

MYAKKA RIVER STATE PARK
PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

DATE: Thursday, March 2, 2017

TIME: 5:30 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.

PLACE: Suncoast Community Church Activity Center
8000 Hawkins Road
Sarasota, Florida

REPORTER: Deborah J. Slinn, RPR, CSR

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1 APPEARANCES:
 2 Greg Vaughn
 3 David Copps
 4 Sine Murray
 5
 6 PUBLIC COMMENTS:
 7 Dr. Doreen Dupont - page 38
 8 Joan San Lwin - page 38
 9 Juliette Jones - page 39
 10 Sarah Hollenhorst - page 41
 11 Mitch Leavitt - page 42
 12 Carol Hawkins - page 43
 13 Maynard Hiss - page 44
 14 Becky Ayech - page 46
 15 Wojciech Wysocki - page 50
 16 Jono Miller - page 52
 17 Julie Morris - page 54
 18 Gayle Reynolds - page 56
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1 then that's why we have the staff here tonight.
 2 All right. First of all, so beyond that I
 3 would like to introduce some DEP staff that are
 4 here. And so we have Sine Murray is here. She is
 5 the Bureau Chief of the Office of Park.
 6 David Copps, who is a Planner with the Office
 7 of Park Planning.
 8 And so I believe we saw -- where is Valinda
 9 at?
 10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In the back.
 11 MR. VAUGHN: There she is. Valinda Subic.
 12 She is the Chief of the State Parks for this
 13 district, District 4, I believe is this district.
 14 And so, anyway, let me ask this. Is there any
 15 elected officials that are here tonight? We would
 16 like to acknowledge you.
 17 Why are you all snickering? Okay. How about
 18 this? Are there any members of the Advisory Group
 19 that are here tonight? Okay. Very good. So thank
 20 you all very much for coming.
 21 You may be asking what is an Advisory Group.
 22 An Advisory Group is a group that is put together.
 23 It is required by the State statute. Anytime there
 24 is an update to a Unit Management Plan, DEP has to
 25 put together an Advisory Group to get input in

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1 MR. VAUGHN: If I can get everyone's
 2 attention, we're going to get started.
 3 All right. First of all, I would like to say
 4 a very hardy welcome to you. If you haven't got to
 5 know your neighbor before when you came tonight,
 6 you did get to know your neighbor because you all
 7 are packed in here pretty good, so.
 8 Like I said, what a great turnout. Thank you
 9 so much. I know that you care very much about
 10 Myakka River State Park. Welcome to tonight's
 11 public hearing in regards to Myakka River State
 12 Park, the update to the Unit Management Plan.
 13 So just wanted to, first of all, thank you.
 14 My name is Greg Vaughn. I work with Atkins
 15 North America. In addition to myself and
 16 Gene Stillman, who is somewhere in the group, might
 17 be outside, we are assisting the State Parks in
 18 regards to conducting the public hearing tonight as
 19 well as the Advisory Group Meeting that's going to
 20 be held tomorrow morning. I'll tell you more about
 21 that in just a few minutes. But anyway,
 22 that is our role is that we are just here to
 23 facilitate, to coordinate, answer questions about
 24 process in general, but if there's detailed
 25 questions about the Unit Management Plan itself,

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1 addition to the public, input from the specific
 2 Advisory Group.
 3 There are mandated members of that group. You
 4 can even add to it, you can add some other folks,
 5 but some of the folks, for example, that are
 6 required to be on there is an elected, local
 7 elected official, representative from the Solar
 8 Water Conservation District, a local conservation
 9 group.
 10 So there's a broad range of entities and
 11 stakeholders that are included in that Advisory
 12 Group to provide input to the ten-year update to
 13 the Unit Management Plan. Okay?
 14 So that meeting is actually going to be held
 15 tomorrow morning from 9:00 till noon at the State
 16 Park at the main location in their training room.
 17 They have a training room there, and so that
 18 meeting is there. That is open to the public. And
 19 so you are welcome to come to that in addition to
 20 being here at the public hearing tonight.
 21 Let me kind of give you a quick schedule and
 22 kind of a breakdown as to how the evening will
 23 transpire.
 24 So obviously we're here tonight to present the
 25 Draft Unit Management Plan for Myakka River State

1 Park and to solicit input into that plan. And so
 2 it's in a draft stage right now, it's not final.
 3 It's in a draft stage. And so we want to get input
 4 from the public and this is one of the ways in
 5 which we do that.
 6 Tonight we will have what we call an open
 7 house format for a public hearing. This is a
 8 little different than what you are used to, but it
 9 has some really good benefits.
 10 One of the things is the fact that from 5:00
 11 to 5:30 it allows you to have one-on-one time with
 12 FDEP staff, the State Park staff. Actually
 13 answer -- and ask questions, get your questions
 14 answered. Go around, kind of see from the boards,
 15 large blown up maps kind of what is included in the
 16 Unit Management Plan, what is proposed as far as
 17 improvements and so forth. It's a great
 18 opportunity to be able to converse one-on-one with
 19 the DEP staff.
 20 It also allows you to provide your comments.
 21 Tonight there's two ways in which you can provide
 22 comments.
 23 One, is through written comments. There is a
 24 blue box that this young lady is holding right
 25 here, it says comment box. So that's one of our

1 record.
 2 You can still provide comments after that.
 3 And they will be reviewed and they will be included
 4 in the overall file, but they will not be included
 5 in the public hearing record because it has a
 6 two-week window. Okay? So that's what that is.
 7 So those are the two primary forms of comment.
 8 Now, tomorrow at the Advisory Group Meeting,
 9 again, like I said, the public is invited. And
 10 that really is an opportunity for the members of
 11 the Advisory Group to talk about the plan with
 12 respect to what they like, what do they not like,
 13 what are some concerns that they have, what are
 14 some changes they would like to see. They provide
 15 that to the State Park staff to be able to be
 16 considered for inclusion into the final plan.
 17 Okay?
 18 Now, but at the end of that there is an
 19 opportunity for public comment. And so if you
 20 would like to provide your comment at that time,
 21 we'll ask you to fill out a speaker card and you
 22 can provide comments at that time which will go
 23 into the official public record.
 24 Yes?
 25 The other thing, I didn't mention this a

1 comment boxes.
 2 There's also a comment box outside. When you
 3 came inside tonight, hopefully you received three
 4 handouts. One was an agenda, which is roughly kind
 5 of a summary of what you see in the slide here.
 6 The other is a handout, (indicating) here.
 7 The last handout, or last sheet that you
 8 should have received when you came in, was a
 9 comment form.
 10 And so what it has on there is that it has
 11 some of the improvements that are proposed. There
 12 is a paragraph down at the bottom, talks about
 13 public input, provides information, where after
 14 tonight you can still provide comment.
 15 We are asking that you provide comments. You
 16 can do that either on the back of this form and
 17 turn it in tonight, you can mail it in, you can
 18 also e-mail it in. But we are asking that you
 19 provide your comments by March 16.
 20 Now, why do we put a deadline? The only
 21 reason we put a deadline of March 16 is to be able
 22 to make it to where, the public hearing record. In
 23 order to make your comments as part of the public
 24 hearing record, we had to set a deadline. So it's
 25 just a two-week deadline for the public hearing

