needed in pine islands, the committee should allow the public more time to submit trail requests.

Frank Denninger said that the ORVAC may agree on camping in upland areas within a fixed distance of a trail, but this may conflict with what Ed Clark said earlier about secondary trails. Frank noted that there may be a difference between the NPS and ORVAC interpretations of "designated campsite" and cited the proposed Burns Lake campsites as an example.

Robert Rose said he did not believe there should be number limits on pull-offs or limits to the number of campsites.

Lyle McCandless (Big Cypress Sportsmen's Alliance) said that the settlement agreement between the NPS and the Florida Biodiversity Project stated that the NPS was to implement a designated trail and/or use area system. His organization asked the NPS to show that use areas were considered and eliminated, and he had not received a response.

**Monroe Station.** Wayne Jenkins said he believed the sportsmen's viewpoint was missing from the exhibits at the Welcome Center and the Oasis Visitor Center. Monroe Station used to be a popular stopping point for visitors to the Everglades, and he would like to see some kind of

concession and exhibit established there that would be reflective of that era. Bob DeGross explained that Monroe Station was on the National Register of Historic Places due to its connection with the years immediately following completion of the Tamiami Trail. The NPS had received a grant to restore the building to its 1930s appearance. However, the entire story of the building's history would be interpreted. There may be some type of commercial operation established there as identified in the BICY Commercial Services Plan. The site plan includes parking, the game check station, and ORV access to trails. Any suggestions or recommendations for the site should be sent to Pedro.

**General Public Comment.** Lyle McCandless (Big Cypress Sportsmen's Alliance) said that he and others had spent the last three weeks in the Addition and disputed the NPS contention of 139 miles of sustainable trails there. He was constructing a map to show where the existing trails are.

Robert Rose said that the Jetport plans by Miami-Dade County do not concern BICY. He is in favor of the planned riding park there because he feels that many BICY ORV permits are sold to people who have no other place to ride. He is also in favor of Wayne's idea for preserving Monroe Station.

Charles Barley reminded the committee that the Preserve, according to Joe Browder, was preserved for the men and their machines and to protect their culture. Decisions being made need to fall in line with those reasons.

Frank Denninger said Bill Clark could not be present to discuss the requested Pikel trail. He thanked Wayne for his remarks concerning the culture of the area. He noted that the Preserve had never had a cultural specialist on staff. He believes that the restoration of Monroe Station should be to the period when it was used by the public as a stopping place, not the period the NPS has chosen.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

## Attachment 1

### ORVAC Presentation

#### 1. Permit System

- Present permit Data
  - Highlight totals
  - New vs. renewals
- Set Asides
  - 50 permits set aside for day sale
    - Is outside the specifics contemplated in the plan.
    - Very likely to raise issue of impact.
    - If the ORVAC recommends this to the Superintendent and he decides to move it forward, it could be submitted as an amendment to the plan through NEPA
    - It would most likely require an EA and would have to go through a public comment period.
  - Earmarks for a particular group (hunters, landowners, long-term users etc.)
    - Is outside the specifics contemplated in the plan.
    - Very likely to raise issue of preferential treatment.
    - If the ORVAC recommends this to the Superintendent and he decides to move it forward, it could be submitted as an amendment to the plan through NEPA
    - It would most likely require an EA and would have to go through a public comment period.

#### 2. Managing Trail Pull-offs

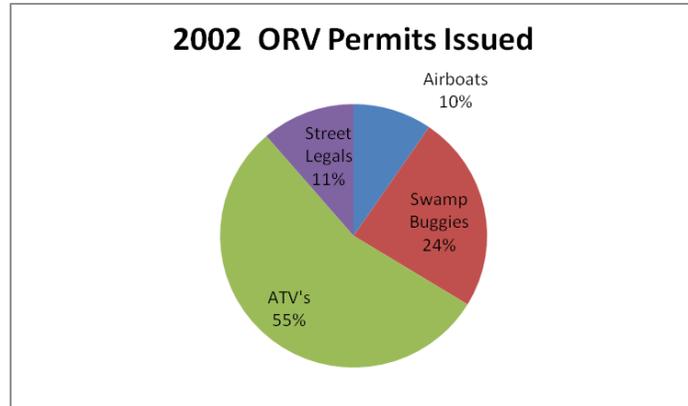
- Issue- how do we define the trail width/corridor?
  - Camping
  - Hunting
    - Tree stands
    - Game retrieval
  - Hiking/Sightseeing

