

Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park

Unit Management Plan

APPROVED PLAN

**STATE OF FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
Division of Recreation and Parks**

February 7, 2002

INTRODUCTION

Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park is located in Alachua County between Gainesville and Micanopy (see Vicinity Map). The main entrance is about 1.25 miles north of the town of Micanopy. Access to the main entrance of the park is from U.S. Highway 441. Six other access points are located along U.S. Highway 441, Southeast 15th Street, and State Road 20.

Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park is a complex and diverse system of uplands, freshwater marshes and wet prairies. The prairie basin itself covers more than 16,000 acres and includes north Florida's largest freshwater marsh and wet prairie. The Paynes Prairie ecosystem supports a variety of plant and animal life and provides critical habitat for many species. Paynes Prairie has profound cultural significance as well. Humans have frequented it for over 10,000 years. In the 1600s the largest cattle ranch in Spanish Florida was based at the prairie. Early descriptions by William Bartram during his visits to the "Great Alachua Savanna" in 1774 provide a glimpse of both the natural and cultural significance of the prairie at that time. Even today, the prairie remains an important part of the local culture with many people sharing a great affinity for the vast green plain. Archie Carr wrote of Paynes Prairie:

"There is no telling the things you see on the Prairie. The sun rises at one end and sets at the other. To a taste not too dependent upon towns, there is always something, if only a new set of shades in the grass and sky or a round-tail muskrat bouncing across the blacktop, or a string of teal running low with the clouds in the twilight in front of the winter wind. The Prairie is a solid thing to hold to in a world all broken out with man. There is peace out there, and quiet to hear the rails call, and the cranes bugling in the sky." (Carr 1964:162)

Paynes Prairie was the first state preserve in the Florida state park system. Acquisition began in 1970 under the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF) and Land and Water Conservation Funds. Since the initial acquisition, additional parcels were acquired under LATF, EEL and P2000/Acquisitions and Inholdings programs; through a settlement; and through a lease from the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD).

Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park is designated multiple-use to protect and preserve the water quality and flood storage capacity of the Prairie Creek system and to provide natural resource-based public outdoor recreation and other related uses. According to the lease agreements the Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) will manage the property only for the conservation and protection of natural and historical resources and for resource-based public outdoor recreation which is compatible with the conservation and protection of the property (see Addendum 1). There are no legislative or executive directives that constrain the use of this property.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE PLAN

This plan serves as the basic statement of policy and direction for the management of Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park as a unit of Florida's state park system. It identifies the objectives, criteria and standards that guide each aspect of park administration, and sets forth the specific measures that will be implemented to meet management objectives. The plan is intended to meet the requirements of Sections 253.034 and 259.032, Florida Statutes, Chapter 18-2, Florida Administrative Code, and intended to be consistent with the State Lands Management Plan. With approval, this management plan will supercede and replace the current approved plan of May 29, 1997. All development and resource alteration encompassed in this plan is subject to the granting of appropriate permits; easements, licenses, and other required legal instruments. Approval of the management plan does not constitute an exemption from complying with the appropriate local, state, or federal agencies. This plan is also intended to meet the requirements for beach and shore preservation, as defined in Chapter 161, Florida Statutes, and Chapters 62B-33, 62B-36 and 62R-49, Florida Administrative Code.

The plan consists of two interrelated components. Each component corresponds to a particular aspect of the administration of the park. The resource management component provides a detailed inventory and assessment of the natural and cultural resources of the park. Resource management problems and needs are identified, and specific management objectives are established for each resource type. This component provides guidance on the application of such measures as prescribed burning, exotic species removal, and restoration of natural

conditions.

The land use component is the recreational resource allocation plan for the unit. Based on considerations such as access, population, and adjacent land uses, an optimum allocation of the physical space of the park is made, locating use areas and proposing types of facilities and volume of use to be provided.

