

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Congress established Biscayne National Park (the Park) in Dade County, Florida, in 1968 to preserve and protect the tropical setting, vegetation, and animal life of Biscayne Bay and the upper Florida Keys. In addition to its natural resources, the Park possesses a vast array of cultural resources: prehistoric sites that provide evidence of aboriginal settlement of the Biscayne Bay region, historic shipwrecks dating from the Spanish exploration of the Americas into the twentieth century, archeological ruins related to nineteenth and early twentieth century homesteading and pioneer settlements, and the buildings and structures from a private resort complex associated with the development of the Miami area as a vacation destination during the first half of the twentieth century.

### **DESCRIPTION OF BISCAYNE NATIONAL PARK**

Biscayne National Park comprises approximately 180,000 acres in Dade County, Florida, just south of Miami. The Park is about 22 miles long, with its northern boundary near Key Biscayne and its southern boundary near Key Largo. The red mangrove forest of the western shore of Biscayne Bay delineates the western boundary of the Park, while the eastern boundary follows the 60-foot-depth contour, for an approximate width of 14 miles. Biscayne is primarily a marine park, with 95 percent of its area submerged within either the shallow Biscayne Bay or the more turbulent waters of the Hawk Channel and the Florida Straits. The park's land area includes 4,825 acres of largely undeveloped mangrove shoreline and 4,250 acres scattered across forty-two keys. The only overland access to the Park is at the Convoy Point Visitor Center via Southwest 328th Street (North Canal Drive).

Congress established Biscayne National Monument in 1968 “in order to preserve and protect for the education, inspiration, recreation, and enjoyment of present and future generations a rare combination of terrestrial, marine, and amphibious life in a tropical setting of great natural beauty.” The Park was expanded in 1974 and again in 1980, at which time it was redesignated Biscayne National Park.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Resource Management Plan for Biscayne National Park* (draft), 1991, 5-7.

