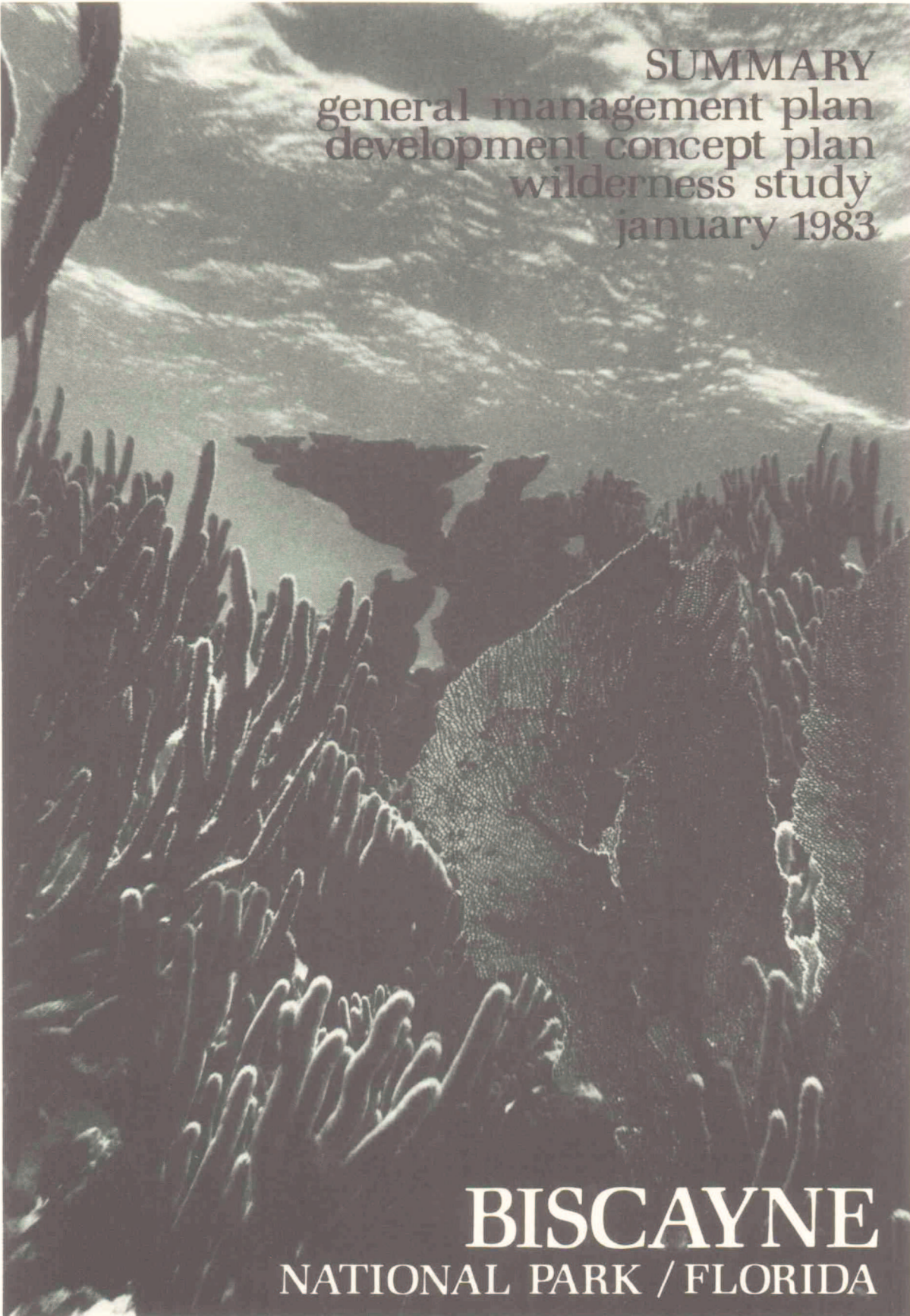


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SUMMARY
general management plan
development concept plan
wilderness study
january 1983

BISCAYNE
NATIONAL PARK / FLORIDA

ON MICROFILM

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INTRODUCTION

The following information is summarized for your review in this brochure:

a proposed general management plan (GMP) for Biscayne National Park, with a development concept plan (DCP) for the mainland headquarters site at Convoy Point