In the development of this plan, the potential of the park to accommodate secondary management purposes (“multiple uses”) was analyzed. These secondary purposes were considered within the context of the Division’s statutory responsibilities and an analysis of the resource needs and values of the park. This analysis considered the park natural and cultural resources, management needs, aesthetic values, visitation, and visitor experiences. For Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park, it was determined that timber management for natural community restoration purposes and cattle grazing in a cultural landscape and interpretive context could be accommodated in a manner that would be compatible and not interfere with the primary purpose of resource-based outdoor recreation and conservation. These compatible secondary management purposes are addressed in the Resource Management Component of the plan. Uses such as, water resource development projects, water supply projects, stormwater management projects, linear facilities and sustainable agriculture and forestry (other than those forest management activities specifically identified in this plan) are not consistent with this plan or the management purposes of the park and should be discouraged.

The potential for generating revenue to enhance management was also analyzed. Visitor fees and charges are the principal source of revenue generated by the park. It was determined that the sale of timber and excess cattle and horses would be appropriate at this park as additional sources of revenue for land management since they are compatible with the park’s primary purpose of resource-based outdoor recreation and conservation.

The use of private land managers to facilitate restoration and management of this unit was also analyzed. Decisions regarding this type of management (such as outsourcing, contracting with the private sector, use of volunteers, etc.) will be made on a case-by-case basis as necessity dictates.

MANAGEMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Management Authority and Responsibility

In accordance with Chapter 258, Florida Statutes, and Chapter 62D-2, Florida Administrative Code, the Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) is charged with the responsibility of developing and operating Florida’s recreation and parks system. These are administered in accordance with the following policy:

It shall be the policy of the Division of Recreation and Parks to promote the state park system for the use, enjoyment, and benefit of the people of Florida and visitors; to acquire typical portions of the original domain of the state which will be accessible to all of the people, and of such character as to emblemize the state’s natural values; conserve these natural values for all time; administer the development, use and maintenance of these lands and render such public service in so doing, in such a manner as to enable the people of Florida and visitors to enjoy these values without depleting them; to contribute materially to the development of a strong mental, moral, and physical fiber in the people; to provide for perpetual preservation of historic sites and memorials of statewide significance and interpretation of their history to the people; to contribute to the tourist appeal of Florida.

The Trustees have also granted management authority of certain sovereign submerged lands to the DRP under Management Agreement MA 68-086 (as amended January 19, 1988). The management area includes a 400-foot zone from the edge of mean high water where a park boundary borders sovereign submerged lands fronting beaches, bays, estuarine areas, rivers or streams. Where emergent wetland vegetation exists, the zone extends waterward 400 feet beyond the vegetation. The agreement is intended to provide additional protection to resources of the park and nearshore areas and to provide authority to manage activities that could adversely impact public recreational uses.

Many operating procedures are standard system wide and are set by the DRP policy. These

procedures are outlined in the Operations Procedures Manual (OPM) and cover such areas as personnel management, uniforms and personal appearance, training, signs, communications, fiscal procedures, interpretation, concessions, camping regulations, resource management, law enforcement, protection, safety and maintenance.

In the management of Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park preservation and enhancement of natural conditions is all important. Resource considerations are given priority over user considerations and development is restricted to the minimum necessary for ensuring its protection and maintenance, limited access, user safety and convenience, and appropriate interpretation. Permitted uses are primarily of a passive nature, related to the aesthetic, educational and recreational enjoyment of the park, although other compatible uses are permitted in limited amounts. Program emphasis is placed on interpretation of the natural and cultural attributes of the park.

Park Goals and Objectives

The following park goals and objectives express the DRP long-term intent in managing the state park. At the beginning of the process to update this management plan, the DRP reviewed the goals and objectives of the previous plan to determine if they remain meaningful and practical and should be included in the updated plan. This process ensures that the goals and objectives for the park remain relevant over time.