1 second ago, we have sitting over here on the side,
 2 we have Deborah. She is our court reporter
 3 tonight. She is recording the presentation. She's
 4 also here for any comments that you may have. So
 5 if you have some oral comments, be able to take
 6 oral comments. So if you have some comments that
 7 you would like to have incorporated into the public
 8 hearing record, you can come see her afterwards.
 9 Okay?
 10 Now, I will say this. There is a possibility
 11 that we will be moving her because of the noise.
 12 Okay? When you get this many people talking, you
 13 know, without a microphone it kind of makes it
 14 difficult for her to understand what you are
 15 saying, so we may be moving her.
 16 But if you see anybody, any of our staff with
 17 one of these badges, we will be able to tell you
 18 where she is going to be. Okay?
 19 But we'll be over here right after the
 20 presentation. If you would like to come see her,
 21 we'll plan on moving her and put her in a location
 22 where she can hear better and make sure we're
 23 accurately accounting for all the comments tonight
 24 that you would like to give.
 25 All right. So we talked about the public

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1 hearing format. The Advisory Group Meeting
 2 tomorrow morning from nine until noon at the State
 3 Park in the training room.

4 And then so what I would like to do now is
 5 turn it over to Mr. David -- Sine Murray, sorry,
 6 David will do the presentation. I will turn it
 7 over to Sine right now and she will be doing the
 8 introduction for David and the presentation.

9 MS. MURRAY: Thanks, Greg.

10 And welcome, everybody. I really appreciate
 11 this, the love and support I see in the room
 12 tonight for Myakka. It's a wonderful park. It's
 13 great to see such a wonderful turnout in support of
 14 Florida Park Service and our work here in the
 15 planning process.

16 There's a couple of other staff I just want to
 17 make sure that we do introduce.

18 Mr. B.J. Gibbons, he is our Assistant Bureau Chief
 19 for District 4. We also have Park Manager
 20 extraordinaire Steve Giguere. There is Steve,
 21 local Park Manager.

22 And we have also District Biologist Chris
 23 Becker here. There is Chris.

24 We also have two additional District
 25 Biologists with us, Chris Oliver, who coordinates

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1 the Myakka Wild and Scenic River Coordinating
 2 Council, Myakka Wild and Scenic River biologist.

3 And Ed Hodge who is also one of our district
 4 biologists.

5 And we have our PSS from Myakka is here.

6 So we've got quite a -- and Terrance, our
 7 Ranger. There is Terrance.

8 We've got a lot of staff here. They are here
 9 and available to answer questions.

10 And also Mr. Parks Small, our Bureau Chief and
 11 Bureau of Natural Culture Resources. Mr. Parks is
 12 here as well.

13 So we appreciate you all taking the time to
 14 come here tonight.

15 And just right out of the gate I want to be
 16 sure to address, a few of you may have some
 17 concerns. We've been hearing obviously there was
 18 an article in the Tampa Bay Times. There's some
 19 issues, some things floating around on social
 20 media. So we really want to take this moment right
 21 out front to address some of these concerns that
 22 you might have about some plan -- of the language
 23 in the plan.

24 I want to be unequivocal about this generating
 25 revenue from any consumptive uses that are not

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1 related to a resource management activity or
 2 program of the Park is absolutely not contemplated
 3 in this management plan.

4 So very -- excuse me, sir. I would like to
 5 finish. Thank you.

6 Okay. So we are highly committed, both the
 7 Department and the Florida Park Service, to
 8 protecting those lands that are entrusted to us.
 9 And we will not conduct timber harvest or any form
 10 of vegetation removal unless it is related to a
 11 natural community restoration project or a natural
 12 community maintenance activity.

13 So I want to be very definitive about that
 14 statement. That is our policy.

15 Now, we are required in statute, the
 16 management plans are governed by two separate
 17 statutes, two different statutes, where we have
 18 certain requirements and things that we have to
 19 meet.

20 Part of that, one of those requirements is
 21 that as part of the planning process we are asked
 22 for all parks over a thousand acres in size to
 23 conduct an analysis of any potential multiple uses,
 24 or what we call them, secondary uses, because our
 25 primary purpose as a single use managed

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1 conservation land is outdoor recreation and
 2 conservation.

3 So we are still required by statute to
 4 consider possible -- to conduct an analysis of
 5 possible secondary uses, and also any revenue
 6 generated potential.

7 So as part of our planning process we look and
 8 we consider some preliminary or some possible
 9 resource management actions that we may need to
 10 consider like timber harvesting as part of our
 11 restoration or resource management program.

12 So that is why those items are identified in
 13 the plan. They are in there because we need to do
 14 them for restoration. And they are required by
 15 statute to list them in a special section of the
 16 plan.

17 So I hope, I just want to make that clear to
 18 everyone that we are -- our primary consideration
 19 is resource management and restoration, not
 20 generating revenue.

21 So if there is something in there that is
 22 related to a consumptive use, say like a timber
 23 harvest, that is about our restoration activities
 24 or resource management activities. It is not -- we
 25 would not be timbering to timber for money sake.

1 So I just want to let that be known.
 2 Now, with that, I wanted to get that out right
 3 away. And we are grateful, we'll be here all
 4 night. We'll be here to answer as many questions
 5 as you like. And we'll be here as long as we need
 6 to talk about those questions.
 7 Now, but I do -- Dave Copps has done a
 8 fantastic job on this plan. He is a professional
 9 planner. He has a great presentation for you
 10 tonight to talk about some opportunities and things
 11 that we are considering in this plan and overall
 12 resource management objectives for the next ten
 13 years.
 14 So with that I would like to introduce
 15 David Copps. Thank you.
 16 MR. COPPS: Thank you, Sine.
 17 Actually, I might be in the wrong place. I
 18 thought this was the 2017 income tax and estate
 19 planning workshop. That's what my presentation is
 20 about. And, anyway. Sorry. Just kidding. Okay.
 21 So I would like to provide a little bit of
 22 background on the Florida Park Service and our
 23 planning process.
 24 The mission of the Florida Park Service is to
 25 provide resource-based recreation while preserving,

1 system, one of the things that makes this group
 2 great.
 3 So the Management Planning Process. Just to
 4 kind of give you an overview of that. The first
 5 thing that we consider is the resources. Every ten
 6 years, I mean, we're looking at our resources and
 7 evaluating them all the time. Management is
 8 adaptive and we're always adapting and going with
 9 the flow. But everything here is we take this
 10 larger look, inventory and assessment of our
 11 resources. We want to know, I mean, are there any
 12 adjustments that we need to make in terms of our
 13 natural communities management, imperiled species
 14 management, controlling exotic invasive species and
 15 protecting our cultural resources.
 16 So once we get that piece right we can come
 17 together as a team internally, we come up with our
 18 goals and objectives for those resources, and only
 19 then do we start crafting the land use component.
 20 We always have the resources first and then
 21 see how are we going to provide possibly additional
 22 recreational opportunities, different types of
 23 recreational opportunities in the next ten years.
 24 Maybe there's some additional trails we could
 25 provide. Possibly some additional camping or