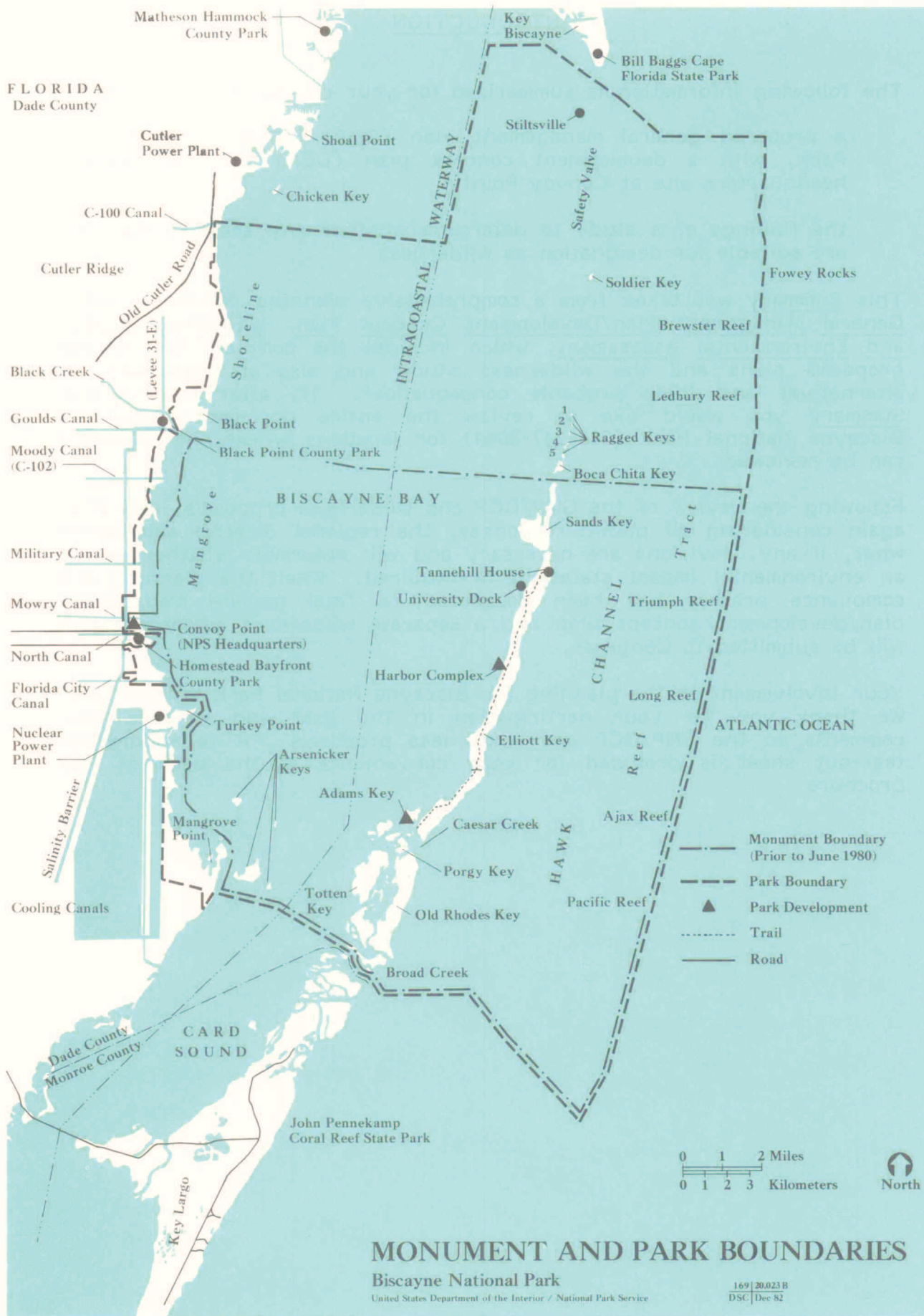
the findings of a study to determine whether any areas in the park are suitable for designation as wilderness

This Summary was taken from a comprehensive planning document, titled General Management Plan/Development Concept Plan, Wilderness Study, and Environmental Assessment, which includes the complete text of the proposed plans and the wilderness study and also an assessment of alternatives and their probable consequences. If, after reading this Summary you would like to review the entire document, telephone Biscayne National Park (305-247-2044) for locations where the document can be reviewed.

Following the review of the GMP/DCP and wilderness proposals, and after again considering all public responses, the regional director will decide what, if any, revisions are necessary and will determine whether or not an environmental impact statement is required. When the planning and compliance process has been completed, a final general management plan/development concept plan and a separate wilderness recommendation will be submitted to Congress.

Your involvement in the planning for Biscayne National Park is important. We thank you for your participation in the past and welcome your comments on the GMP/DCP and wilderness proposals. A self-addressed tear-out sheet is provided for your convenience at the back of this brochure.

FLORIDA
Dade County



MONUMENT AND PARK BOUNDARIES

Biscayne National Park

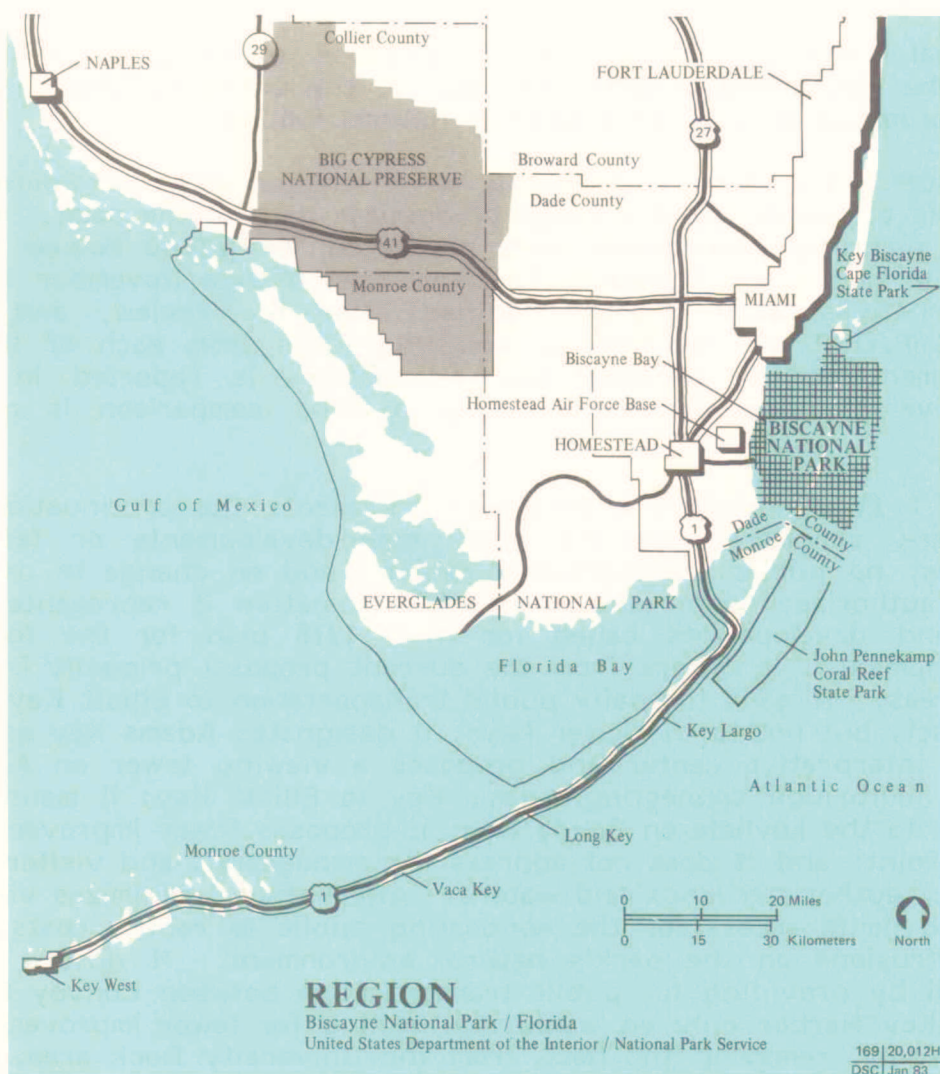
United States Department of the Interior / National Park Service

