United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Big Cypress National Preserve
33100 Tamiami Trail E
Ochopee, Florida 34141-1000

In reply refer to:

October 26, 2010

Memorandum

To: Pedro Ramos, Superintendent

From: Big Cypress Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Committee (ORVAC)

Re: Secondary Trails

You requested that the BICY Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Committee offer recommendations about secondary trails in the Preserve to enable your staff to move forward in implementing a designated trail system. Accordingly we have discussed this at several of our meetings, as well as meetings of our Turner River subcommittee. Based on these discussions, including a conversation at our meeting on February 2, 2010, we offer the following recommendations for consideration by you and your staff, with the understanding that your staff will be assessing the viability of these recommendations. We look forward to hearing your thoughts.

- We feel that the current definition of secondary trails, as provided in the ORV Management Plan (p. 34), is good and we support your use of it as a baseline. Given the large size and variety of terrain within the Preserve, we feel that the current definition offers BICY staff appropriate latitude in making decisions that are appropriate to managing individual circumstances, allowing for the best management resource protection and visitor experience.

- We feel that secondary trails and destinations should be identified on a site-specific basis, based on ground-truthing by BICY staff, with a focus on sustainable resource protection and a functional trail system that will encourage compliance.

- We support using the shortest sustainable route to a selected destination.

- We believe that loops in secondary trails should be used judiciously and only when warranted by conditions.

- We do not believe that the secondary trail system should be determined based on a certain number of miles per unit, or as a certain percentage of miles of the primary trail system in each unit. Likewise, we do not feel that the length of secondary trails should be a pre-determined number (such as ½ mile). We believe that it is best to leave the specific designation of trails to the discretion of BICY staff based on their assessment of individual sites and cumulative impacts, using the guidance included in this memo and our other related discuss

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- We recommend that, in the future, the process for designating secondary trails start by:
    - Assuring that natural, cultural and historical resource inventories are up to date in these areas,
    - Identifying preferred destinations,
    - Ground-truthing these destinations, and
    - Determining what secondary trails will be required for those destinations, followed by an overall review.

- We acknowledge the tension between the conclusion that destinations should be locations that have specific uses such as hunting, wildlife photography, bird watching, camping, and spiritual practice, and the fact that essentially the entire Preserve is appropriate for all of these identified uses and more. We feel that the process of designating destinations should involve ground-truthing of each recommended site by BICY staff and should take into consideration:
    - Areas of historic or customary use,
    - Consideration of existing scientific data.

- We recommend using historical place names from USGS maps when possible, when designating destinations.

- We recommend that BICY staff monitor use of destinations and secondary trails over time and make modifications as required to meet resource protection goals.

- We recommend that trails leading to private property in-holdings be considered as secondary trails up to a reasonable turn-around point before they enter the private property, though we recommend that BICY staff evaluate these on an individual basis for sustainability.

    - Areas that are environmentally sustainable and minimize impacts to the resource. (We are still in discussion about our recommendations related to the extent to which you can take into consideration larger-scale impacts such as introduced species),