1 interpreting, and restoring natural and cultural
 2 resources. That sets the umbrella and the tone for
 3 everything we do.
 4 We've got 163 State Parks in the system,
 5 eleven trails and we have one Cross Florida
 6 Greenway. There is 800,000 acres of parkland
 7 throughout the state. The parks are open all day,
 8 every day. And so, you know, when Christmastime
 9 comes around, Thanksgiving time comes around, you
 10 know, if you wanted to drop a fruit cake off, or a
 11 turkey leg at the ranger station, I don't think
 12 there would be any objections to that. But we have
 13 very dedicated staff and is here during all the
 14 times when we're with our families and enjoying
 15 vacations.
 16 We had last fiscal year over 30 million
 17 visitors came annually. Statewide direct economic
 18 impact, the last fiscal year is pushing \$3 million.
 19 And this Florida Park Service has won National
 20 Awards, Gold Medal Awards, for three different
 21 years and it absolutely would not be done -- let me
 22 get out of the way here -- it would not be done
 23 without our volunteers.
 24 30,000 volunteers, almost a million and a half
 25 volunteer hours. That is what makes this park

1 picnicking opportunities. Those are the sorts of
 2 things that we're looking for. And we can add and
 3 provide the facilities related to those particular
 4 opportunities and activities.
 5 So then we have the land use component. Land
 6 use component and resource land management
 7 component, and we package those together as a draft
 8 plan that is reviewed internally by the Division.
 9 So it goes through the Division, we chew on it, it
 10 goes back and forth, and then we revise it and we
 11 get it like we want it internally, and then we take
 12 it out to the public, which is this meeting right
 13 here.
 14 And then tomorrow, as Greg said, we have the
 15 Advisory Group Meeting of stakeholders that get to
 16 look at it and comment on it as well.
 17 And then after we make any necessary
 18 adjustments to the plan, it's packaged and it goes
 19 for final approval to the Acquisition and
 20 Restoration Council and they sit in on behalf of
 21 the governor and cabinet. So that's the basic
 22 planning outline.
 23 I would like to meditate on this photograph
 24 for about 23 minutes, if you don't mind. I think
 25 this is Dale Berlin. This was a fantastic

1 photograph. I think it was one of the State Park
 2 photo winners, but it's a pretty stunning
 3 photograph there and it's soothing.
 4 Okay. The Park is located in Sarasota and
 5 Manatee Counties. The Park was initially required
 6 in 1936, about a four- or 500-acre parcel. Now,
 7 the State owned, you know, some of this land which
 8 would become the Park later, but the initial Park
 9 started in 1936 and then over the years it's grown
 10 to be over 37,000 acres.
 11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 1934.
 12 MR. COPPS: Thank you very much.
 13 So we have -- last year we had approximately
 14 367,000 visitors came to the Park. And, you know,
 15 we're looking at over \$33 million in direct
 16 economic impact and the equivalent of 536 jobs that
 17 were created because of that.
 18 So in terms of the recreational opportunities,
 19 Myakka is one of the greatest of the State Parks in
 20 terms of the full spectrum of recreational
 21 opportunities that it provides.
 22 You know, in terms of a wildlife viewing park
 23 it is, you know, exceptional from that standpoint.
 24 We have a variety of trail experiences. And then,
 25 of course, the camping, paddling, boating, fishing

1 and those sorts of things. But it is that broad
 2 spectrum and wonderful resources for our visitors.
 3 The natural communities. We've got about
 4 twelve natural communities. And, of course, that
 5 dry prairie is the, you know, sort of our main
 6 focus in terms of management. There is about
 7 15,000 acres of dry prairie. It is an imperiled
 8 habitat and because of that there are imperiled
 9 species which depend on that dry prairie.
 10 So we are, you know, major focus is managing
 11 that dry prairie in such a way it's going to
 12 become, you know, a premier habitat.
 13 We do have other uplands, basic flatwoods,
 14 scrubby flatwoods. And the prairie hammock is
 15 interspersed throughout those uplands as this
 16 wonderful mosaic of all these different wetland
 17 types.
 18 And, of course, we have the blackwater stream,
 19 which is the Myakka River, and its associated
 20 habitats, the floodplain marsh and the river
 21 floodplain lake. And the Myakka River is State
 22 designated as wild and scenic, at least in Sarasota
 23 County. And it is -- forgot what I was going to
 24 say. It is wild and scenic. It flows about twelve
 25 miles through the Park.

1 So the Park with those natural communities, we
 2 provide habitat for a variety of plants and
 3 animals. Associated with the dry prairie we've got
 4 pine lily, grass pink orchid, burrowing owls, and
 5 the crested caracara and gopher tortoise.
 6 We do have some scrubby flatwoods which could,
 7 I don't think they're supporting scrub-jays right
 8 now, but we like to manage them in a way that they
 9 can if the scrub-jays do come down, we would like
 10 to have that habitat to help them stay. And, of
 11 course, the Florida manatee in the Myakka River.
 12 There are some exotic invasives in the
 13 property, in the Park. And all parks, you know, we
 14 work to get a handle on these and keep them under
 15 control. We do have a handle on them, but it's a
 16 challenge here.
 17 If you let up for a year or two, man, these
 18 suckers will sock right back in here. So the Park
 19 staff does a good job of getting a handle and
 20 keeping them suppressed.
 21 Cogon grass, of course, is always a bad one.
 22 Old World climbing fern, West Indian marsh grass
 23 along the river there and then ceasarweed, are some
 24 of the more common ones.
 25 As far as the Park resources, we have 36

1 recorded cultural resources and those span
 2 prehistoric -- from prehistoric times up to the
 3 middle part of the last century. They are remnants
 4 of the early 20th Century cattle ranching. I'm
 5 forgetting her name, who could yell out her name?
 6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Bertha Honore Palmer.
 7 MR. COPPS: There you go.
 8 But she had about 90,000 thousand acres of
 9 ranch land. And I think in the early part of the
 10 1900's she was kind of one of the first to take
 11 this free range cattle situation down here. And
 12 she did some improvements in terms of fencing and
 13 cross-fencing and introducing some improved brands.
 14 So that early cattle ranching history is part
 15 of the Park. There are remnants of that, her sweet
 16 pastures, sweet meadow pastures ranch.
 17 And then, of course, we have the Civilian
 18 Conservation Core Development which is a very
 19 important part of the cultural resources of this
 20 Park.
 21 And so Myakka River State is one of the nine
 22 New Deal parks in the state of Florida. And it is
 23 the Civilian Conservation Corp. that caused that
 24 New Deal Program that helped get folks back to
 25 work, trained them to get them back to work during

