

# Big Cypress National Preserve News Release

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## **Big Cypress National Preserve Receives Consent on ORV Trails**

Big Cypress National Preserve reached a consent agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, region four office, late last week. The agreement identifies issues relating to the implementation of the Recreational Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan of 2000 and supports the continued work on designated off-road vehicle trails in the Preserve. Work on these trails was halted last spring when controversy arose over whether or not federal permits were required for the trailwork. The trails are designated on off-road vehicle routes previously damaged by use, and identified by deeply rutted and widened areas. Crushed limerock was being added to sections that were deepest, bringing them up to grade, hardening soft spots and rerouting areas around fragile prairies.

"This consent agreement asks the National Park Service to acquire an after-the-fact permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for all previous work conducted on these trails and for future work needed to complete the project onsite" said Superintendent John Donahue. "We are delighted that the Environmental Protection Agency recognizes this project as a sustainable solution to the impact of off-road vehicle use on the soils and waters of the Preserve".

Mitigation to compensate for approximately 34 acres of wetlands affected by construction and stabilization of approximately 24 miles of 12 foot wide limerock trails for utilization by off-road vehicles will be done by removal of fill material from old fill locations and restoration of areas previously impacted by off-road vehicles. Those restoration measures were originally addressed in the Recreational Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan and will advance the National Park Service efforts to restore the natural environment in Big Cypress National Preserve.

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"This plan is a model for how to manage high impact recreation in a sustainable manner. We look forward to working with the Corps of Engineers to finalize the permit process and continue to implement our designated trail system," said Donahue.

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