## Attachment 2

### ORV PERMIT SALES DATA

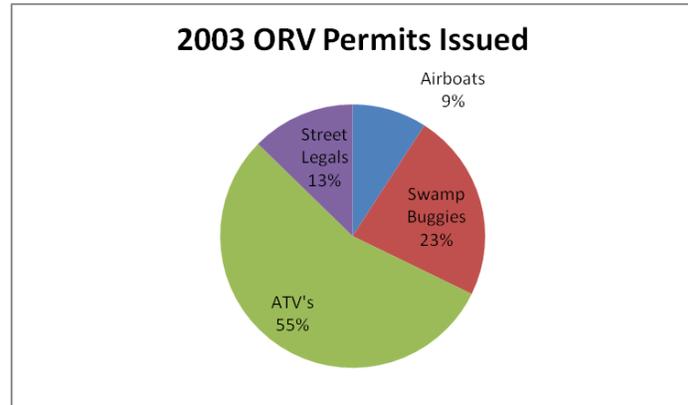
#### 2002

Airboats	76
Swamp Buggies	192
ATV's	437
Street Legals	90
Permits Issued	1754*



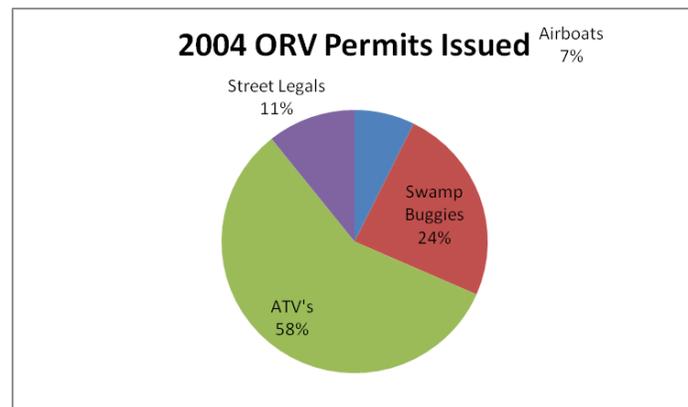
#### 2003

Airboats	87
Swamp Buggies	222
ATV's	528
Street Legals	121
Permits Issued	1699*



#### 2004

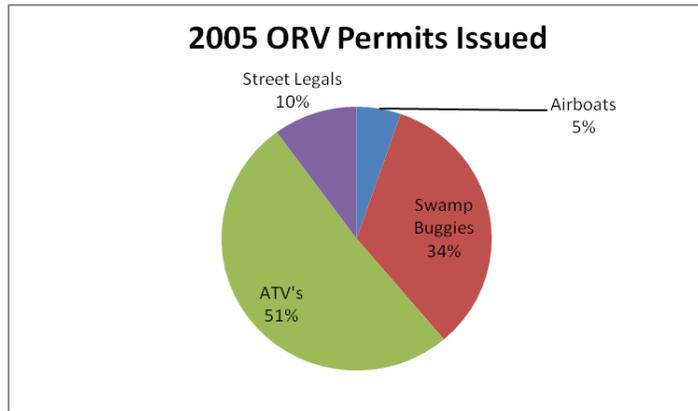
Airboats	73
Swamp Buggies	241
ATV's	574
Street Legals	107
Permits Issued	1652*