Estimates are developed for the funding and staff resources needed to implement the management plan based on these goals, objectives and priority management activities. Funding priorities for all state park management and development activities are reviewed each year as part of the DRP legislative budget process. The DRP prepares an annual legislative budget request based on the priorities established for the entire state park system. The DRP also aggressively pursues a wide range of other funds and staffing resources, such as grants, volunteers, and partnerships with agencies, local governments and the private sector, for supplementing normal legislative appropriations to address unmet needs. The ability of the DRP to implement the specific goals, objectives and priority actions identified in this plan will be determined by the availability of funding resources for these purposes.

Natural Resources

1. Restore natural hydrology within the park to the extent possible.
 - A. Consolidate existing hydrological information and data into a hydrological restoration plan for the prairie basin that lists all dikes and culverts that may require manipulation to restore more natural hydrological regimes on the basin. Seek additional funding and mitigation projects to continue hydrological restoration efforts. Complete hydrological restoration projects currently underway.
 - B. Identify hydrological manipulations to isolated wetlands within the uplands and develop recommendations for restoration of ditches and other perturbations.
 - C. Continue to monitor status of flow from Prairie Creek into the park; investigate potential for increasing peak flows during flood events.
 - D. Continue to work with the multi-agency Orange Creek Basin Partnership to mitigate the impacts of Sweetwater Branch on Paynes Prairie. Encourage the SJRWMD to monitor groundwater quality near the Alachua Sink.
 - E. Determine best disposal method for spoil dredged from Sweetwater Branch canal.
 - F. Continue to work the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) regarding the removal of the spoil piles and canals and the restoration of the wet prairie and basin marsh within the FDOT right-of-ways along Interstate Highway 75 and U.S. Highway 441.
2. Prioritize and restore disturbed natural communities within the park.
 - A. Continue efforts to reduce hardwood and exotic invasion of herbaceous wetlands through flooding and prescribed fire as well as using mechanical and chemical methods where appropriate.
 - B. Continue restoration efforts in uplands and on prairie rim; identify original natural community types of cleared areas; prioritize areas to be restored based on projected cost and ecological benefit; identify sources for plant material for restoration; develop methods

- to remove pasture grasses where necessary; develop methods for control of weed species in restoration areas.
- C. Initiate recontouring of the railroad bed along the north rim of Paynes Prairie and within the Alachua Sink Hammock; augment natural recruitment through planting of appropriate plant species; monitor and control invasive exotics in restoration areas.
 - D. Restore natural communities in areas impacted by the southern pine beetle outbreak. Determine boundaries of remaining off-site pine stands, determine best management method for restoration, and prioritize them for removal if necessary.
 - E. Determine best course of action for restoration of borrow areas.
 - F. Remove unnecessary roads and unauthorized trails.
3. Continue efforts to control invasive exotic plants and develop other programs to augment current efforts.
 - A. Map the current range of all EPPC category I and II species within the park.
 - B. Initiate cooperative venture with landowners to manage invasive exotics. Promote the goal of removing all invasive exotics from adjoining properties.
 - C. Continue to pursue funding from the Bureau of Invasive Plant Management Withlacoochee Regional Working Group for invasive exotic plant control.
 4. Increase prescribed burning activities within the park.
 - A. Pursue prescribed burning of the flatwoods between Interstate Highway 75 and U.S. Highway 441 north of Micanopy. Enlist the aid of the Division of Forestry in conducting fuel reduction burns.
 - B. Increase emphasis on prescribed burning whenever weather conditions permit. Assess equipment and staffing levels needed for the effective management of the prescribed burn program of the park.
 5. Protect and monitor designated species within the park.
 - A. Continue mapping of rare plant species using GPS.
 - B. Repeat gopher tortoise burrow census using GPS.
 - C. Coordinate with FFWCC in management of bald eagles, sandhill cranes, wood storks, wading birds, and other designated wildlife species.