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PLANNING BACKGROUND

In 1980 Congress expanded the former Biscayne National Monument and redesignated it Biscayne National Park. With the new additions, which incorporated the mainland shoreline and the area of bay, keys, and reefs north of Sands Key, Congress increased the size of the park by 70 percent, to 175,000 acres. At the same time, the National Park Service was directed to produce a general management plan for the park and to make a recommendation about the suitability of park lands and waters for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.



Briefly, the proposed plan will provide public transportation to all the various park environments so that nonboating visitors as well as those who own boats can get out to the bay, the keys, and the reefs. Traditional recreational uses of the park will continue, but they will be integrated with new interpretive and educational programs that will provide national and regional visitors a better opportunity to learn about the park's extraordinary marine and terrestrial environments. Sport and

commercial fishing will continue in accordance with Florida state law, as will other special uses now occurring within the park. Visitor facilities will be improved at the existing park development sites, but no currently undeveloped natural areas will be disturbed. Elliott Key Harbor will be improved as the interpretive center of the park; Adams Key and University Dock will remain as day use areas; the artificial canal leading to the "keyhole" on Sands Key will be filled; and new development will occur at the Convoy Point headquarters site to replace temporary and inadequate facilities. The proposal for the keys that were recently added to the park is to redevelop Boca Chita as a day use area for the boating public and to return the Ragged Keys and Soldier Key to natural areas. These keys are now in private ownership, and the National Park Service will seek to acquire the interests necessary for implementing the proposal.

The National Park Service intends to propose to Congress that no wilderness be designated at Biscayne, but all the currently undeveloped areas will be managed to perpetuate their natural values.

The GMP/DCP and wilderness proposals were selected after consideration of the public comments about a range of possible uses of the park. Four preliminary planning alternatives were presented for public review in a Planning Information and Response Form released in late November 1981. These alternatives were slightly modified after the review, and the proposed GMP/DCP was derived by selecting ideas from each of them. The assessment of the proposal and alternatives is reported in the comprehensive planning document. Only a brief comparison is given here.

Alternative 1 (the no-action alternative) represents the continuation of existing park programs with no major new developments or federal expenditures, no public transportation system, and no change in use of the newly authorized lands and waters. Alternative 2 represents the programs and developments called for in a 1978 plan for the former national monument. It differs from the current proposal primarily in the following areas: It calls for daily public transportation to Elliott Key and the reef tract, but not to the lower keys; it designates Adams Key as the major park interpretive center and proposes a viewing tower on Adams Key and a footbridge connecting Adams Key to Elliott Key; it maintains canal access to the keyhole on Sands Key; it proposes fewer improvements at Convoy Point; and it does not address the management and visitor use of the newly authorized lands and waters. Alternative 3 minimizes visitor services and limits access for the nonboating public to reduce costs and to avoid intrusions on the park's natural environment. It differs from the proposal by providing for public transportation between Convoy Point and Elliott Key Harbor only on weekends, calling for fewer improvements at Convoy Point, removing the dock from the University Dock area, and returning Boca Chita to a natural state with no facilities for visitor use. Alternative 4 emphasizes the development of visitor facilities to expand recreational and educational opportunities throughout the park. It differs from the proposal primarily by maintaining canal access to the keyhole on Sands Key and by providing for additional development of camping platforms at Mangrove Point and Arsenicker Keys, a small boat concession and new NPS boat basin at Convoy Point, a viewing tower and footbridge at Adams Key, a bicycle trail and amphitheater on Elliott Key, and adaptive use of existing facilities on Ragged Key 3.

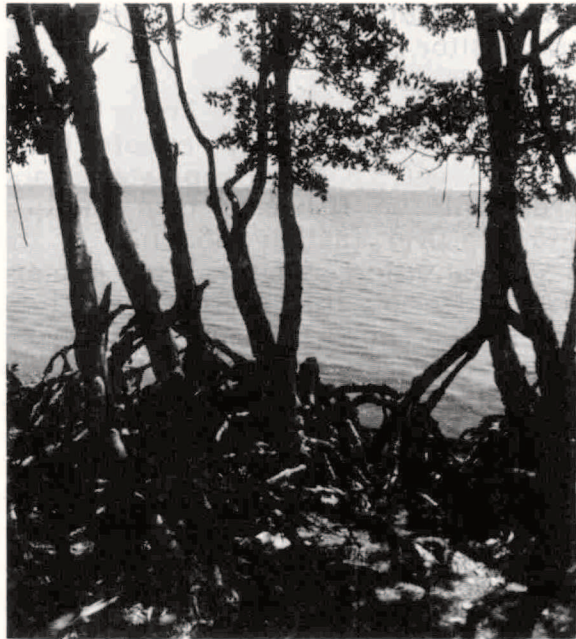
PARK SIGNIFICANCE AND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Biscayne National Park, originally established as a national monument in 1968, was created by Congress "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."