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1 the Great Depression. And, of course, some of
 2 their structures are still here today in terms of
 3 pavilions and buildings and such. That is a very
 4 important part of the history of the Park.
 5 So the objectives that we have for the next
 6 ten years are very similar to all of our parks. We
 7 like to always look at the water quality and
 8 quantity, and restore the natural hydrology when
 9 and where we can.
 10 Restore and maintain natural communities in
 11 the Park. And, like I said, that dry prairie is
 12 the main focus, but we do have some work to do, the
 13 mesic flatwoods, scrubby flatwood and river
 14 floodplain lake.
 15 And we're always surveying imperiled plants
 16 and animals and updating that list, and that's sort
 17 of a continuous and ongoing activity.
 18 And some of the animals, and I'm specifically
 19 going to identify at the moment in this next
 20 planning period include the burrowing owl,
 21 caracara, gopher tortoise, and the scrub-jay which
 22 may show up in the scrubby flatwood areas. There's
 23 various butterflies. And, of course, the cardinal
 24 airplant and the giant airplant in the hammock
 25 areas.

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1 hiking, picnicking, paddling, camping and that sort
 2 of thing.
 3 So I've got -- excuse me. I've got two maps.
 4 And one is a broad overview, a 30,000-foot look
 5 down at the Park, this western side. And we'll
 6 talk about that.
 7 And then I've got two insets. This is inset
 8 one and inset two. This is the facilities that are
 9 proposed down here, the entrance and the southern
 10 end of the Park. And these are the, will be the
 11 facilities I'll talk about that are related to the
 12 Upper Myakka Lake Day Use Area.
 13 Looking at this big broad view, the white line
 14 going through here is about seven miles of Park
 15 drive. That needs some help in certain places. We
 16 need to come up with sort of an assessment and a
 17 study of that road and figure out where do we need
 18 to repave, where should culverts be replaced, that
 19 sort of thing. The Park drive needs help.
 20 But then also every parking area associated
 21 with any of the day use areas, there's some
 22 opportunity, I think, that we have to look at those
 23 and try to improve the flow and the circulation of
 24 those areas and maybe achieve some additional
 25 parking within that same footprint.

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1 Of course, always keep a handle in treating
 2 invasive exotic plant species. That will be
 3 ongoing.
 4 And then implementing control measures on
 5 exotic animal species such as feral hogs.
 6 And as far as cultural resources, we're always
 7 documenting all the recorded sights we have and
 8 looking for any new sights that we might come
 9 across and always documenting those, submitting
 10 files to the master site file. Doing research when
 11 and where that's necessary. And always working to
 12 protect and preserve and maintain the cultural
 13 resources.
 14 So, in terms of, you know, that's sort of the
 15 resource management component, then we come to the
 16 conceptual land use plan.
 17 I work in the office of Park Planning in
 18 Tallahassee with Sine and other planners. And we
 19 work with a team of people and the Florida Park
 20 Service to come up with plans that, you know,
 21 balance this public access with protection of
 22 resources.
 23 And it's always looking at how we can provide
 24 enjoyment such as nature study and wildlife viewing
 25 while, you know, providing these activities like

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1 You know, if you design things right we may be
 2 able to achieve some additional parking. We do
 3 have this issue this time of year with real heavy
 4 congestion in the Park and anything that we can do
 5 to kind of help address some of the problems
 6 associated with that we would like to work on. So
 7 that's the Park drive.
 8 And then way up here at the north entrance
 9 we've got the Clay Gully picnic area. And what is
 10 proposed for that area is a large picnic pavilion
 11 and a restroom there. And really a lot of the
 12 other picnic areas, they need to be replaced.
 13 The playground needs to be upgraded there.
 14 And we were looking at a possible fishing platform
 15 on Clay Gully Creek. And, of course, like I said,
 16 the parking improvements at that area and sort of
 17 the traffic flow needs to be addressed as well as
 18 the others.
 19 So I'm going to move to this inset. This is
 20 down at the south entrance. The first thing I want
 21 to start with is this area is the Old STOP Camp.
 22 And it's a Short-Term Offenders Program, it was ran
 23 by the Department of Juvenile Justice. It was a
 24 camp that they operated. It's no longer there.
 25 There are the buildings there and the facilities.

1 And the idea is to possibly look at putting
 2 in, you know, something like an ecotourism center
 3 where we could have conferences, an auditorium,
 4 maybe there could be some lodging and dining
 5 opportunities there.

6 But we would like to provide to individuals,
 7 organizations, tour groups, we would like to
 8 provide some activities that are, you know, related
 9 to the ecosystems, these wonderful ecosystems, the
 10 wildlife and the history of this particular region.
 11 A very rich, natural and cultural history. And the
 12 idea at this point would be that it would be a
 13 concession operated facility.

14 And then -- so that's right here. There is a
 15 primitive group camp area in this zone. And that's
 16 basically adding another picnic pavilion and
 17 replacing the restroom there.

18 As we move across to the southern entrance, we
 19 have talked about improving that entrance traffic
 20 flow and there's a lot of backing up that goes on
 21 there. And the busy highway is not very faraway.

22 So you really try not to have people backing
 23 up into the major highway. There is a safety issue
 24 there. So maybe an additional lane and a toll
 25 booth on the other side to help people get in more

1 right here.

2 So a lot of improvements in terms of bat
 3 houses and restrooms. They have kind of outgrown
 4 their -- they kind of aged out on us here.

5 In terms of the Myakka, the bridge area,
 6 that's a spot where people are fishing off the
 7 bridge, they are walking, traffic is flowing. It's
 8 a congested area. It's a safety issue. We would
 9 like to provide some pedestrian walkways on each
 10 side of that bridge and possibly some fishing
 11 platforms off of that so that people can get away
 12 from the traffic as on these high impact days.

13 And then in terms of the canopy walkway area,
 14 once again, that's looking at that parking and
 15 trying to improve the flow and the capacity of
 16 parking in that situation by achieving some
 17 efficiency with good design.

18 So the Upper Myakka Lake area, well, we'll
 19 start with the Big Flats Campground. That's really
 20 kind of improving the camping pads, replacing the
 21 bat house. And, you know, there is that entrance
 22 road, the driveway, we would like to pave that.
 23 And then add some good plantings between the
 24 campsites for more privacy.

25 And at the Upper Myakka Day Use Area, the

1 quickly, but also the thought is in this zone we
 2 would like to propose something like a remote
 3 parking area.

4 It would be an additional area of parking, but
 5 to have some sort of a tram system that would
 6 regularly run from this area all the way up then to
 7 the Myakka Day Use Area.

8 And the Visitor Center that is right here, you
 9 know, in general people come into the Park and they
 10 just kind of keep moving through and there's not as
 11 much as visitation here as we think there could be.
 12 So in the next slide I'll talk about that, a
 13 possible relocation of the Visitor Center up to the
 14 Myakka Day Use Area. And that's the next slide.