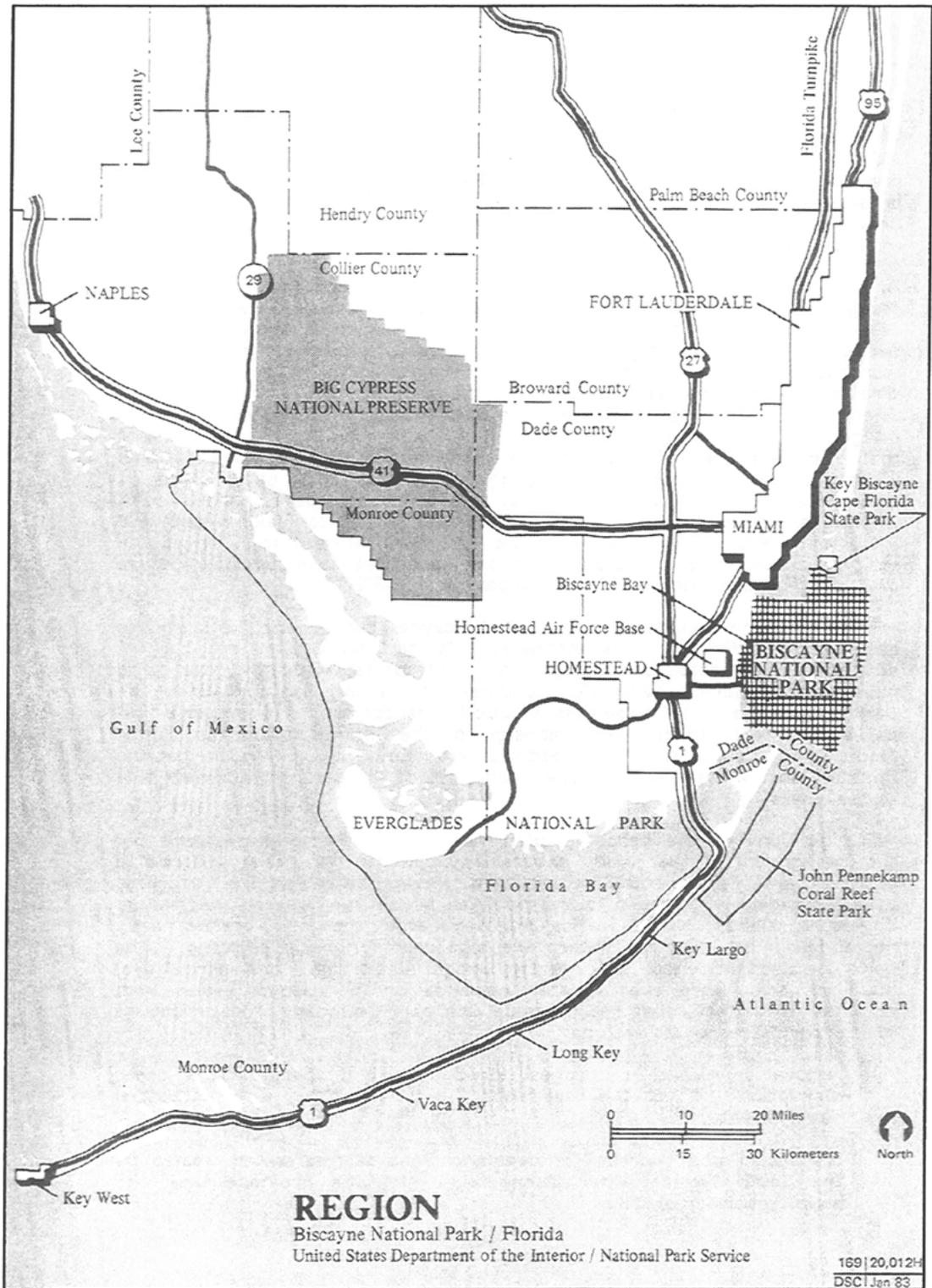


Figure 1. Location of Biscayne National Park

## **SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY**

The Historic Resource Study (HRS) identifies the various historic resources within Biscayne National Park, establishes and documents the historic contexts associated with the Park's cultural resources, and evaluates the extent to which existing resources represent those contexts. It provides a thematic framework for the Park's cultural resources, outlining historical and anthropological themes that can be more fully developed in future studies and reports. The completed HRS will serve as a tool for future site planning, resource management, and the continuing development of interpretive programs at the Park. It will complement other cultural resource studies being prepared for the Park, such as the Cultural Resource Management Plan, the Archeological Overview and Assessment, and other, more specialized archeological, historical, and ethnographic surveys.

The HRS provides an overview of the prehistory and history of the Biscayne Bay area in Chapter Two, "Background History." This chapter outlines the geologic and human history of the Florida Keys, including the occupation of South Florida by Native American groups and early settlement of the Biscayne Bay area by American citizens. The chapter refers to all known and potential cultural resources, primarily archeological sites and structural ruins, within the Park, but it does not attempt to evaluate the significance of these resources.

The third chapter, "Recreational Development of Miami and Biscayne Bay, 1896-1945," focuses on the Park's historic architectural resources. The chapter outlines the evolution of the Miami area into a resort community and examines the development of a private resort on Boca Chita Key. It also identifies and evaluates, using National Register criteria, the extant historic structures within the Park, all of which are located on Boca Chita Key, and how well they represent the historic context associated with recreational development of the Biscayne Bay area.

Few historic buildings survive in the Park. The subtropical climate, hurricanes, and the accidental and purposeful actions of humans have all contributed to the destruction of man-made structures on the keys. The historic resources of Biscayne National Park include a complex of stone and concrete structures built on Boca Chita Key between 1937 and 1940 by Mark Honeywell, founder of Honeywell Industries, as a private resort. The only other historic structure within the boundary of the Park is the Fowey Rocks Lighthouse, which is owned by the United States Coast Guard and therefore has not been evaluated in this study. A brief description of the lighthouse has been included as appendix D.

## **SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS**

### **Survey Methodology**

Goals of the historic resource survey of the Park are to 1) update the List of Classified Structures (LCS) database for the Park for use by management; 2) prepare a Historic Resource Study for the Park; 3) complete National Register documentation; and 4) assemble a comprehensive survey of structures in the Park built before 1950 and considered eligible for the

National Register. This information will be used in complying with Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

David Cullison examined records at the Park and conducted a field survey to determine the present condition of the structures in August 1995. Further research in both primary and secondary materials was conducted at the Southeast Regional Office of the National Park Service, the University of Miami, the Tebeau History Museum and Research Center of the Historical Association of Southern Florida, and other libraries.

The survey of cultural resources was limited to historic structures owned by the National Park Service. As a result, structures built after 1950 and the Fowey Rocks Lighthouse, which is owned by the Coast Guard, were excluded from the survey. Archeological sites, including those listed on the National Register within the Offshore Reefs Archeological District, were also excluded from the survey.

#### **Determination of Historic Contexts**

This study evaluates the historic integrity and assesses the eligibility of the Park's historic architectural resources within a single historic context, "Recreational Development of Miami and Biscayne Bay, 1896-1945." This context is related to several historic themes identified by the National Park Service in its revised thematic framework. The NPS theme "Peopling Places" is represented in the context through the examination of population movement south down the Florida peninsula around the turn of the century and the settlement of the Biscayne Bay area. The discussion of the wealthy society that migrated every winter to Miami Beach and the Florida Keys relates to the theme "Expressing Cultural Values." The construction of weekend retreats on the keys served to "Transform the Environment," another NPS theme explored in the historic context.

The context "Recreational Development of Miami and Biscayne Bay, 1896-1945" also relates to the statewide historic contexts developed by the Florida State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). These contexts divide Florida's history after acquisition by the United States chronologically; therefore, the Florida contexts from the turn of the century through the Great Depression and World War II are directly related to the context contained in the HRS.



Figure 2. Aerial view of Boca Chita Key

**HISTORICAL BASE MAP DISCUSSION**

The historical base map (appendix E) depicts the existing historic resources on Boca Chita Key that are documented in this study. Although prehistoric and historic archeological sites exist on other keys within the Park, none of these sites contain significant architectural resources. As a result, these sites are not depicted on the base map. Maps produced by the Denver Service Center of the National Park Service served as the basis for maps found in this study. The historical base map does not attempt to depict a historic scene or identify nonextant historic structures.