Biscayne is primarily a marine park, with only 5 percent of its surface comprised of emergent land (4,300 acres of keys and 4,500 acres of mainland shoreline) and 95 percent comprised of water (166,200 acres). From the mainland to the ocean it encompasses a remnant profile of relatively pristine estuarine and marine environments: a natural mangrove shoreline on the mainland, a shallow bay with diverse bottom communities, a chain of mostly undeveloped coral keys, and the northernmost living coral reefs in the United States. This intact natural profile is the basic factor in the park's national significance.

In recognition of the distinct sensitivities and recreational and educational opportunities inherent in the environmental profile of the park, it has been divided into four planning units: the mainland, the bay, the barrier system, and the reef tract. Management objectives have been established for each of these units, based on their particular resource characteristics and opportunities for compatible uses.

The Mainland. Most of the mainland shoreline within the park consists of mangroves. Preservation of the mangrove buffer is important to the health of all the park units because the mangroves filter out pollutants while contributing valuable nutrients to the bay. The mainland unit provides wildlife habitat, including important bird rookeries, and is also critical to various marine populations. Apart from the headquarters facility at Convoy Point and the county's marinas at Homestead Bayfront and Black Point parks, the only development that now penetrates the mangrove shoreline within the park is drainage canals. Over most of the shoreline, dense vegetation overhanging the water's edge bars human entrance and gives water-bound visitors a sense of what the southern Florida coast was like prior to development.



The objective for managing the mainland is to preserve it in its natural state (except for the existing headquarters site at Convoy Point) and to help visitors understand the important ecological role served by the virtually unbroken mangrove shoreline.

The Bay. Within the clear waters of the bay, dense beds of turtle grass and patches of algae, sponges, and soft coral nurture a diverse collection of other marine and estuarine life. The bay is an essential nursery for spiny lobster, pink shrimp, and several gamefish, and the rich biotic community supports an important commercial and sport fishery. The bay's water is relatively clean in spite of the constant threat of pollution from mainland industrial, agricultural, and urban sources. Shipping plies the center of the bay along the Intra-coastal Waterway, and the sheltered water supports a wide range of recreational uses, including sailing, motorboating, waterskiing, swimming, snorkeling, and fishing. The bay's broadness and shallowness make it excellent for anchorage as well as adventure and discovery.



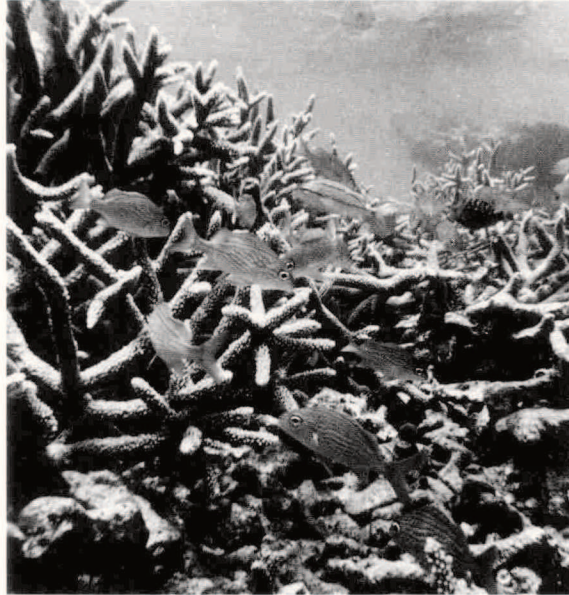
The objective for managing the bay is to allow established recreational and commercial activities to continue with controls necessary to guarantee the protection of marine species, water quality, bay-bottom communities, and visitor safety.

The Barrier System. The barrier system is a relatively remote fossil coral reef. From pirates and presidents to fish and fowl, natural and cultural history abound on the keys, inviting visitors to explore man's use of the islands and tidal creeks. The northern portion is mostly covered with water, but the mudflats and tidal channels in a shallow area known as the Safety Valve still constitute a distinct transition between the Atlantic Ocean and Biscayne Bay. To the south stretches a long line of low keys--some small and obviously altered by man, some larger and densely vegetated. Below Adams Key, the line of keys widens but is more frequently broken by narrow, winding creeks and lagoons. A feeling of mystery prevails in these constricted waterways, and although a glimpse of pirates is anticipated around every curve, only wildlife is encountered.



The objective for managing the barrier system is to retain its natural character, providing the opportunity for visitors to explore undeveloped subtropical keys and the waterways winding through them, and to use the existing developed areas to provide support facilities for the park's major interpretive messages and basic visitor services.

The Reef Tract. The clean warm waters of the shallow sea beyond the barrier system foster living coral and the many other forms of colorful marine life that find shelter and food among the coral communities. Biscayne National Park includes the northernmost living patch reefs of the United States as well as shoal reefs that parallel the park's eastern boundary. Seen from above, this unit looks like a patchwork quilt, providing a kaleidoscope of greens and blues. From the surface, water and a limitless horizon pervade the visitor's experience. Below the surface, one journeys to a different world for a brief encounter with color, form, and movement alien to everyday life. Remains of sunken ships are scattered throughout the reef tract.



The objective for managing the reef tract is to preserve its cultural and natural resources and to provide a meaningful and safe surface and underwater experience for visitors.