15 So as far as the picnic areas, the south
 16 picnic area, and the log pavilion picnic area,
 17 improvements there for the south area would be just
 18 upgrading the playground and replacing the
 19 restroom. And then as we've already talked about,
 20 the parking and traffic flow improvements there at
 21 the log pavilion.

22 The Old Prairie Campground is right here.
 23 That road, that access road, we would like to
 24 stabilize it, actually pave that, provide an
 25 accessible camping spot and replace the bat house

1 Visitor Center, we would like to locate, relocate
 2 it, up here. And, you know, we think there is real
 3 opportunity for good design here in terms of the
 4 driveway and the parking. Right now there's safety
 5 issues with people walking across the driveway. We
 6 think that we can site design that to get a much
 7 better and safer flow by achieving efficiency,
 8 maybe capture some additional parking space.
 9 Especially if the old concession building is taken
 10 away, that could become some additional parking as
 11 well.

12 So with that, that is the conceptual Land Use
 13 Park. I'm going to turn it over to Greg and he's
 14 going to lead you through the rest of the process
 15 here.

16 MR. VAUGHN: So, before we go any further, if
 17 we can have staff back in that corner, we took down
 18 those boards, to allow people to be able to see the
 19 slides since this is the last slide, I would like
 20 to have staff go ahead and put those boards back up
 21 so their stations can be ready as soon as we're
 22 done with the presentation here and go back to open
 23 house format.

24 I would like to again thank you for coming
 25 tonight. And remind you of the ways in which you

1 can comment, public comment is very important.
 2 Everything that you provide tonight in written form
 3 becomes part of the public hearing record.
 4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just a clarification.
 5 MR. VAUGHN: Yes.
 6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Comment deadline is
 7 March 17th on this slide. But on the paper you
 8 gave us it's March 16th. So which is it, 17 or --
 9 MR. VAUGHN: I understand that is a typo. It
 10 should be the 16th, but we'll keep it open through
 11 the 17th because that's what's there. Kind of like
 12 the price at Walmart. If you say that's the price,
 13 that's where I want the price, then it really is
 14 the price, so.
 15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you so
 16 much for that public clarification.
 17 MR. VAUGHN: So, just to clarify. It is
 18 official, the public record, we will be accepting
 19 comments, public comments through the 17th. Okay?
 20 Again, tonight, there's two ways to be able to
 21 provide your comments that will become part of the
 22 public hearing record. One, written comments, the
 23 blue box that is over here. Also, there's the
 24 comment box outside with comment forms to provide
 25 comments. You do not even have to use -- you can

1 put comments that you prepared, you can put those
 2 in the comment box. Those will become part of the
 3 public hearing record.
 4 Also, like I said, you can see Ms. Deborah
 5 for -- she will take your verbal comments and
 6 record them and those will become part of tonight's
 7 public hearing record, part of the transcript of
 8 that will be part of the Unit Management process.
 9 Okay?
 10 The other thing I wanted to say is beyond,
 11 again, thank you so much for showing up, it's great
 12 to see that people care, it's great to see that
 13 people are interested, but I would like to
 14 apologize, I know it's tight in here. But I
 15 appreciate your patience and I appreciate -- our
 16 thought process was to try to have a location that
 17 was near the State Park.
 18 The State Park, we didn't feel like we have a
 19 facility big enough to where we could have the
 20 meeting there. So we tried to have a place that
 21 was nearby as opposed to faraway from the State
 22 Park. So that was the reason why we had it here
 23 tonight. I hope you understand. I really
 24 appreciate everybody being here for this evening.
 25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How do we expect to get

1 answers to the comments and the questions that we
 2 have about why language has been removed from the
 3 plan? When was that submitted that we don't like
 4 about the plan?
 5 MR. VAUGHN: This is --
 6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We turn all this stuff
 7 into you, when is the next opportunity to get
 8 answers to those concerns and questions?
 9 MR. VAUGHN: That's a very good question.
 10 Number one is the public hearing, Sine said
 11 earlier, we'll be here as long as it takes tonight.
 12 I know it was advertised from five to seven, but
 13 we'll be here to answer any questions that you may
 14 have.
 15 So individually you can come up, you can ask
 16 questions to Florida Park Service staff. You can
 17 ask questions to Sine to David. We're here to be
 18 able to answer those questions. Okay?
 19 The other thing is that I want to reiterate is
 20 that tomorrow at the Advisory Group Meeting there
 21 is an opportunity for public comment there as well.
 22 You fill out a speaker card and be able to provide
 23 your comments at the time that is allocated.
 24 Excuse me, ma'am?
 25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you have a time

1 limitation?
 2 MR. VAUGHN: It is --
 3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You fill out a card, do
 4 you get three minutes? A minute? A minute and a
 5 half?
 6 MR. VAUGHN: While there is -- let me just
 7 clarify for a second. While there is public
 8 comment for tomorrow, tomorrow's meeting, the
 9 primary purpose is for the meeting for the Advisory
 10 Group, but there is an opportunity for the public
 11 to speak.
 12 Also, I wanted to clarify the fact that you
 13 can provide comments after tonight's meeting. You
 14 can mail them in on the comment form. There is an
 15 e-mail that you can submit your e-mail comments on
 16 there. Again, all of that as long as it's received
 17 by the 17th becomes part of the public hearing
 18 record. So there's plenty of opportunity to be
 19 able to do that.
 20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When do we get a
 21 response? Is there a second glass that will come
 22 out that we can review and based on the comments?
 23 MS. MURRAY: I will answer that question, then
 24 we need to get back to the open house comments.
 25 That's a very valid question, how do you know --

1 how are you going to respond to the comments.
 2 So we will make available on our website, the
 3 Park website. We will post all of the public
 4 comments that we receive. We will also post our
 5 Advisory Group, staff reports. You guys can review
 6 the comments that we receive from all of our
 7 stakeholders on the Advisory Group.
 8 We will also subsequently post the Revised
 9 Management Plan that will be the next phase as was
 10 indicated to you on the process board. The next
 11 phase of this process is the plan will go to the
 12 Acquisition and Restoration Council. That is the
 13 appointed body that approves all land management
 14 plans for all State conservation lands in Florida
 15 on behalf of the governor and cabinet.
 16 We anticipate that in October so that Draft
 17 Management Plan will be available. You can also
 18 reach out to the Office of Park Planning at
 19 anytime. Anything we work on is public record. We
 20 are happy to provide you the latest draft of the
 21 Plan when you request it. There is no problem with
 22 that.
 23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How long is the comment
 24 period?
 25 MS. MURRAY: The comment period, so we want

