



OrchidSwamp.org

**Friends of Fakahatchee, Inc.
Environmental Protection Plan**

December, 2018

Introduction

The Friends of Fakahatchee is a Citizens Support Organization (CSO) affiliated with the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, located in Copeland, FL. In addition to the usual and customary activities expected of a Florida CSO, the Friends of Fakahatchee was awarded the master concessionaire agreement for the Park the 13th August 2018. Our concession agreement # *CA-0518* requires that our Environmental Protection Plan (EPP) addresses the following:

- 1) Use of recyclable or biodegradable material where possible;
- 2) Natural resource impact minimizations;
- 3) Solid waste reduction and recycling;
- 4) Waste management;
- 5) Any other information, which would allow a reviewer to evaluate and understand a total Environmental Protection Plan.

It is important to realize that, unlike many state properties, there are currently no existing structures or other permanent property that serves to support concessionaire businesses. For example, there are no food outlets or

vending machines on park land, no camping or trailer sites, and no equipment rentals.

In terms of an overall EPP, we must distinguish between activities offered and performed by the Friends of Fakakhatchee (FOF) not-for profit and the tour activities offered by commercial tour companies within the Park's borders.

We will address these two distinct roles separately, and then account for both in an overall plan, as follows;

Commercial tour companies

As a part of the role of the FOF's Master Concessionaire #CA-0518 we anticipate entering into sub-agreements with commercial companies (hereafter: "sub-contractors") who wish to provide services within the Park.

Based on historical activities within the Park we anticipate that initially commercial companies will wish to offer opportunities involving guided kayaking, hiking and biking.

As a key part of these sub-contractor agreements, each sub-contractor will provide their own EPP appropriate to their proposed activities, to ensure each is operating in an environmentally sound and responsible fashion.

These plans will form a binding part of any agreement between FOF and the sub-contractors. We will strive to ensure that sub-contractors minimize their impact as a result of their activities upon the Park's natural environment. Each separate plan will need to address the same points outlined in our master agreement and listed on page two of this document. Each plan will address compliance with environmental regulations when appropriate.

Tour activities offered by Friends of Fakahatchee

The existing activities offered by FOF are approved by the Park Manager on an annual basis, these activities fulfill the FOF's mission to educate the public about the importance to protect the unique ecology of the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and fall into two categories (1) Tours on a truck-pulled tram and (2) Seasonal guided walks on the prairies and within the slough areas of the Park. These activities are described as "Ghost Rider tram tours", "Moonlit Fakahatchee tram tours", and "swamp walks". Further details may be found at <http://orchidswamp.org/adventures/>. Each of these activities is constrained by the carrying capacity of the vehicles and typically limited to not more than fifteen to 20 participants depending on the tour.

The tram and associated towing vehicles reside at the Park's parking area adjacent to the ranger station. The vehicles are FOF property, used and maintained by FOF volunteers and also available to Park staff.

There are very few consumables involved in these activities, and consequently very little waste is generated. The tours typically provide a bottle of chilled water for each participant. These empty bottles are collected by our tour leaders at each tour's conclusion and are disposed of through domestic recycling programs. There are no straws of any type provided. This is the only 'solid waste' generated through the FOF tours and substantially all of it is recycled. In addition, tour leaders carry a grocery store bag during each tour. This serves two functions; to collect trash generated from 'snack food' brought by participants and as a receptacle for any small items (wrappers, soda cans) that might be found in the Park in the course of a tour. We regard this as a 'teachable moment' activity.

The FOF tours program is approved and monitored by the Park Manager and when needed modified to eliminate any impact on the local resources.

Vehicles are confined to established roads within the park, with no 'off road' anywhere, other than on foot.

No changes in FOF offerings are anticipated in the immediate future; therefore we do not anticipate any short-term changes in environmental impact arising in this category.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

We recognize that we are entering into a new mode of concessions operation. While the Fakahatchee starts from a low base compared to many other State properties in this regard, we are mindful that we may see major changes in concession activities as a consequence of the new operational model. In order to manage activities that might impact the environment going forward we propose to act as follows.

1. On an annual basis Park Biologist can provide quantitative baseline data including plant and animal observation to detect trends which will provide a contextual review of impacts beyond sub-contractors original EPP and their operations.
2. We will generate a report as an outcome of such review and provide copies to the Park Manager as well as a summary to each sub-contractor. This summary will be anonymized as necessary.

3. As an outcome from these reviews we will expect sub-contractors to update their EPP if necessary, delivering copies of the updates to FOF within 30 days from the determination that an update is required.
4. Any updates to the comprehensive plan so arising will be provided to the Park Manager.

In closing it should be noted that the Park's Biologist considers tours in the Park valuable opportunities to report wildlife observations that can be entered in the Fakahatchee Wildlife Observation database. Data that contributes to a better understanding of overall trends in animal population within the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park.