Cultural Resources

6. Protect cultural resources from damage.
 - A. Maintain, protect and interpret existing archaeological sites and their associated artifactual assemblage from vandalism, erosion and other forms of encroachment. Continue to patrol sites to monitor for vandalism and discourage casual trails through interpretative signage where appropriate.
 - B. Avoid ground disturbance where possible and when unavoidable, conduct ground-disturbing activities in accordance with the Department of State, Division of Historical Resources (DHR) policy.
 - C. Plan and implement a program of professionally conducted cultural landscape studies throughout the park.
 - D. Reduce impacts at the Rancho de La Chua site by relocating recreational trail users.
7. Develop a comprehensive cultural resource management plan that includes maintenance schedules.
 - A. Develop a phased plan for managing the currently identified cultural resources in the context of their surroundings.
 - B. Regularly assess the condition of recorded and unrecorded cultural resources. Monitor the condition of sites in poor condition through the use of photopoints.
 - C. Develop and adhere to cyclical management schedules for management of the Camp Ranch structures associated with the Rancho de La Chua site and all other historic structures within the park. Regularly assess condition of historic structures. Schedule professional documentation and determine feasibility of repair / rehabilitation of historic

structures.

- D. Draft a Scope of Collections Statement, catalog and inventory permanent collections.
- 8. Document unrecorded cultural resources, pursue funding for a synthesis of existing research and National Register nomination.
 - A. Pursue nomination of the park to the National Register of Historic Places as an archaeological and historic district.
 - B. Fill out Florida Master Site File forms for all known but unrecorded sites.
 - C. Pursue funding for research to refine information on known archaeological sites and identify prehistoric settlement patterns.

Recreational

- 9. Continue to provide quality resource-based outdoor recreational and interpretive programs and facilities at the state park.
 - A. Continue the annual Primitive Arts Festival.
 - B. Maintain tent, RV and primitive camping opportunities.
 - C. Maintain a network of hiking, biking and equestrian trails that provide opportunities to experience a cross section of park natural and cultural resources.
 - D. Provide opportunities for learning about park natural and cultural resources through up-to-date static interpretive displays, informational materials, and on- and off-site interpretive programs, and guided tours.
 - E. Provide sufficient picnic facilities and play areas for groups and families.
 - F. Maintain water access areas for fishing, canoeing and kayaking.
- 10. Seek funding to expand recreational and interpretive opportunities through the improvement of programs and the development of new use areas and facilities, as outlined in this management plan.
 - A. Relocate La Chua Trailhead from District Office grounds and provide universally accessible, pedestrian-only connection to existing La Chua Trail.
 - B. Develop and initiate self-guided interpretive programs on appropriate trails.
 - C. Develop exhibit materials for FDOT rest areas along Interstate Highway 75.
 - D. Evaluate and replace Visitor Center displays as needed with input from the Division of Historic Resources.
 - E. Develop amphitheater and campfire circle with associated interpretive programs to enhance recreation opportunities for campers.
 - F. Construct trail from campground to ranger station.
 - G. Develop primitive campsite on south side trail system.
 - H. Install additional warning signs and pavement markings on Gainesville-Hawthorne State Trail at potentially hazardous curves and slopes.
 - I. Stabilize edges of the Gainesville-Hawthorne State Trail.
 - J. Update kiosk contents with vandalism resistant materials along Gainesville-Hawthorne State Trail.

Administration/Operations

- 11. Maintain secure preserve boundary.
 - A. Post preserve boundary and maintain secure fences where needed.
 - B. Preserve boundary should be re-surveyed east of Camp's Canal and the ownership of the canal east of County Road 234 verified.
- 12. Monitor activities outside the park that may impact preserve land and water quality; Interact with those responsible for these activities in a cooperative effort without compromise of the interests of the park.
 - A. Increase law enforcement activities on the Gainesville-Hawthorne State Trail and along Camp's Canal.
 - B. Continue involvement with Orange Creek Basin Partnership and work to mitigate effects of City of Gainesville wastewater and stormwater discharges.

