



The park headquarters is located on a 10-acre plot of fill material at Convoy Point. (See map entitled Convoy Point, Alternative 1--Development Concept Plan: Existing Conditions.) The existing administrative and visitor facilities are crowded and inadequate. The superintendent's office, a visitor contact station, and other administrative functions share space in a reconditioned concrete block bathhouse. Additional staff offices are located in an overcrowded trailer directly behind the bathhouse. Nearby are public toilet facilities and picnic tables. A recently constructed boat basin serves the maintenance/ferry boat and all other NPS work and patrol boats. The basin often becomes overcrowded. If passenger ferry service is expanded, as proposed, conflicts between public service and maintenance/operations activities are foreseen unless the boat basin area is enlarged. Adjacent to the basin is a 1-acre staff/visitor parking lot with 63 spaces (33 double and 30 single).

A small concrete block structure farther back from the boat basin contains a dive locker and field laboratory; an adjacent trailer provides additional staff offices, and two nearby house trailers serve as employee residences. The maintenance area, which is used largely for maintaining NPS boats and motors, is situated 300 yards from the boat ramps. It contains a small office trailer owned by the state Department of Natural Resources, covered storage, a temporary maintenance shop, and an open storage area. Existing water lines, which run 4½ miles from Convoy Point to county sources, are shared by Homestead Bayfront County Park, are old and breaking, and are not large enough to satisfy projected demand. They are therefore being replaced. Cost of replacement will be shared by Dade County and the National Park Service. Sewage at Convoy Point is currently handled by onsite septic tanks. These are subject to tidal flooding with resultant contamination of groundwater, and alternative methods of treatment are being considered. Power is provided by Florida

Power and Light Company on overhead lines, which are aesthetic intrusions on the site and should be placed underground.

Next to the NPS boat basin is a smaller basin with four piers and six boat ramps that are used by private boaters as well as the National Park Service. Adjacent to the boat ramps is a 1½-acre public parking lot with 77 double spaces and 2 single spaces.

Homestead Bayfront County Park is located to the south of the National Park Service headquarters, on the other side of North Canal. The county park is a day use area that currently provides a protected swimming area, picnic sites, playground equipment, a softball backstop, two pavilions, restrooms, a boat lift, 72 boat slips, and parking space that has accommodated over 1,000 vehicles. Future plans call for an additional 189 boat slips, 10 boat launching ramps, and a small-boat concession for motorboat, sailboat, and canoe rentals, all to be in place by the fall of 1984. No interpretive programs exist at or are planned for the county park. If plans for the county park are realized, it will be characterized as a more active recreational area than it is today.

Porgy Key

A privately inhabited house trailer is located on the north side of Porgy Key. Nearby are a wooden boat dock and the ruins of a recently burned house. The residence remains under a life-estate agreement with the National Park Service.

Adams Key



There are currently six structures on Adams Key: two employee residences, a pumphouse/storage shed, a generator house which supplies all the electric power, a 60,000-gallon cistern which supplies potable water for employees only, and a wood-frame building (former recreation

"casino") that contains facilities for school group interpretation and public saltwater toilets. Sewage treatment is by a septic tank/aboveground sand filter system. A short L-shaped dock extends approximately 50 feet from shore toward the deep channel of Caesar Creek. This is the only docking facility at the site, and it is too small for current use by both the park staff and private boaters, as evidenced by the practice of visitors "rafting" their boats together (tying their boats side-by-side due to no available dock space).

Elliott Key Harbor



The largest land-based visitor use area in the park is at Elliott Key Harbor. A two-story visitor information/orientation pavilion houses interpretive exhibits, a book sales counter, and offices for the ranger and interpretive staffs. There is some conflict between ranger and interpretive activities, which are both located on the second floor, and ways to separate these functions should be considered. Evening interpretive programs are also presented on the second floor; however, the space is designed poorly for such presentations.

A harbor with 66 boat slips serves private boaters, the public ferryboat, and NPS boats. Nearby is an NPS utility dock. Other visitor facilities include a camping area with 35 sites, a group camping area, a picnic area with tables and charcoal grills, shower and toilet facilities, an interpretive loop trail, a designated area in the bay for snorkeling and wading, and a glass-bottomed barge for guided tours of the bay.

Two individual employee houses adjacent to the maintenance and utility area were programmed for construction prior to this planning effort and will be available in 1983 to replace the two existing house trailers.

Electric power is provided by a new generating station, and sewage disposal is by a septic tank/aboveground sand filter system. Potable water for public consumption will soon be available.

University Dock

The boat dock at this site is in need of replacement due to deterioration and will be replaced during 1982 and 1983. A small picnic area is located near the swimming beach.