**2005**

Airboats	77
Swamp Buggies	487
ATV's	743
Street Legals	146

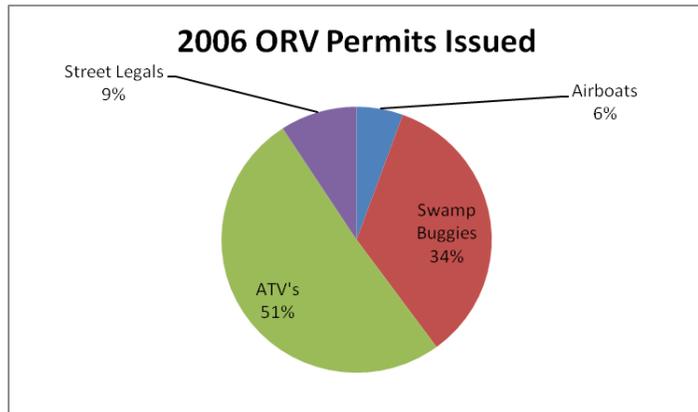
Permits Issued 1444\*



**2006**

Airboats	67
Swamp Buggies	416
ATV's	615
Street Legals	111

Permits Issued 1702\*

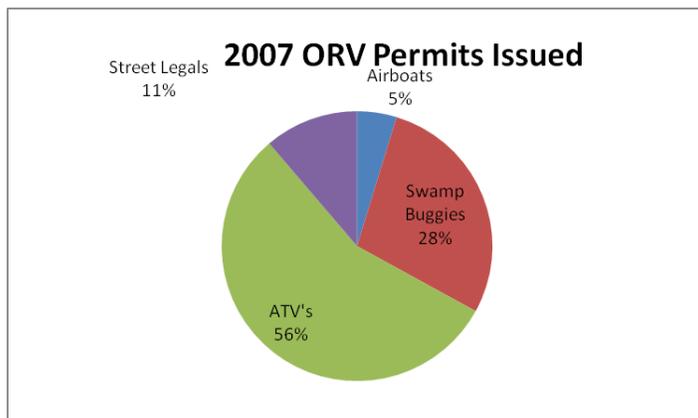


\* The total Permits Issued for the years 2002-2006 does not equal the sum of the 4 ORV types listed above. This is due to database corruption. The total issued is correct. Assuming random database corruption we believe the per cent distribution of ORV types is approximately correct.

**2007**

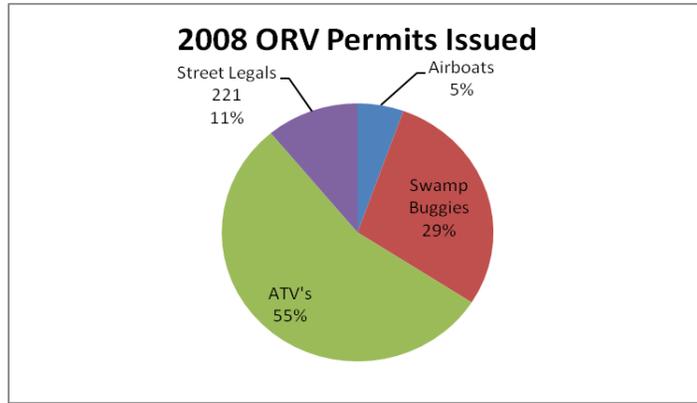
Airboats	90
Swamp Buggies	541
ATV's	1066
Street Legals	214