1 on the Park alert, on the Park's page. We also put
 2 up flyers in the surrounding community.
 3 And considering the turnout tonight, it feels
 4 like most people got the word about the meeting.
 5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's not a public
 6 meeting unless the public is able to speak openly
 7 at this meeting. There are people here that have
 8 questions that I'm sure we would all really enjoy
 9 hearing you answer.
 10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.
 11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And it's a misnomer to
 12 call this a public hearing unless you allow open
 13 questions made to staff in front of everybody where
 14 everyone can hear them.
 15 MR. VAUGHN: Okay.
 16 (Applause)
 17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We're here to hear what
 18 you have to say, but you don't want to hear what
 19 anybody else has to say and most people have to get
 20 up and go to work in the morning. They can't be
 21 there to give their comments.
 22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I actually heard about
 23 this from an outfit in Orlando on that Facebook
 24 page, Parks in Peril. And it lasted about five
 25 minutes, Facebook pages with people who live right

1 to --
 2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Time wise.
 3 MS. MURRAY: It's approximately two weeks --
 4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- get up and speak
 5 tomorrow at the Advisory Committee.
 6 MS. MURRAY: It will be depending on the
 7 number of folks that we have. Typically, as Greg
 8 mentioned, the focus of tomorrow's meeting is
 9 primarily for us to hear from the Advisory Group
 10 Members.
 11 Tonight's meeting is about hearing from the
 12 public. There is an opportunity for the public to
 13 speak tomorrow and address Advisory Group members.
 14 But the purpose really is for the Advisory Group
 15 Meeting, you are welcome to observe.
 16 What we would like to do here is tonight is to
 17 hear your public comments. So we're here to answer
 18 questions and be available at all of our boards.
 19 Thank you.
 20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How did you notify the
 21 public of the meeting?
 22 MS. MURRAY: The meeting was noticed on DEP
 23 calendar and was presented on NPR. It was posted
 24 at the Park. We tweeted out on social media, on
 25 our Facebook page. We have a notice that went out

1 here in Myakka who didn't even know this was going
 2 on.
 3 MR. VAUGHN: It was advertised in accordance
 4 with State Statute. There was an advertisement
 5 placed in the Herald Tribune.
 6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Where?
 7 MR. VAUGHN: I can give you the date. I can
 8 show you the --
 9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Classified?
 10 MR. VAUGHN: I've got that information. You
 11 come see me. Okay?
 12 We're going to now dismiss and go back to the
 13 public hearing comment. If you have questions,
 14 please come see us. That's why we're here. Again,
 15 we're here as long as it takes tonight to make sure
 16 the comments are recorded and included in the
 17 public hearing record.
 18 Again, thank you very much for being here
 19 tonight.
 20 (END OF OPEN HOUSE PUBLIC FORUM AT 6:15 P.M.)
 21 ////
 22 ////
 23 ////
 24 (PUBLIC COMMENTS TAKEN OUTDOORS)
 25 MS. DUPONT: I'm Dr. Doreen Dupont from 34228,

1 my ZIP code.
 2 I want to address the issue of possibly
 3 selling off some of the Park to turn it into cattle
 4 grazing land. Don't do that. We don't need it.
 5 We need to get off of eating meat. It's killing
 6 us. It's contributing more to climate change than
 7 any cars that we have.
 8 We need our parks. The parks cool us and they
 9 provide oxygen for us. And they give a sense of
 10 mental well-being to people who visit the parks.
 11 It's the best thing that people can do. I'm a
 12 physician, so I say that with some authority.
 13 I don't want you to pave over any of the
 14 drives. No more concrete. You don't need anymore
 15 concrete out there. I want you to keep it natural
 16 because that's what's best for us.
 17 THE REPORTER: Thank you.
 18 MS. SAN LWIN: I'm just a private citizen, so
 19 I am not any kind of expert on park management, I
 20 am an expert on what I enjoy. And I enjoy nature.
 21 And to propose making any changes to the natural
 22 environment is deplorable.
 23 The State Parks must be preserved in their
 24 natural settings, period. State Parks do not need
 25 to pay for themselves, period.

1 Any money making activity is not needed nor
 2 desired. That's enough.
 3 MS. JONES: First of all, I strongly object to
 4 the use of the State Parks, consumptive use of the
 5 State Parks. For over 80 years since they were
 6 founded by a group of women's clubs, didn't even
 7 have the right to vote, who had the foresight to
 8 begin to assemble these Parks.
 9 I've been told Governor Scott started fooling
 10 around and pulling out staff which don't make a lot
 11 of money, they staff forestry staff. They do it
 12 for the love of the Parks and the love of service.
 13 And he is pulling them out and trying to privatize
 14 this.
 15 And people are getting hip to it. And, you
 16 know, ever heard of give them an inch, they'll take
 17 a mile? Nobody is fooled about this consumptive
 18 use thing who knows about it.
 19 It's bad for the Park. It will do
 20 absolutely -- it will open the door for it. It's
 21 never been part of what these Parks, has been done
 22 in the Park, any of these Parks.
 23 And the land should be left pristine and
 24 natural and maintained by forest rangers who have a
 25 history of doing it so that the memory, these large

1 pieces of land and nature has human custody,
 2 instead of some privateers coming in there who are
 3 friends of Scott's.
 4 Now, nobody is fooled about where this is
 5 coming from. Scott appoints the people in charge
 6 of the DEP. And my suggestion is that if he wants
 7 to run for the Senate, which he most certainly
 8 does, in 2018, he better pull the plug on that
 9 because so many people are angry and are going to
 10 take action. This is a bad idea.
 11 You're ruining, you're ruining, opening the
 12 door to ruining Old Florida and these award winning
 13 Parks that have such great tradition and natural
 14 history and the animals and the plants that
 15 comprise the wilderness.
 16 Oh, one more thing. One more thing. It's
 17 also becoming public knowledge that the Forest
 18 Service is gagged, that the Department of Parks and
 19 Recreations people have been gagged. They are not
 20 allowed to speak in opposition to what Scott is
 21 doing. And, you know, this lack of transparency is
 22 Un-American.
 23 The word on this is getting out too. And
 24 nobody knows the forest better than the people who
 25 work there. But, you know, when you have private

1 interest in your back pocket, gagging people, the
 2 word gets out irrespective. And it's wrong, wrong,
 3 wrong. And it's part of the regime, the nature of
 4 the regime, that is behind this whole thing.
 5 Thank you.
 6 THE REPORTER: You're welcome.
 7 MS. HOLLENHORST: Okay. I believe that the
 8 DEP and the Department of Resources here should
 9 have a communication going so that the Park itself
 10 is protected because the DEP, Bureau of Mine
 11 Reclamation is permitting --
 12 THE REPORTER: Excuse me. Would you mind
 13 stepping back and talking over there, please?
 14 MS. HOLLENHORST: -- is permitting mining to
 15 be at the headwaters of the Myakka River. And it's
 16 encroaching to the east of the Park. That's all
 17 going to affect the hydrology of this Park. And if
 18 it's allowed to happen, permits are allowed to be
 19 given, then the Park itself is not being protected.
 20 And the Park, I believe, I'm an environmental
 21 biologist, I have a master's in it. I believe
 22 that's going to lead to the total decline of this
 23 Park in the future.
 24 And so there should be an agency that connects
 25 both agencies so that they work together in

