



Natural Resources Management Department

2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way
Building A, Room 219
Viera, Florida 32940

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

TO: Frank B. Abbate, County Manager

THRU: John Denninghoff, P.E., Assistant County Manager

FROM: Virginia Barker, Director, Natural Resources Management Dept. 

SUBJ: Citizen Efficiency and Effectiveness Recommendation (CEER) #2024054

DATE: 04/01/2024

CEER #2024054 was received by the County from Susan B. Connolly.

Citizen Statement:

Support the Indian River Lagoon becoming a National Park

Citizen Recommendation:

Support the Indian River Lagoon becoming a National Park

Staff Analysis:

The mission of the National Park Service is to *"conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects, and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."*

The potential conversion of the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) to a national park brings both advantages and drawbacks. The prospect of gaining greater public recognition as a national park has the potential to attract more tourists, providing a boost to the local economy. The IRL could benefit from an increase in federal funding for lagoon access facilities and conservation efforts. However, there are notable concerns as well. Access restrictions to the park, including the imposition of entrance fees, may pose challenges for visitors and residents. Use restrictions, including limitations on commercial and recreational fishing could be implemented to protect national interests. The anticipated rise in property value around the park could become another barrier for lower-income communities, potentially leading to issues of accessibility and affordability. Furthermore, local control of management decisions for the IRL will be diminished, leading to legal complexities. The divergence in priorities between federal, state

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and local governments may introduce decision-making challenges and delays, impeding restoration efforts and conflicting with local priorities.

Biscayne National Park is the largest marine park in the National Park System and offers a window into possible impacts of the Indian River Lagoon becoming a national park. The park follows two basic sets of rules; (1) rules common to all national parks and (2) rules that apply only in Biscayne National Park. Rules that apply to all national parks include the Historic Sites Act, Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and Clean Water Act. Rules specific to the park include its enabling legislation, which expresses the purpose of the park; the park superintendent compendium, which details items such as closures, speed limits, camping, personal watercraft and unmanned aircraft; and General management plans, which guide park actions in order to achieve the missions of resource preservation and protection.

Effective January 1, 2024, Biscayne National Park increased its docking and camping fees per the table below. Eighty percent of docking fee revenue stays at Biscayne National Park to fund projects related to visitor experiences. Recent examples of fee revenue improvements include improved park signage, updated comfort stations, picnic tables and grills. The remaining twenty percent of collected fees is allocated for visitor experience improvements at non-fee parks throughout the National Park system.

Docking and Camping Fee Changes effective January 1, 2024

	Boca Chita Docking	Elliott Key Docking	Boca Chita Camping	Elliott Key Camping
Current Rates	\$0	\$0	\$35/night boat docking and camping	\$35/night boat docking and camping
			\$25/night camping only (no boat docking)	\$25/night camping only (no boat docking)
Proposed 2024 Rates	\$45	\$45	\$35 camping	\$35 camping

In 2014, a Fisheries Management Plan was adopted with regulatory options, however specific regulations must be approved by Florida's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Five years later, Biscayne National Park was sued by the National Parks Conservation Association for failing to implement its plan to create a marine reserve and phase out commercial fishing in the park. The following is a statement by Dr. Melissa Abdo, Sun Coast Regional Director for the National Parks Conservation Association: "Because of the Park Service's failure to act, overfishing has led to the severe decline of many reef fish species and the degradation of Biscayne's marine environment. This damage is leaving Biscayne's coral reef ecosystem less resilient to climate change, coral bleaching, coral disease, and pollution."

The process for designating the Indian River Lagoon as a national park requires an assessment of its natural, cultural, and recreational significance, followed by a study of its suitability and

feasibility. If deemed nationally significant and feasible, legislation is proposed in Congress, and upon approval through an act of Congress, the management is transferred to the National Park Service, marking its designation as a national park.

Potential PROs

- Greater public recognition
- More tourists boost the local economy
- Increased federal funding
- Increased property values around the IRL
- Increased regulation for the protection of natural resources

Potential CONS

- Access restrictions to the IRL and entrance fees
- Property value increases contribute to affordable housing challenges
- Loss of local control to benefit national interests
- More red tape to resolve federal, state and local government differences in priorities
- Notoriety could lead to excess use

Staff Recommended Action:

Staff recommends that the Board reject the CEER recommendation as there is insufficient information to evaluate the potential benefits and detriments of national park designation.

Recommendation #2024054

Recommendation Details

Contact Information

Full Name: Susan B Connolly **Email Address:** sbconnolly@aol.com

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PALM BAY fl 32905 **Alt Email Address:**

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Group/Organization

N/A

Recommendation Information

Recommendation Title: Support the Indian River Lagoon becoming a National Park
Areas Affected:

Department:

Support the Indian River Lagoon becoming a National Park

Support the Indian River Lagoon becoming a National Park

Problem Description:

Recommendation Description

Attachments

There are no attachments for this recommendation.

Administrative Action

Evaluation

Recommendation Timeline

User	Status	Date	Remarks
RACHEL HORST	Citizen Submitted	Jan 3, 2024	
Karen Conde	Department Assigned	Jan 4, 2024	NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT Assigned

Awaiting action from department director