Tannehill House

A wooden boat dock and three structures--a private residence, a guest house, and a utility building--are located on the site of the Tannehill house. The site remains under a renewable special use permit. The buildings, which are nonhistoric, are suitable for adaptive use by the Park Service, but the dock would have to be replaced.

Boca Chita, Ragged Keys, Soldier Key



These keys are still in private ownership and are not accessible to the general public. The southernmost and largest key, Boca Chita, is used by the Dinner Key Cruising Club. An ornamental rock light tower marks the entrance to a large steel-bulkheaded harbor that is capable of berthing an estimated 30 boats (18- to 25-foot class) along the existing seawall or approximately 60 boats if slips are provided. The upland areas

have been cleared to accommodate a number of permanent structures: a small stone chapel, a large deteriorated wooden shed, a large roofless stone building, an extensive stone wall with a gatehouse, four small frame buildings, and a screened open-air pavilion and abutting house trailer. Some of these structures would be suitable for adaptive use by the National Park Service. A footpath extends around part of the island. Power is furnished by a generator. The rainwater storage capacity is reported to be approximately 140,000 gallons.



Most of the adjacent Ragged Key 5 is covered with mangrove, but a small clearing on the southern end contains a wooden stilt residence and appurtenant structures. An extensive dock network, which serves as a mooring for three houseboats, extends out from the southwestern side of this key. A wooden dockhouse contains two generators. Neither the structures nor the docks are suitable for adaptive use by the National Park Service because of their deteriorated condition.

Ragged Key 4 has no development.

Ragged Key 3 has a relatively high upland area (probably filled) on the north end, surrounded by a concrete seawall, which is the site for a two-story house with adjoining building, generator room, and boathouse, all of which are in apparently good condition. A high concrete-walled boat slip provides access. Power is supplied by a generator, and communications are served by a radiophone. The structures are intrusive on the natural scene.

Ragged Key 2 has no development.

Ragged Key 1 has been previously inhabited. An old wooden dock, although in disrepair and dangerous, remains usable at high tide for access to the western shore of this key. A deteriorated concrete bulkhead encircles a large part of the island. The area within the bulkhead has been filled. The area outside, when exposed at low tides, increases the size of this island by approximately one-half. Concrete pillars and a broken concrete tank, which may have served as a cistern, remain from previous development.

Soldier Key has also been extensively filled. Development consists of three open driftwood structures, a small wooden tree house, and several footpaths. There is a shallow-water boat slip and dock on the western side of the island. A sunken houseboat is at the end of the dock. A small generator provides electricity. None of the structures are suitable for adaptive use by the National Park Service because of their substandard construction and deterioration.

Stiltsville



Stiltsville is a group of 15 buildings on stilts located in Biscayne Bay just inside the new park boundary south of Key Biscayne. The privately owned structures are on leased property owned by the state. The leases will expire in 1999 and cannot be renewed.

REGIONAL LAND USE

A detailed account of current regional land use and projected trends is contained in the Comprehensive Development Master Plan for Metropolitan Dade County, Florida (Metropolitan Dade County Department of Planning 1979). Current land uses affecting the park region include residential and strip commercial development along US 1 and the Florida Turnpike, from Cutler southwest to Homestead and Florida City; agriculture and oolite mining between the Florida Turnpike and the park boundary; Homestead Air Force Base; South Florida Water Management District drainage canals and levees; and the Florida Power and Light Company's Turkey Point and Cutler Ridge power plants. Major shipping occurs in the Intracoastal Waterway, Hawk Channel, and the offshore Florida Gulf Stream; oil barges frequently cross park waters to deliver fuel to the Turkey Point power plant.

The county's master plan places the mainland shoreline within the current park boundary in the "environmental sensitivity" or "parks and recreation" categories. The current park boundary on the mainland generally matches the county's "no development" area designation to protect wetlands and the bay. However, current zoning for the mainland ranges from relatively high density residential to industrial, agricultural, and "interim use." Development on the upland portions of the Ragged Keys and Boca Chita is under the jurisdiction of Islandia, which has submitted a proposed comprehensive plan for review by the county.

The county's master plan also contains guidelines relating to coastal flood hazards and bay water quality; physical use of and access to Biscayne Bay, the mangrove and marsh shorelines, and marinas and docking facilities; and development of the bay. Many of these regional land use issues were further addressed in the Biscayne Bay Management Plan (1981), prepared jointly by the Metropolitan Dade County Departments of Environmental Resources Management and Planning. As stated in the Biscayne Bay plan,

Since excellent cooperation exists between National Park and County staffs, few if any coordination problems are foreseen. However, since the Bay should be viewed as an holistic, interrelated system, it will be necessary not only to maintain the present working relationship, but also to insure that the Park is represented on all appropriate Bay Management committees or interagency structures.

The superintendent of Biscayne National Park is a member of the county Biscayne Bay Management Committee.