PROPOSED VISITOR USE AT BISCAYNE NATIONAL PARK

MAINLAND

BAY

BARRIER SYSTEM

REEF TRACT



fishing from spoil banks
along dredged canals
canoeing along shoreline

At Convoy Point

large tour boat to Elliott
Key Harbor
smaller tour boats with
glass bottoms to reef
tract for snorkeling
and to lower keys for
guided tour
picnicking
park orientation/
interpretation
guided glass-bottomed
barge tours of bay
interpretive boardwalk
through mangrove fringe
other interpretive programs
bird watching

fishing
snorkeling
swimming
wading
motorboating
waterskiing
sailing
boat camping
bird watching
scuba diving

fishing
hiking
exploring the upland
exploring the creeks
and channels
beachcombing
bird watching
backcountry camping

At Adams Key

boat docking
picnicking
interpretive trail (guided
and self-guided)
interpretive exhibits
school group interpretation

At Elliott Key Harbor

boat docking
picnicking
interpretive trail (guided
and self-guided)
interpretive exhibits
guided glass-bottomed
barge tours of bay
swimming
wading
guided snorkeling in bay
other interpretive programs
designated camping

At University Dock

picnicking
sunbathing on sandy beach
swimming
wading
boat docking and mooring

At Boca Chita

boat docking
picnicking
interpretive exhibit
sightseeing from tower

snorkeling over coral
reefs and shipwrecks
scuba diving
fishing
motorboating
sailing

PROPOSED GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN/DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN

PUBLIC ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Biscayne National Park can be fully appreciated only if the park's environments are made available to the nonboating public as well as to those who own boats. To accomplish this, it is proposed that daily passenger tour boat service be provided to Elliott Key, the lower keys, and the reef tract. It is preferred that this service be operated by a concessioner. However, if after a trial period the operation proved not to be economically feasible, alternative means of providing public transportation, such as funding by a nonprofit organization or a government subsidy, would be explored. The operating specifics of the system, such as boat design, the number of trips per day, and departure times, will be determined later, but the following concept is desired.

A 50-passenger tour boat will pick up passengers at the NPS headquarters site at Convoy Point and carry them to Elliott Key Harbor and back. This will allow all visitors to get out on the water and to participate in the interpretive programs offered at the Elliott Key Harbor center. The cost per passenger will probably be between \$6 and \$10 for adults and \$3 and \$6 for children. For visitors desiring to see more of the park, smaller boats, also based at Convoy Point, will be available for both interpretive tours of the major creeks south of Adams Key and guided snorkeling trips to the coral reef. If feasible, the smaller boats will be designed with glass windows in the bottoms to permit viewing of underwater features. These boats will stop at Adams Key, where interpretive presentations will specifically relate to the coral reefs, the lower keys, and the cultural history of the immediate area. The cost per passenger for the smaller tour boats will probably range from \$10 to \$15.

VISITOR USE AND INTERPRETATION

The park will remain a significant recreational resource for the south Florida region, where residents and tourists can enjoy a great variety of water-oriented activities. At the same time the park's full interpretive potential will be realized, providing opportunities for national and regional visitors to learn about the natural and cultural history of one of the few subtropical environments in the United States.

Visitor use and interpretation will be closely correlated with the major terrestrial and marine environments in the park. By visiting both Convoy Point and Elliott Key, visitors will have an opportunity to participate in a variety of interpretive programs and activities. Visitors with the time and desire to meet the park on more intimate terms may do so by taking the public tour boats to the lower keys for an interpretive tour or to the reef tract for snorkeling. This will allow visitors to experience all four park environments.

The Mainland: To protect the natural values of the mangroves and wetlands along the shore, visitor activities on the mainland within the park boundary will be confined to Convoy Point and the canal spoil

banks. Mainland visitor use and access to the bay are also available at Homestead Bayfront and Black Point county parks, which are adjacent to the national park.

Convoy Point will be redesigned to serve as the park's major orientation and information center and the entry point for nonboating visitors. Interpretive programs will highlight the park's significance, orient visitors to the remnant profile represented by the park environments, and inform visitors of the various activity options, skill requirements, and hazards associated with discovering this park. A short interpretive boardwalk along the mangrove shoreline and an interpretive canoe trail, both keyed to descriptive brochures, will help visitors understand how this shrinking resource contributes to the health of the bay. Guided bay tours on a glass-bottomed barge will help visitors appreciate the underwater communities in the bay. Other visitor activities will include picnicking, bird-watching, sightseeing, and fishing along the jetty. Docking and equipment rental facilities for canoeing, sailing, and motorboating will be available at the adjacent Homestead Bayfront County Park. Canoe rentals will also be available at Black Point County Park.

Elsewhere on the mainland, there will be pedestrian access to the canal spoil banks for fishing and sightseeing. To control erosion and reduce safety hazards, vehicular traffic will no longer be allowed on the spoil banks, but parking areas will be designated nearby.

The Bay: Recreational uses including motorboating, sailing, waterskiing, boat camping, sportfishing, snorkeling, and swimming will continue, with some restrictions to protect marine species, water quality, bottom communities, and visitor safety and to minimize visitor use conflicts. Both sport and commercial fishing will continue in accordance with state law. Selected shallows and biologically sensitive areas will be marked and placed off limits to boaters, and additional areas will be closed to waterskiing. Brochures will advise visitors of the shallow and restricted areas.

The Barrier System: Except for a few development sites, the keys will be maintained as natural areas. The National Park Service will seek to acquire the interests necessary to provide for public day use anywhere in the park--the exception being if part of the islands are placed off limits to protect sensitive resources such as nesting sea turtles or birds. Backcountry camping will continue to be managed under a free permit system.

