

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION

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NRA

January 9, 2006

Pedro Ramos
Assistant Superintendent
Big Cypress National Preserve
33100 Tamiami Trail East
Ochopee, FL 34141-1000

Dear Mr. Ramos:

On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of NRA members who live in Florida and have an abiding interest in the future management of the "Addition Lands," the NRA would like to go on the public comment record as supporting a management philosophy that enhances hunting, fishing and ORV use.

Alternatives B, C, D and E do seek to provide a mix of recreational opportunities, including hunting. But because hunting, fishing and motorized recreation are classified as "traditional uses" in the Big Cypress National Preserve, a final management plan needs to reflect the emphasis that has been given to them in law.

During Congressional consideration of the Big Cypress National Preserve Act, sportsmen supported acquisition of the Addition Lands into the Preserve because their interests were guaranteed to be reflected in the management of these lands. The irony is that all recreationists but sportsmen have had the ability to enjoy these lands. It is long past the time when this area should be opened to hunting and ORV use.

Of all the alternatives, Alternative F is completely unacceptable. Its management concept emphasizes preservation of native species, restoration of disturbed areas and research. While these concepts are laudable, as priority management objectives they would prevent the Addition Lands from being managed for the benefit of sportsmen and other recreationists which the law clearly states is a priority purpose of the lands. It is unclear how the Preserve could legally manage the Addition Lands under such a concept.

As an additional note, Alternative F states that the National Park Service will manage hunting seasons. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has the authority to manage seasons, bag limits and fees in the state and should retain that authority on the Addition Lands.

In summary, the final management plan for the Addition Lands needs to underscore the importance of providing recreational opportunities and access for the hunter, angler and ORV user.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Addition Lands General Management Plan. A hard copy of this letter will follow by mail.

Sincerely,



Susan Recce
Director
Conservation, Wildlife and Natural Resources
National Rifle Association