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1 protecting this Park because it is not being
 2 protected by the State.
 3 And I'm against anything that affects the
 4 hydrology of the Park, putting in roads without,
 5 you know, paving roads, that might interfere that
 6 needs to be, you know, engineered properly so it
 7 doesn't affect the hydrology.
 8 I'm against timber harvesting. I'm against
 9 hunting, grazing and anything -- let's see. Oh,
 10 fuel, fuel collecting, fuel harvesting. Because I
 11 think this Park is self-sustaining as far as
 12 economically and we don't need to be taking from
 13 the Park.
 14 That's pretty much what I can think of.
 15 Thank you.
 16 THE REPORTER: You're welcome.
 17 MR. LEAVITT: I am disappointed and
 18 discouraged by the format of the meeting because
 19 questions from the public were not accepted and
 20 then answered to the entire audience, period.
 21 Number two. I would like to see a cost
 22 benefit analysis of developing the wilderness area
 23 south of Highway 72, period.
 24 I suspect this will cost more money than it
 25 generates or it will sorely degrade the site,

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1 period.
 2 I would rather abandon that idea and use
 3 available funds to preserve and maintain and
 4 upgrade existing amenities, period.
 5 Number three. Regarding page seven of the
 6 Unit Management Plan, which states that timber
 7 harvesting, fuel and stump harvesting, and palm
 8 harvesting are consistent with the Park's primary
 9 purpose of recreation and conservation. We all
 10 want to see a basis of that analysis, period. I'm
 11 skeptical about collateral damage. That's it.
 12 Thank you.
 13 THE REPORTER: You're welcome.
 14 MS. HAWKINS: My main concern is the hunting.
 15 We border the Park for two miles on the west side.
 16 Even the Sheriff's Department, Fish and Game, the
 17 Park did not control poachers and my concern is how
 18 are they going to control hunters. Because I
 19 promise you if a hunter sees a ten-point buck
 20 across our fence line, he will shoot it and pull it
 21 back across. Maybe not all of them, but I'm waging
 22 to say 70 percent get buck fever. And that's my
 23 main concern is the hunting. I don't think they
 24 will be able to control it.
 25 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

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1 MS. HAWKINS: You're welcome.
 2 MR. HISS: Okay. My main comments are this,
 3 that there is no specificity in the plan about what
 4 the management type activities are. So, for
 5 example, if you're going to do restoration, you
 6 don't even designate the restoration areas.
 7 Now, if it's a management plan, restoration
 8 seems like it would be a critical part of it, but
 9 we don't know what you're going to restore and we
 10 don't know how you're going to restore it.
 11 So in a normal review process you have land
 12 development and regulations and a comp. plan, you
 13 have like a comprehensive plan, like this is an
 14 overview plan, and then you have Land Development
 15 Regulations, and then you have a permit review
 16 process.
 17 So for major activities like putting in the
 18 park center, and doing these detailed plans of
 19 restoration which could mean logging of tons of
 20 trees in there, there is no specificity and there
 21 is no public input on the review process. There is
 22 no peer review process.
 23 So there's not really a clear idea of what
 24 you're going to do. So if somebody wanted to log
 25 for -- to cut out, you know, the forest and turn it

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1 into prairie, they could do that under this
 2 situation. And there would be no review of their
 3 activity. There might be some in Tallahassee, but
 4 no public.
 5 So, in a sense we are commenting on the
 6 esoteric thing. We are not commenting on a plan,
 7 we're commenting on a plan to plan and then when
 8 the plan comes into effect, we have no way in which
 9 to make our comments where they would be the most
 10 valuable.
 11 So there's not even, as I said, specificity on
 12 where the restoration process would be in which
 13 there would be in a normal land use plan if the
 14 resources, the main -- the forest resource or the
 15 prairie resource are the main resource, then the
 16 specificity of what you're going to do would be
 17 important to know and then I could comment on how
 18 you're going to do it in that specific area.
 19 Because general comments on general things are
 20 not that helpful to anybody. So that's the main
 21 focus of my concern.
 22 The other thing is that usually there is a
 23 scoping process. So, for example, there was a lot
 24 of interest in the canopy walk. And so the
 25 community was involved heavily in the canopy walk,

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1 not only were they heavily involved in the planning
 2 of it, but into the paying for it. And making sure
 3 that it happened. And it became a huge asset for
 4 the Park and lot of people come for it.

5 Well, there are certain minimal impact things
 6 like viewing things that could have a huge amount
 7 of value that people could make demands for those
 8 specific things, but there was no scoping process
 9 of what people feel like they need. And so they
 10 didn't get involved in the ground floor on it, and
 11 then they would have the review of those
 12 specificity. So that was the other comment.

13 This woman is going to -- give you some
 14 exercise.

15 MS. AYECH: The first thing I want to have go
 16 on the record is that I do not consider this to be
 17 a public meeting. I've been going to public
 18 meetings, I don't want to say how long, but I will
 19 tell you I've been going to public meetings for
 20 over 40 years. And I've never had a meeting
 21 classified as public where the public is not
 22 allowed to ask questions and get answers as a
 23 group. Rather, it's a divide-and-conquer technique
 24 that seems to be what agencies want to use today.

25 The second comment is that the Advisory

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1 Committee is made up of folks that I have not a
 2 clue about except for Jono Miller.

3 The Miakka, spelled M-i-a-k-k-a, Community
 4 Club has been a neighbor of the State Park since
 5 1945. We are just north of the Park, we are
 6 property owners. And we were not asked to
 7 participate in the Advisory Council.

8 I have served on Advisory Council and they
 9 take public input, but they have a large role in
 10 determining what is going to go in a plan.

11 When I spoke to the lady here for DEP and
 12 asked if the Community Club could not be put on the
 13 Advisory Council, she said, no, but if I went to
 14 the meeting tomorrow that I would have ample
 15 opportunity to talk to the Advisory Committee.

16 I pointed out that they are the leaders and I
 17 am just an audience person and she told me I was
 18 misinformed.

19 Tonight when I asked how much time I would be
 20 allowed to speak at the meeting tomorrow morning,
 21 the Advisory Meeting, they would not give me a
 22 time. Not five minutes, or ten minutes or three
 23 hours. They did not respond to my questions.

24 Okay.

25 They need to be spending money on fixing what

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1 is already there. The roads are in deplorable
 2 shape. You don't need a consultant to go out and
 3 see the potholes in the road.

4 They need to spend money to replace the two
 5 staff people that are not there. They need more
 6 people to work in the Park because of the numbers
 7 of people that are there.

8 This idea that we're going to make traffic
 9 flow faster, this is a park. People walk in the
 10 park. This is not I-75. We are not crossing an
 11 interstate. We are walking in a park. And if
 12 people cannot adhere to the speed limit, they
 13 should get a ticket.