Permits Issued 1911



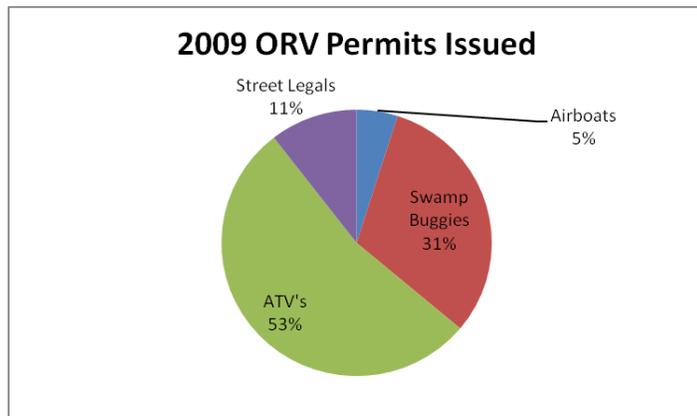
**2008**

Airboats	110
Swamp Buggies	572
ATV's	1097
Street Legals	221
Permits Issued	2000



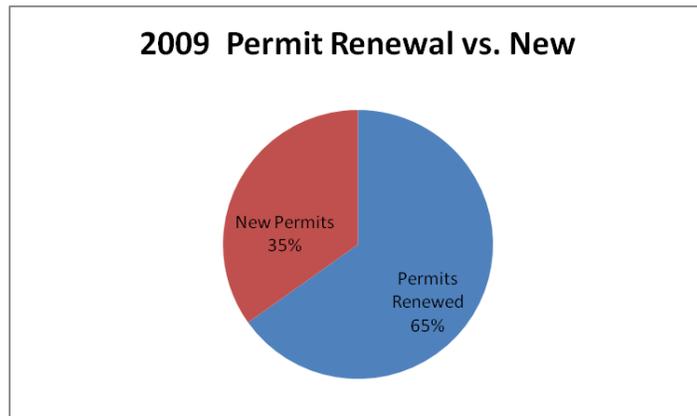
**2009**

Airboats	98
Swamp Buggies	624
ATV's	1068
Street Legals	210
Permits Issued	2000



**2009**

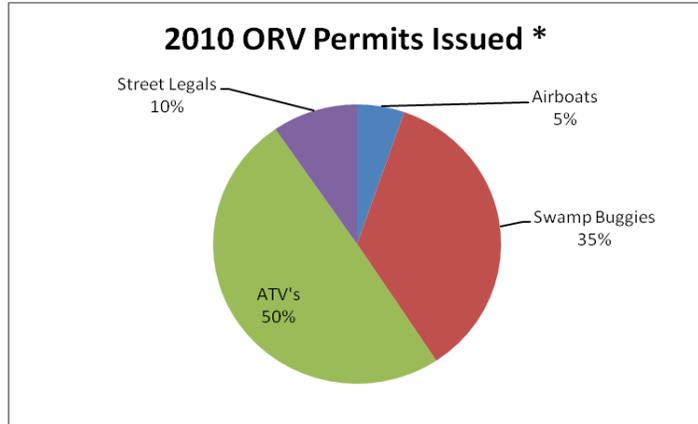
Permits Renewed	1303
New Permits	697
Permits Issued	2000



**2010**

Airboats	62
Swamp Buggies	414
ATV's	580
Street Legals	112
Permits Issued	1168

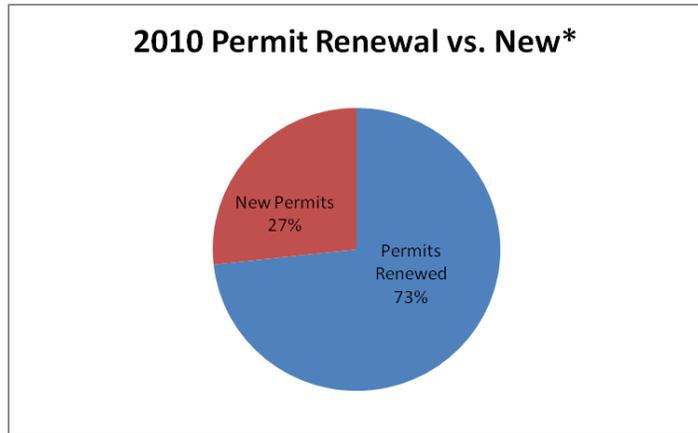
\*Data valid up to 1/31/2010



**2010**

Permits Renewed	856
New Permits	312
Permits Issued	1168

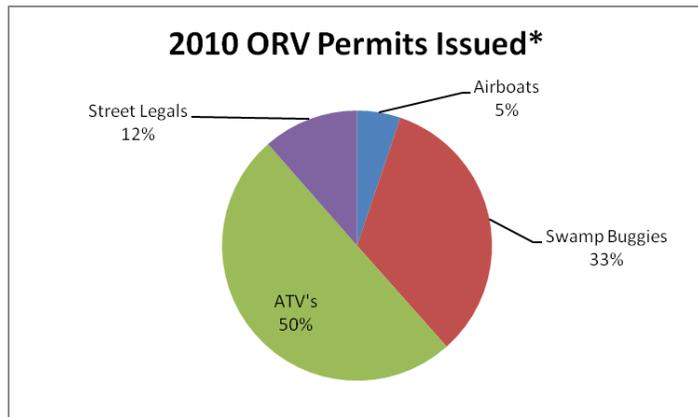
\*Data valid up to 1/31/2010



**2010**

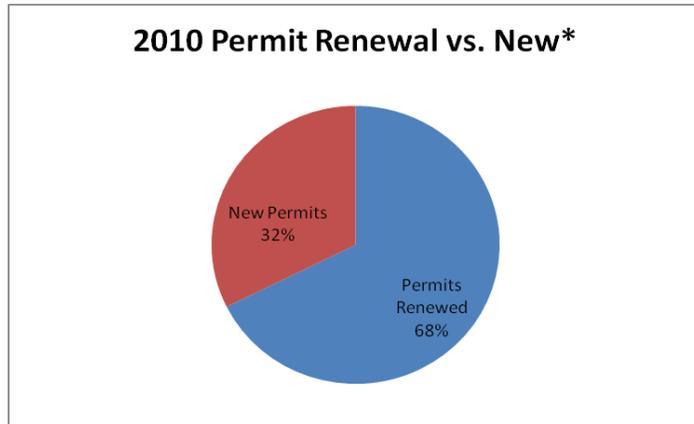
Airboats	95
Swamp Buggies	606
ATV's	914
Street Legals	209
Permits Issued	1824

