

**Visitor Services Project
Big Cypress National Preserve
Report Summary**

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at Big Cypress National Preserve during March 3-11, 2007. A total of 1002 questionnaires were distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 634 questionnaires were returned resulting in a 63.3% response rate.
 - This report profiles a systematic random sample of Big Cypress National Preserve. Most results are presented in graphs and frequency tables. Summaries of visitor comments are included in the report and complete comments are included in the Visitor Comments Appendix.
 - Forty-eight percent of visitor groups were in groups of two and 44% were groups of four or more. Fifty-two percent of visitor groups were family groups and 22% were with friends.
 - Forty-seven percent of visitors were ages 56-70 years, 23% were 41-55 years, 10% were 71 years or older, and 5% were 15 years or younger. Three percent of visitors were of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity and 96% reported their race as White.
 - United States visitors were from Florida (34%), Ohio (6%), Michigan (6%), and 42 other states. International visitors, comprising 14% of the total visitation, were from Canada (48%), Germany (18%), and 13 other countries.
 - Sixty-four percent of visitors visited the preserve once in the 12 months prior to the survey and 63% visited the preserve for the first time in their life. Visiting Big Cypress National Preserve was the primary reason that brought 22% of visitor groups to the South Florida area (areas south of Lake Okeechobee), while 36% were visiting other attractions in the area. Twenty-one percent of visitors were local residents.
 - Prior to this visit, visitor groups most often obtained information about the preserve through friends/relatives/word of mouth (48%), and previous visits (43%). Sources to use on a future visit were preserve website (64%) and travel guides/tour books/publications (52%).
 - Of visitor groups who spent less than 24 hours in the preserve (N=408), 44% spent up to two hours. Of those spending 24 hours or more (N=131), 30% spent seven or more days. The average length of stay was 1.6 days. Fifty percent of visitor groups camped in an RV/trailer park inside the preserve while 28% were tent camping in a campground.
 - The most commonly visited sites in the preserve were Oasis Visitor Center/wildlife viewing area (55%) and H.P. Williams Roadside Park/wildlife viewing area (40%). Forty percent of visitor groups desired to visit the backcountry on this or past visits, of those 60% were able to visit the backcountry. Most common method used to access the backcountry was hiking (52%) and airboat (32%).
 - The most common activities visitor groups participated in were viewing wildlife (69%), taking a scenic drive (66%), and driving through to another destination (52%).
 - Regarding the importance of protecting preserve attributes/resources, it is important to note the number of visitor groups that responded to each question. The attribute/resource that received the highest combined proportions of “extremely important” and “very important” ratings included native wildlife (98%, N=500, clean air (97%, N=596), clean water 97%, N=593), and natural setting (97%, N=593).
 - Regarding use, importance, and quality of facilities, it is important to note the number of visitor groups that responded to each question. The most used facilities included restrooms (77%), wildlife viewing areas (65%), and scenic drive (64%). The facilities that received the highest combined proportions of “extremely important” and “very important” ratings included campgrounds (92%, N=105) and wildlife viewing areas (86%, N=353). The facilities that received the highest combined proportions of “very
-

good” and “good” quality ratings were Kirby Storter Boardwalk (91%, N=161) and wildlife viewing areas (91% N=345). The facility that received the highest combined proportions of “extremely crowded” and “very crowded” ratings was campgrounds (11%, N=98).

- Regarding the use, importance, and quality of visitor information services, the most used services were information brochure/map (74%) and outdoor exhibits/bulletin boards (57%). The information services that received the highest combined proportions of “extremely important” and “very important” ratings were NPS Preserve website (84%, N=69) and assistance from park staff (82%, N=227). The information services that received the highest combined proportions of “very good” and “good” quality ratings were the ranger-led programs (93%, N=53) and assistance from park staff (93%, N=219).
- Average group expenditure inside and outside the preserve (areas south of Lake Okeechobee) was \$1,073, with a median expenditure (50% paid more and 50% paid less) of \$370. Average total expenditure per person was \$484.
- Fifty-two percent of visitor groups reported they would be likely to visit the Big Cypress Addition Lands area on a future visit. Thirty-seven percent of visitor groups were “not sure” if the availability of outfitters/ guides would increase the likelihood of visiting the Big Cypress Addition Lands area on a future visit.
- Most visitor groups (89%) rated the overall quality of services, facilities, and recreational opportunities at Big Cypress National Preserve as “very good” or “good.” Less than 2% of visitor groups rated the overall quality as “very poor” or “poor.”

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact the Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho at (208) 885-7863 or the following website <http://www.psu.uidaho.edu>.