Elliott Key Harbor will be the major center for interpretive activities, one of the primary destinations for private boaters, and the destination for a public tour boat out of Convoy Point. The visitor experience will be characterized as "interpretation through participation." Glass-bottomed barge tours of the bay, snorkeling lessons and tours, and guided and self-guided interpretive trails will continue to bring visitors into contact with the resources of the bay, the barrier islands, and the shoreline edge of the outer reef tract. Park interpreters will describe the human history--a story molded by the events of this changing environment. For the many visitors who will not have a firsthand opportunity to dive and explore the underwater world of the reef tract, an audiovisual/exhibit

presentation at the visitor pavilion will bring them as close as possible to an experience with this northernmost extension of a living coral reef. The harbor will also continue to be a popular recreation destination, offering facilities for private boat docking, picnicking, swimming, and camping.

Adams Key will be maintained as a secondary day use area for the boating public and as a site for school group interpretive programs. Boat docking and picnicking facilities will be available, and there will be trails for guided and self-guided interpretive walks. Interpretive exhibits will emphasize the natural history of the coral reefs and the creeks and keys south of Adams Key, and the cultural history of the immediate area.

The swimming area at University Dock on Elliott Key--which is one of two sandy (coral sand) swimming beaches in the park--will continue to be designated, and overnight boat anchorage (boat camping) will continue to be allowed offshore.

When the National Park Service acquires the necessary interests in Boca Chita, the island will become a major day use harbor and recreation area for private boaters. Facilities will be available for boat docking and picnicking, and the ornamental light tower (not a true lighthouse) will provide an elevated place where visitors can view many of the features of the park.

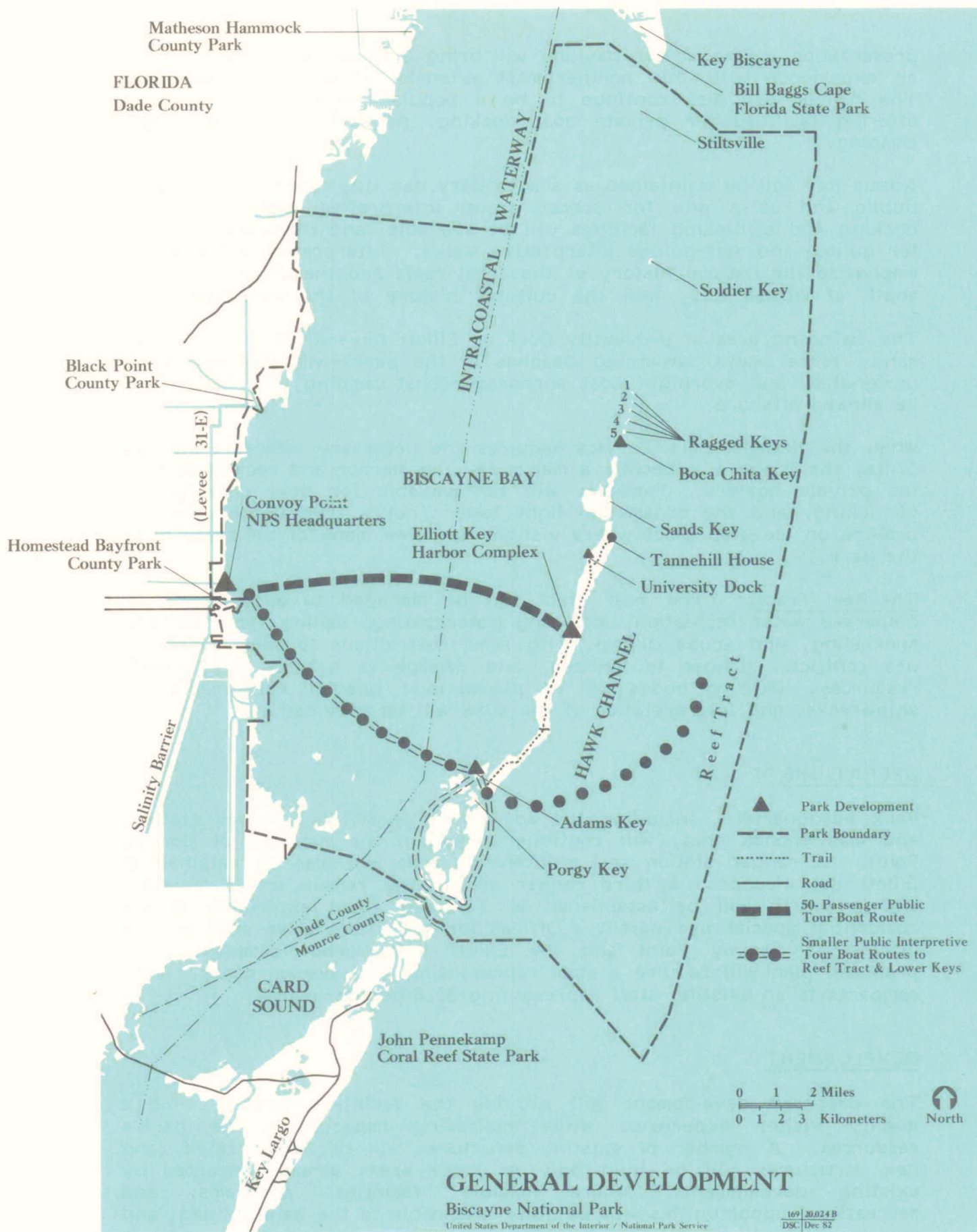
The Reef Tract: The reef tract will be managed to allow continued dispersed water recreation, including motorboating, sailing, sportfishing, snorkeling, and scuba diving, with some restrictions to minimize visitor use conflicts, danger to visitors, and damage to natural and cultural resources. Mooring buoys will be placed over selected coral reefs and shipwrecks, and interpretation of the sites will be provided.

OPERATIONS

Park headquarters, including the administrative offices, ranger station, and maintenance area, will continue to be on the mainland at Convoy Point. A ranger station and maintenance area will also be retained at Elliott Key Harbor. A third ranger station will remain on Adams Key, and a fourth will be established at Tannehill upon expiration of the residential special use permit. Offices for the interpretive staff will be located at Convoy Point and the Elliott Key Harbor complex. The proposed plan will require a staff representing 41.2 person-years. This compares to an existing staff representing 32.6 person-years.

DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development will provide the facilities necessary for a quality visitor experience while minimizing impacts on the park's resources. A number of existing structures will be rehabilitated, and new structures will be built only in those areas already impacted by existing development. Where feasible, facilities, programs, and recreational opportunities will be fully accessible to the handicapped, and new facilities will be designed to minimize energy consumption.



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GENERAL DEVELOPMENT

Convoy Point

Construct new

- visitor information/orientation station
- interpretive boardwalk through mangrove fringe
- jetty walkway with fishing turnouts
- landscaped area with picnic tables
- visitor and staff parking
- administration building with field laboratory
- maintenance building with dive locker
- maintenance boat dock
- utility compound
- employee housing
- interpretive canoe trail

Replace existing power, water, and sewer lines

Maintain existing

- tour boat basin
- maintenance storage area

Close existing boat ramp to public use after the service is offered at the neighboring Homestead Bayfront County Park

Porgy Key

Remove man-made structures upon expiration of life estate

Return to natural state

Adams Key

Provide new

- outdoor interpretive exhibit
- self-guiding facilities for foot trail

Enlarge existing public/NPS boat dock (scheduled for 1983)

Rehabilitate existing small NPS boat dock (scheduled for 1983)

Recondition existing interpretive facility

Plant native vegetation for screen

Maintain existing

- picnic tables
- sun/rain shelter
- foot trail
- employee residences
- ranger station

Elliott Key Harbor Complex

Redesign visitor information/interpretation pavilion

Relocate ranger offices

Improve interpretive facilities

Resurface interpretive trail

Maintain existing

- showers and toilet facilities (available in 1983)
- potable water (available in 1983)
- picnic tables
- sun/rain shelter
- campsites
- swimming area

public/NPS boat basin

utility dock

maintenance area (available in 1983)

employee residences (available in 1983)

University Dock

Provide new

- toilet facility
- information sign
- picnic tables

Maintain existing

- swimming beach
- boat dock (replaced in 1982/1983)

Tannehill House

Adapt as ranger station/residence upon expiration of special use permit

Replace boat dock

Maintain hiking trail to Elliott Key Harbor

Sands Key

Fill artificial canal and restore salt pond to original contours

Return island to natural state

Boca Chita

The following will be done after acquiring necessary interests in land:

Provide new

- picnic tables
- information/interpretation exhibits
- toilet facility
- maintenance/storage facility

Rehabilitate existing

- screened open-air pavilion
- light tower
- boat basin
- shoreline bulkhead

Remove other structures

Replace Australian pines with native vegetation

Ragged Keys and Soldier Key

The following will be done after acquiring necessary interests in land:

Remove all man-made structures

Allow islands to return to natural state

Stiltsville

Manage existing leases until 1999 upon transfer from state, then remove all man-made structures as stated in the leases

Bay and Reef Tract

Provide new markers parkwide

The general development plan for the park is shown on the following map and table. A more detailed site plan for the proposed development at Convoy Point is shown on the map titled Convoy Point Proposed Development Concept Plan.

The entire national park is located within the 100-year floodplain, and much of it lies in the coastal high-hazard area. Therefore, the design of new structures and the rehabilitation of existing structures will incorporate methods for minimizing storm damage. In addition, the park staff will continue to maintain an active hurricane evacuation plan for visitor safety and protection of property.

RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

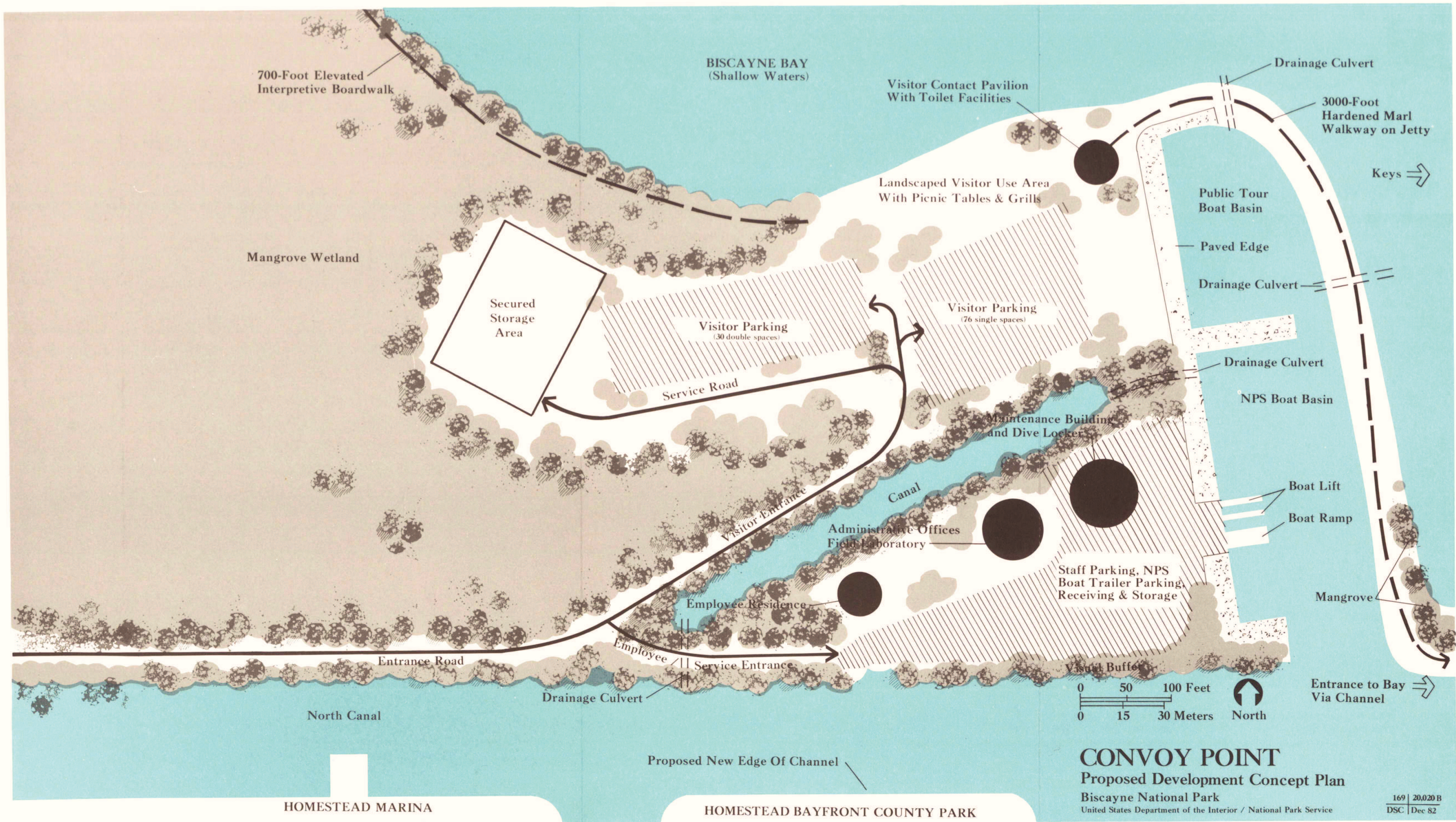
A comprehensive program for managing natural and cultural resources will give special attention to reducing or eliminating the major threats to the park.