\*Data valid up to 4/19/2010



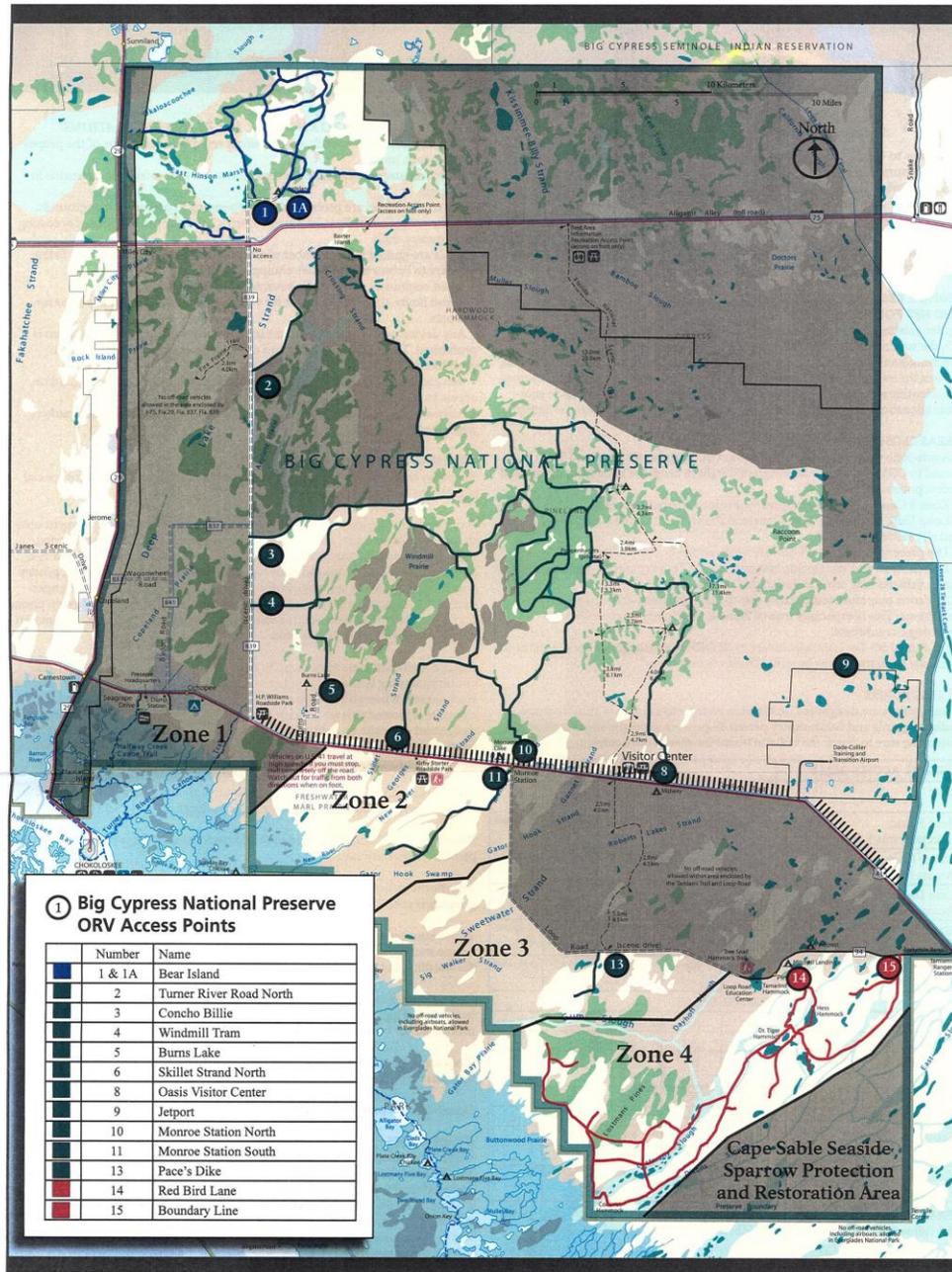
**2010**

Permits Renewed	1213
New Permits	580
Permits Issued	1793



\*Data valid up to  
4/15/2010

# Attachment 3



### 1 Big Cypress National Preserve ORV Access Points

Number	Name
1 & 1A	Bear Island
2	Turner River Road North
3	Concho Billie
4	Windmill Tram
5	Burns Lake
6	Skillet Strand North
8	Oasis Visitor Center
9	Jetport
10	Monroe Station North
11	Monroe Station South
13	Pace's Dike
14	Red Bird Lane
15	Boundary Line

### Big Cypress National Preserve ORV Access

- ① ORV Access Point
- Airboat Access Trails
- Swamp Buggy, ATC and Street Legal 4x4 Trails
- Swamp Buggy and ATC Trails
- Closed to ORV Use
- US 41 Buffer Zone

This map is for reference only. Use topographic maps for navigation and orienting.