Regulations for Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve--which includes the new bay and mainland additions to the park, as well as Card Sound to the south and the bay to the north--were adopted by the state in 1980. They address the sale, transfer, or lease of state-owned lands and require permits for all coastal construction activities; the permits are reviewed by the Department of Environmental Regulation on the basis of existing statutory language in the state's Aquatic Preserve Act.

Biscayne National Park is within the Florida coastal management zone. Hence, federal activities must be consistent with the Florida coastal management program. There is mutual interest in resource protection, flood hazards, and the Florida keys as an area of critical concern. The National Park Service has informally consulted with the state Department of Environmental Regulation concerning the consistency of its proposals with the coastal management program in accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (see "Environmental Consequences" section).

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROPOSAL AND ALTERNATIVES

DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

Four alternatives for a general management plan were presented for public review in November and December 1981 in a "Planning Information and Response Form." The proposed plan is a combination of actions from all four original alternatives, along with new ideas contributed by the public. The original four alternatives represented a range of possible park uses. Alternative 1 would continue the existing uses. Alternative 2 would implement the strategies outlined in the 1978 management plan for the former Biscayne National Monument, which called for fairly extensive development of visitor facilities; there would be no change in the private uses of the 1980 additions. Alternatives 3 and 4 would both result in new uses for the 1980 additions, but they would stress different elements of the purpose of the park as stated in the 1980 legislation. Alternative 3 would emphasize the preservation and protection of park resources, with only minimal development for visitor use. Alternative 4 would involve more development and stress intensive visitor use for recreation, enjoyment, and education. The four alternatives presented in this section are essentially the four alternatives presented to the public in 1981.

Certain elements are common to all of the alternatives, including most of the programs for management of natural and cultural resources described in the proposal. Pending the completion of a land protection plan, it is assumed that sufficient interests in park lands and waters will be acquired, or other protection strategies developed, to implement the proposal or any of the alternatives. The proposal and alternatives are summarized in table 6, at the end of this section.

Alternative 1: Continuation of Existing Conditions with No Public Transportation (No Action)

Public Transportation. The experimental weekend shuttle service from Convoy Point to Elliott Key Harbor would continue until July 4, 1983. Thereafter there would be no public transportation system in the park.

Mainland. No NPS development would take place within the mainland mangrove shoreline.

The existing facilities at Convoy Point would remain, including the visitor contact station in combination with the administrative offices. A new sign would be placed at the entrance to provide information regarding the national park and Homestead Bayfront County Park. The public boat ramps at Convoy Point would be closed to the public when the new boat ramps are constructed at Homestead Bayfront County Park.

The Arsenicker Keys would be maintained in a natural state.

Bay. Dispersed water recreation--with existing restrictions to minimize conflicts--and commercial fishing would continue. Special uses such as transportation (Intracoastal Waterway and three dredged channels) and the U.S. Air Force sea survival training would continue. Additional buoys would be set out as necessary for the safety of boaters and protection of the fragile bay bottom.

Barrier System. The delicate lands and shallow waters of the barrier system south of Caesar Creek would be preserved in their natural state. Adams Key would be maintained as a ranger residence, a day use area with improved docking facilities, and a school group interpretive area.

Elliott Key would largely remain natural, except for necessary management roads and existing development. The Elliott Key Harbor complex would continue to be the park's primary facility for private boaters, with a 66-slip harbor, visitor pavilion, ranger station, restrooms, showers, interpretive loop trail, swimming area, and picnic/campsites. The University Dock would remain, as would the designated swimming and anchorage areas. Upon expiration of the special use permit at Tannehill, the structures would be removed.

Sands Key would be managed as a natural area, and private boaters would be able to anchor their boats in the keyhole.

Private uses would continue on Boca Chita, the Ragged Keys, and Soldier Key. There would be no public access, NPS development, or alteration of existing structures by the Park Service on these keys.

The state leases for the residences at Stiltsville would continue through 1999.