To reduce the potential for disruption of the ecologically significant coastal mangroves and wetlands by encroaching residential and industrial development, the National Park Service will cooperate with Dade County to seek "Park Protection" zoning status for the area between the park boundary and the salinity barrier (levee 31-E). Such zoning, which would be administered by the county in areas outside the park boundary, would recognize the importance of park values and restrict activities that would disrupt natural shoreline processes and degrade the water quality in the bay. In addition, the National Park Service will seek to reduce the potential for aesthetic intrusions from possible future highrise development by working with the county to establish building-height zoning restrictions in areas where highrise structures would be visible from the park.

Water and air quality will be monitored in the park for chemical, radioactive, and organic pollution. The National Park Service will cooperate with county, state, and federal agencies in reducing pollution threats to park resources. This will include seeking a cooperative agreement with the South Florida Water Management District to reduce adverse impacts to the estuary associated with unseasonal freshwater discharges from the drainage canal system.

Recreational use will be controlled to avoid overuse and damage of submerged resources, such as propeller scarring of bay-bottom grass beds or destruction of coral by anchors and prop thrust. Sensitive areas will be closed to boaters on a rotating or permanent basis, and mooring devices will be provided at selected reefs.

Research will be conducted to provide information for managing native wildlife and vegetation. Fish and invertebrates will be monitored to sustain native populations. If it appears that further restrictions on fishing and shellfishing are warranted in the park, the National Park Service will cooperate with the state in revising state and federal regulations. National Park Service rangers will continue to enforce Florida state law governing sport and commercial fishing. Endangered or



threatened species will continue to be protected through cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service. The spread of exotic plant and animal species will be checked by controlling their populations to the extent feasible.

Historic shipwrecks will be protected by training park rangers to identify illicit salvage operations, by increasing ranger patrols and surveillance of the reefs, and through visitor education.

COSTS

The gross cost of proposed development is estimated to be \$7,621,000. Development will be phased as money becomes available. In addition, the initial gross cost of interpretive media is estimated to be \$852,000, and the initial gross cost for resources management, \$588,000. The estimated annual operating cost for staffing, equipment, supplies, utilities, maintenance, and rehabilitation is \$1,024,000.

WILDERNESS STUDY

The National Park Service studied wilderness suitability at the same time that the proposal and alternatives were developed for the general management plan, and the findings of the study are consistent with the proposed GMP. All areas within the authorized park boundary, including those not currently in federal ownership, were studied for wilderness suitability.

According to the Wilderness Act, to be eligible for wilderness an area must now, or in the foreseeable future, be without the lasting imprint of man, conducive to the experience of solitude or unconfined primitive recreation, and of sufficient size to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.

Based on these criteria the National Park Service finds no area within Biscayne National Park suitable for wilderness designation and will so advise the secretary of the interior for his recommendation to the president and the Congress. The proximity--spatially, visually, and acoustically--to major development and well-established motorized activity (airplanes, motorboats, large ships) is not conducive to an experience of solitude as intended in the Wilderness Act.

Those areas that were judged possibly eligible for wilderness, regardless of designation, will be zoned and managed as undeveloped natural areas in which traditional compatible recreational uses will be permitted. The natural, scenic, and recreational values of the areas will thus be preserved, whether or not wilderness is designated.

COMMENTS

Please write your comments regarding the GMP/DCP and wilderness proposals on this sheet. If not enough space is provided, you may attach additional sheets. Detach and fold this page so the return address is on the outside, fasten it with tape or staples, and mail it to the superintendent at Biscayne National Park. No postage is required.

PUBLIC ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION: _____

VISITOR USE AND INTERPRETATION: _____

DEVELOPMENT: _____

RESOURCES MANAGEMENT: _____

WILDERNESS: _____

OTHER: _____

Thank you for your comments. Will you please advise us if you are commenting as ☐ an individual or as ☐ a representative of the following agency or organization _____

Also please indicate your particular interest in the park (adjacent landowner, commercial or sport fisherman, boater, etc.) _____

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Biscayne National Park
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