ORV Rules Regs.indd, BDeGross, Revised 8/2008 - Replaces all previous versions. Printed 9/2008 500

ORV travel in open areas south of I-75 and north of US 41, is dispersed use until trails are designated. Prairies are closed to ORVs. This area is accessible to swamp buggies and ATCs only.

Travel in Zones 2, 3 and 4 is along designated primary and secondary trails only.



## Attachment 4

# Big Cypress Backcountry Trail Marking

*[Note: The BICY ORVAC Education and Public Use Subcommittee has reviewed this document. Suggested additions are underscored. Suggested deletions are ~~struck out~~. Notes are added in brackets such as this one.]*

### **Introduction**

This plan describes sign and marking standards for backcountry trails maintained and managed by Big Cypress National Preserve. It is meant to bring uniformity to trail marking/signing, make trails easy to identify, and enhance user education, enjoyment and safety on trails.

The marking of backcountry trails will be consistent with guidelines set forth in NPS *Management Policies 2006*, section 6.3.10.4:

**“Signs detract from the wilderness character of an area and make the imprint of man and management more noticeable. Only those signs necessary for visitor safety or to protect wilderness resources, such as those identifying routes and distances, will be permitted. Where signs are used, they should be compatible with their surroundings and the minimum size possible.”**

*[Note: The sub-committee strongly supports the above statement and recommends that it be used consistently to shape the direction of this document.]*

Trail markers will be consistent in size, shape, and color and will provide information that is easily understood. Though the ultimate goal of signage in the backcountry is to minimize the amount of signs, the NPS recognizes that as designated trail use only for Off-Road Vehicles (ORVs) is implemented more signs may be needed for a short period of time to ensure travel along designated routes.

It is often thought that marking a trail has one purpose: to indicate the route and reassure users they are on the trail. But, along heavily traveled trail sections, it serves to actually influence travel. In other words, blazes, signs, metal markers, and posts, when thoughtfully placed, can help guide users along the appropriate pathway, particularly in open areas. Markers guide users along a single route, which in turn may prevent off-trail resource damage.

This plan is intended to complement the BICY *Recreational Off-road Vehicle Management Plan* and will be similarly adaptively managed.

### ***Types of Trail Signage and Markers***

#### **Access Point Kiosks**

Kiosks will be placed at all access points and include the following:

- Access point name and number
- Trail name and number (if there is one)
- NPS and BICY logos
- ORV permitting and operator licensing requirements

- Types of trail uses allowed, i.e., ORV type, hiking, etc.
- Map showing the trail location and trail amenities, if any
- Trail length (in mileage), GPS coordinates of major intersections, amenities and sites of interest

*[Note: Subcommittee feels it is ALL of interest.]*

- ~~Trail difficulty and special instructions~~

*[Note: the sub-committee wonders whether the preserve intends to rank trails in some way, such as black diamond, etc. Our general feeling is that signs about trail difficulty are inappropriate as they take the discovery out of the experience, and tend to be inaccurate as trails are unpredictable and vary with seasons, and can be dangerous if trail users assume there are no dangers except those that are marked. Also, we feel that most special instructions are covered in the mandatory ORV class. We recommend replacing this bullet with a general disclaimer such as that in the next bullet.]*

- These are unimproved trails. Trail conditions are unpredictable and vary with the seasons. Caution should be used at all times.

- Rules of the trail, including trail user yielding signs. Appropriate and inappropriate use statement

*[Note: Include statement recommended by ORVAC and adopted by BICY.]*

- Warnings of dangers, safety messages and trail closures

*[Note: the subcommittee interprets this as notice of prescribed burn operations, wildfire alerts, annual 60-day closures, etc.]*

- Phone numbers for NPS information and emergency services

#### **The kiosk/bulletin board trailhead sign may also include:**

- Hours trailhead is open, if applicable
- Trail maps and handouts

*[Note: The subcommittee also recommends downloadable maps on the website, and if technologically feasible downloadable GPS trail maps.]*