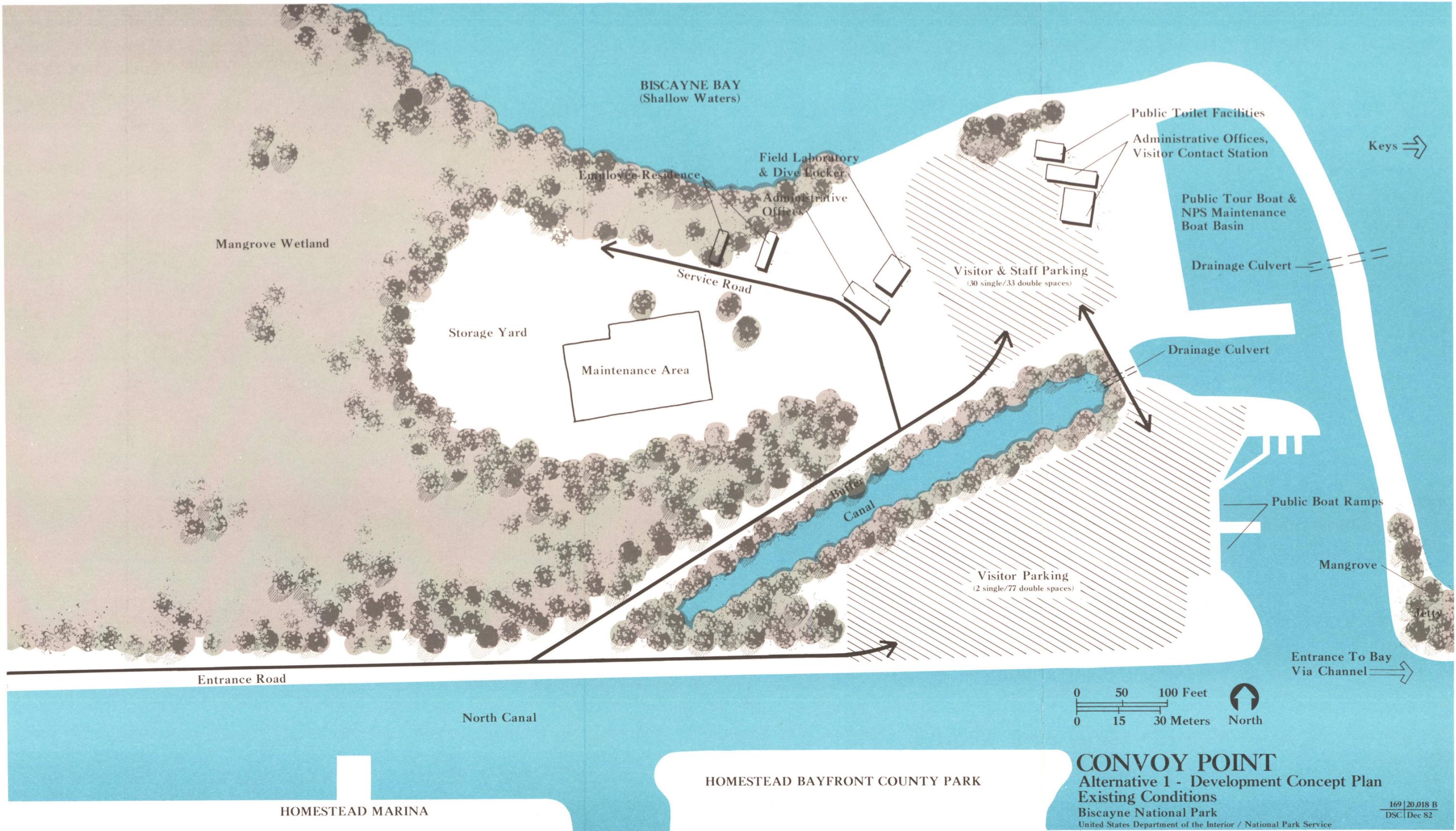
Reef Tract. The reef tract would continue to support dispersed water recreation such as fishing, snorkeling, and scuba diving, with only minimal restrictions to avoid visitor use conflicts, resource damage, and vandalism. The four existing interpretive/mooring buoys would be maintained.

Alternative 2: 1978 General Management Plan

Public Transportation. Public transportation would run daily from Convoy Point to Elliott Key Harbor, Adams Key, and the reef tract.

Mainland. No NPS development would take place within the mainland mangrove shoreline.

The new development at Convoy Point would be similar to the current proposal, except there would be no boardwalk through the mangroves and no jetty walkway, and the maintenance facilities would remain where they are currently located. The visitor use area would have a new



BISCAYNE BAY
(Shallow Waters)

Mangrove Wetland

Employee Residence

Field Laboratory
& Dive Locker

Administrative
Offices

Public Toilet Facilities

Administrative Offices,
Visitor Contact Station

Keys →

Public Tour Boat &
NPS Maintenance
Boat Basin

Drainage Culvert

Service Road

Visitor & Staff Parking
(30 single/33 double spaces)

Storage Yard

Maintenance Area

Drainage Culvert

Buffer
Canal

Public Boat Ramps

Mangrove

Visitor Parking
(2 single/77 double spaces)

Jetty

Entrance Road

Entrance To Bay
Via Channel →

North Canal

0 50 100 Feet
0 15 30 Meters



North

HOMESTEAD MARINA

HOMESTEAD BAYFRONT COUNTY PARK

CONVOY POINT
Alternative 1 - Development Concept Plan
Existing Conditions
Biscayne National Park
United States Department of the Interior / National Park Service

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