- C. Continue partnerships with all agencies affecting hydrology within the prairie basin system and Paynes Prairie watershed.
- D. Monitor water quality of Visitor Center, campground and recreation area wells.
- 13. Continue development and distribution of park information materials.
 - A. Update all brochures. Complete vertebrate list.
 - B. Continue publishing of Prairie Press newsletter
 - C. Continue development and updating of web pages.
- 14. Provide visitors with a quality recreation experience through visitor service.
 - A. Establish measurable means of monitoring impacts of recreation on park natural and cultural resources.
 - B. Maintain carrying capacities in various use areas.
 - C. Provide universally accessible public facilities.
 - D. Assure that appropriate training is provided to all staff in visitor services, park information and emergency procedures. Enhance Campground Host training program.
 - E. Conduct regular inspections of the park to provide a clean, well-maintained and safe environment for visitors and staff.
 - F. Install pay phones in campground, Bolen Bluff trailhead and Visitor Center.
 - G. Recruit and maintain volunteer support to assist park staff with the development, implementation and maintenance of park programs and facilities.
 - H. Establish "Adopt a Trail" and other programs through the Friends of Gainesville-Hawthorne State Trail Citizen's Support Organization.

At this time, no additional FTE positions are needed to implement this management plan.

Management Coordination

The park is managed in accordance with all applicable Florida Statutes and administrative rules. Agencies having a major or direct role in the management of the park are discussed in this plan.

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry (DOF), assists DRP staff in the development of wildfire emergency plans and provides the authorization required for prescribed burning. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC), assists staff in the enforcement of state laws pertaining to wildlife, freshwater fish and other aquatic life existing within park boundaries. In addition, the FFWCC aids the DRP with wildlife management programs, including the development and management of Watchable Wildlife programs. The Department of State, Division of Historical Resources (DHR) assists staff to assure protection of archaeological and historical sites. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA) aids staff in aquatic preserves management programs. The DEP, Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems aids staff in planning and construction activities seaward of the Coastal Construction Line. In addition, the Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems aids the staff in the development of erosion control projects. Emphasis is placed on protection of existing resources as well as the promotion of compatible outdoor recreational uses.

An ecopassage facility has been constructed by the FDOT to facilitate wildlife crossing of the section of U.S. Highway 441 that crosses the prairie. Safety concerns have developed due to drivers pulling off the roadway to view the facility. The DRP will coordinate with the local Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization safety study consultants and Scenic Highway Designation Committee to provide information and advise on design solutions for safety hazards associated with this facility.

Public Participation

An initial public workshop was held on June 14, 2000. The purpose of the meeting was to solicit comments from the public before the development of this management plan.

A second public workshop was held on September 18, 2001. The purpose of this meeting was to present this draft management plan to the public.

A DEP Advisory Group meeting was held on September 19, 2001. The purpose of this meeting

was to provide the Advisory Group members the opportunity to discuss this draft management plan. See Addendum 1 for the list of advisory group members and the advisory group meeting staff report.

Other Designations

Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park is not within an Area Of Critical State Concern as defined in section 380.05, Florida Statutes. Currently it is not under study for such designation. Paynes Prairie was designated as a National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior in December 1974.

All waters within the unit have been designated as Outstanding Florida Waters, pursuant to Chapter 62-302 Florida Administrative Code. Surface waters in this unit are also classified as Class III waters by DEP. The preserve is not within or adjacent to an aquatic preserve as designated under the Florida Aquatic Preserve Act of 1975 (section 258.35, Florida Statutes).

Several other significant land and water resources exist near the park. They include: Lochloosa Wildlife Conservation Area, Gum Root Swamp Park and Conservation Area, Colclough Pond Sanctuary, Austin Cary Memorial Forest, Devil's Millhopper Geological Site State Park, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park, Dudley Farm Historic State Park, San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park, Goethe State Forest, Carl S. Swisher Memorial Nature Preserve, and Katherine Ordway Preserve.