- Trail register/backcountry permits

*[Note: The subcommittee stresses that it is critical that these be available at every access point.]*

- Information on trail organization partners and/or trail care crews
- Information on how users can get involved in volunteering
- Information on agency partners
- Interpretive information

#### **Typical prefabricated kiosk for backcountry access points**

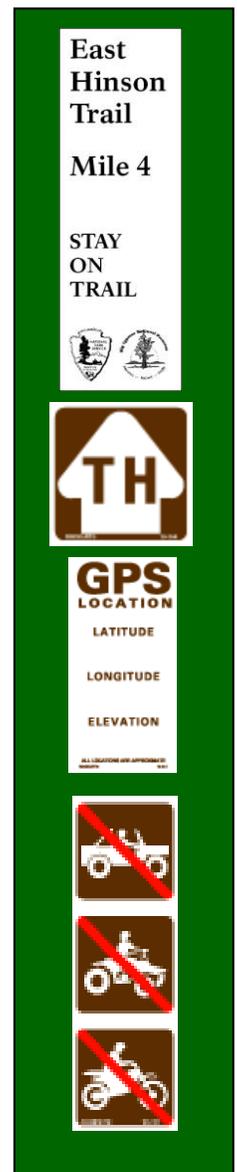


**Primary Trail Identifier Markers Will Be:**

- Used along primary trail routes.
- Green carsonite flat markers affixed to galvanized steel posts.
  - [Note: The subcommittee feels strongly that the vertical sample shown to the right is appropriate, but that high, horizontal street signs such as those found in residential neighborhoods would be inappropriate.]*
- Of an elevation to be visible and above high water line, but not obtrusive.
- Set approximately every mile along the trail route from the access point or nearest intersection from which the trail begins, as needed if the trail route is unclear or if there are intersections. Decisions to place signs will be site-specific.
- Be on both the left and right side of the trail if needed at specific sites to keep people on the trail, but will be minimized where possible.
- Allow for the application of 3” wide decals depicting
  - Trail name and/or identification number
  - Mile from access point or nearest intersection
  - ~~Arrow indicating direction of trail travel~~
  - Coordinates of site
    - [Note: The subcommittee recommends posting the coordinates only at major intersections and trail junctions unless they are needed from an emergency response standpoint. We request clarification on this point.]*
  - ~~International symbols of appropriate vehicles for trail~~
    - [Note: The subcommittee recommends posting appropriate vehicles for the trail at the trail head, then not posting them on subsequent signs unless something has changed or where crossing a hiking-only trail.]*

**Secondary Trail Identifier Markers Will Be:**

- Used along secondary trail routes.
- Blue carsonite flat markers set in the ground or affixed to galvanized steel posts.



- Set approximately every mile along the trail route from the nearest intersection from which the trail begins, as needed if the trail route is unclear or if there are intersections. Decisions to place signs will be site-specific.
- Be on the right side of the trail only.
- Allow for the application of 3” wide decals depicting
  - Trail identification number.
  - International symbols of appropriate vehicles for trail.  
*[Note: See above].*
  - ~~Arrow indicating direction trail travel.~~
  - The first marker along the trail will also post the approximate total mileage of the trail.

### **Example of a Primary Trail Identifier Marker, right**

#### **Trail Route Markers Will Be:**

- Used to identify appropriate route when necessary.
- Will be green along primary routes and blue along secondary routes.
- Will have an arrow identifying the appropriate route only where necessary.
- In wooded areas will be 2” x 6” trail blazes nailed to trees.  
*[Note: Subcommittee feels nailing signs to trees should be discouraged.]*
- In open areas may be affixed to carsonite posts that are either set in the ground or affixed to galvanized steel posts.
- In areas that are receiving major impact, will be used as “channel markers” identifying the allowable lane of travel, and be set perpendicular to each other in close proximity to ensure use stays along allowable route, until such time that the area is stabilized. Once stabilized the marked route will be reduced in width and signage will remain heavy until surrounding vegetation re-grows. Once the trail narrows and vegetation re-grows route markers will be greatly reduced.
- Allowances for discretion in determining the actual spacing and number of markers needed to ensure travel along the designated trail.

#### **Trail End Markers Will Be:**

- Placed at the terminus of either a primary or secondary trail.
- Have a clear sign that reads “Trail End, No ORV Use Beyond This Point, Stay On Trails Or Lose Your Permit”
- The terminus of the trail will allow for vehicles to turn around.
- Other informational signage may be included depending on the situation.
- Places on trails leading to private property, after consultation with landowners. These signs will say “Authorized Use Only”, rather than mentioning that there is private property.

### **An Example of a trail end marker**

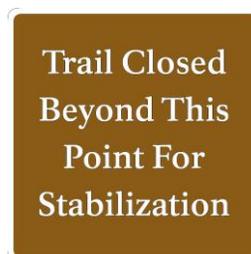


**“No Trail” Markers Will Be:**

- Placed in areas that have a high level of use off from the designated trails. This use may be from administrative access or from ~~inappropriate~~ unauthorized recreational uses.
- Used to prevent continued use of a track that was created through administrative use or ~~inappropriate~~ unauthorized recreational uses.
- Red carsonite posts either set in the ground or affixed to a galvanized post. This will be determined by what level of use the track receives.
- Allow for the application of 3” wide decals with “No Trail” and international symbols with a red slash indicating that the trail should not be used.
- Removed once vegetation re-grows and use of the trail subsides.

**Informational Signage Will Be:**

- Used to –
  - Warn trail users of hazards along the trail.  
*[Note: It is the subcommittee’s hope that these signs will be limited and will not, for example, be used to indicate uneven surfaces and deep holes (as indicated below), and these conditions are normal within the preserve. Alerting ORV users to some and not others might, in fact, increase danger by building reliance on signs.]*
  - Indicate the distance and direction to destinations.
  - Provide regulatory and resource information.
- Small versions of typical road signs and in the same fashion of road signs. The size of these signs should be no more than 1’ x 1’.  
*[Note: The subcommittee is concerned about having an aesthetic that closely resembles residential or settled areas, as opposed to an aesthetic appropriate for the woods.]*
- Examples would include-
  - ~~“Seasonal closure”~~
  - ~~“Uneven surface”~~
  - ~~“Deep Hole”~~
  - ~~“Stay On Trail”~~



- “No ORV Access Beyond This Point”

### **Examples of Informational Signs, right.**

- Directional signs, identifying trail names will be placed at intersections with other trails.

### **General Considerations**

For trails that cross large, open areas such as prairies and which are heavily used, it may be necessary to place markers more frequently and apply reflective tape or stickers that make the trail markers visible at night or in inclement weather.

Intersections with public roads will be marked 100 feet before the intersection with a reflective warning device and stop sign at the intersection or trail head. In the area of 11-mile Road and oil pads, signage will consist of stop signs, decals for GPS coordinates, prohibition against travel on 11-mile Road, ~~and direction and distance to U.S. 41.~~

*[Note: Indicating direction and distance to Tamiami Trail in locations where ORV trails cross the 11-Mile Road may encourage unauthorized ORV use on the restricted road to expedite return to the highway.]*

Trail intersections will be marked with a sign mounted on a rigid post. The sign will identify the trails and have arrows indicating the trail routes.

Yellow trail markers will be used to indicate a hazard area. These markers will be placed on both sides of the trail and will inform the user of the impending hazard type. ~~An example would be the marking of a cypress slough which remains wet through all seasons.~~

*[Note: The subcommittee strongly feels that the above is a good example of over-marking. The subcommittee recommends against this level of danger marker, with the possible exception of dangers on the level of the 10+ foot deep hole blown by dynamite.]*

### **Trail Marking Plans**

A trail marking plan shall be provided to all volunteers and staff that are assigned trail marking responsibilities. The trail marking plan shall include:

- A map (1" = 1 mile minimum scale) that clearly shows the trail(s) that have legal public right-of-way and are in need of marking.
- Points on the map showing locations of where trail markers need to be placed and the type of markers needed at these points. If GPS locations are known, they shall be noted on the map.

*[Note: Final placement of signs should be based upon site specific conditions rather than strict adherence to points on a map, with the goal of minimizing signage where possible.]*

- Written recommendations for placement of markers along the route to address specific conditions; i.e., blind corners or sharp turns, wet crossings, hazards (such as deep holes), private land, distance markers and GPS locations markers, taking into consideration visibility during high water and/or night driving conditions.

*[Note: The subcommittee agrees with the concept of written instructions for staff or volunteers, but not with having these hazard signs. We feel that this can be covered through the mandatory course and by having a general disclaimer at each kiosk.]*

- Written recommendations on how to physically place the signs, i.e.; how far off the trail and at what height when placing on trees. This is important for purposes of maintaining the trail. If markers are too close, they may be run down by users or maintenance equipment performing trail work.