14 But to say that we need to make traffic work
 15 better so that we can have a better flow, that has
 16 nothing to do with the value of being in the Park,
 17 experiencing the Park.

18 They may have said in one of their documents
 19 that a park is supposed to be self-sufficient and
 20 that this park only generates 77 percent of the
 21 money that it needs. But they didn't tell us how
 22 much the new interpretive center would cost, nor
 23 did they tell us how much it would cost to move the
 24 Park entrance, nor did they tell us how much it was
 25 going to cost to reconfigure the area where the

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1 restaurant is, all of the things that they plan on
 2 expanding they put no dollar figures to. But the
 3 money doesn't come from heaven and so they're
 4 taking it up from one place to put it in another
 5 place.

6 The expansion of Clay Gully. I visit that
 7 almost on a daily basis. It does not need an
 8 expansion. They're acting like we're building
 9 Disney World in the middle of a park. And we are
 10 not.

11 The experience, the reason people come to
 12 Myakka River State Park, is because of the
 13 quietness, the naturalness of it. They don't come
 14 to see logging. They don't come to see roundabout
 15 traffic control.

16 The parking that they want to improve in the
 17 one campground they talked about by putting in a
 18 hard road, that is an impervious surface that
 19 contributes to runoff. The whole Park is low.
 20 That is a low area. So now you're putting in a
 21 road system that will generate more runoff.

22 With the new facilities that they want to put
 23 in, they didn't talk about what the traffic is
 24 going to be on the roads that go to the Park.

25 I live just north of the north entrance of the

1 Park. On weekends the traffic from the Park is
 2 hellatious. With all the new things that they are
 3 proposing, there will be more traffic because
 4 people go out the north entrance to sightsee.
 5 They didn't look at the level of service of
 6 the road. They didn't look to see if the level of
 7 service would be degrading. They didn't come and
 8 talk to the Miakka Community Club or the residents
 9 of Old Myakka who will suffer the consequences of
 10 this additional traffic. They didn't take into
 11 consideration the noise that is going to be
 12 generated. We live in the country. We can hear
 13 for miles away.
 14 And so that wasn't part of their discussion.
 15 I don't even know why they even had us here this
 16 evening. Because it's a requirement by law that
 17 they have a public hearing and this is what they
 18 determined a public hearing to be. It's a sad day
 19 in Florida. And it's a sad day for Myakka River
 20 State Park.
 21 Thank you.
 22 MR. WYSOCKI: All right. I'm pretty much, I
 23 would like to add to what this lady said before.
 24 I'm strongly opposing any cutting, any cutting the
 25 trees for profit, selling any trees, even those

1 that are going to be burned out because this is
 2 always a possibility or a temptation of going over
 3 the board with cutting more than is really needed
 4 because of the temptation of income.
 5 So I strongly opposing that. And I don't
 6 think that there's such a huge possible income that
 7 would really save the Park from any difficulties
 8 that would matter.
 9 I also would like to say that I'm opposing any
 10 building of new facilities because it will make the
 11 Park more commercial than recreational.
 12 We don't need new roads. We might need some
 13 little walking paths, but not roads for cars and
 14 heavy equipment. So we don't need that.
 15 We need to stay with the Park in a most
 16 natural way possible so the less we do the better
 17 it is for the Park and for integrity of the Park.
 18 And pretty much it. Adding new areas to the
 19 Park, I'm very for it, very much for it. Because
 20 that will expand the area, the preservation, but
 21 expanding buildings and cutting trees, again, I'm
 22 very much -- and cutting trees for profit, I'm very
 23 much against that. That's it.
 24 THE REPORTER: Thank you.
 25 MR. MILLER: So I will have an opportunity

1 tomorrow morning to comment on the contents of the
 2 plan. Tonight I just want to comment on the public
 3 process related to the Draft Unit Management Plan.
 4 This Unit Management Plan was supposed to be
 5 completed in 2014, three years ago. At any point
 6 from then until the present, staff could have come
 7 down and met with the public to find out what the
 8 local public's concerns were about Myakka River
 9 State Park, their visions for the future, what they
 10 thought was working well and not working well. And
 11 there was no opportunity.
 12 So in reality the public should have been
 13 involved from the beginning of the planning
 14 process, even from the scoping of what should have
 15 been included in the plan. There is a lot of
 16 important information that would guide the future
 17 of the Park that's simply not included in this
 18 document.
 19 So it took three years for the staff to
 20 develop the draft plan. During that time we were,
 21 the Myakka River Management Coordinating Council,
 22 was encouraged to not discuss the plan because no
 23 draft was available.
 24 We received the draft 14 days and one day, two
 25 weeks and one day, prior to the public meeting

1 which meant we had a very limited time to go
 2 analyze the 249-page document and communicate with
 3 the public.
 4 I communicated with Gary Clark that I thought
 5 this format of the meeting was going to be
 6 problematic; that it would not allow people the
 7 opportunity to speak; that people want to be heard.
 8 I suggested an alternative hybrid system where
 9 we would take the first hour of the meeting to
 10 allow for the open house format, and then we would
 11 switch to a system where, the members of the
 12 Advisory Group will be meeting Friday morning,
 13 would sit essentially on the dias, even though
 14 there's no dias, and the public would address their
 15 neighbors and the people that live in the community
 16 that are interested in the Park.
 17 They would not be aggressive, they would not
 18 be contentious, because they understood that the
 19 people receiving the testimony had not written the
 20 plan and there was no reason to be hostile towards
 21 them.
 22 What that would enable is the people who serve
 23 on the Advisory Group would be able to hear from
 24 the general public and contrast their insights from
 25 reading the plan and, from their constituent group,

1 would be tempered by the comments of the general
 2 public so that when they met the follow morning
 3 they would have a broader understanding of the
 4 concerns related to the Unit Management Plan.
 5 So there were, like, different counts, 199
 6 people here, over 200 people. The building clearly
 7 wasn't designed to accommodate this size of a
 8 crowd. And I think for a lot of people the meeting
 9 simply didn't work. And it could have been much
 10 better. And unfortunately it wasn't. This is not
 11 helping the Park planning process.
 12 Thank you.
 13 THE REPORTER: You're welcome.
 14 MS. MORRIS: So I don't think the Welcome
 15 Center should be relocated to the Upper Lake Area.
 16 When the Park is in flood stage, when the
 17 river is in flood stage, they close the Park road
 18 beyond the bridge in the Park. And during that
 19 period the Welcome Center would be inaccessible to
 20 any visitors. If you would keep the Welcome Center
 21 at the south entrance, at least there would be
 22 something for people to do at the Park when a large
 23 portion of the Park drive is closed.
 24 And it makes sense to have people be welcomed
 25 and oriented when they first arrive at the Park.

1 that's part of a restoration management effort, but
 2 not what they mean by harvest for maintenance.
 3 I think they need to be thinking about how to
 4 buffer the river in the Park from all of the
 5 hydrologic changes and the water quality changes
 6 that are happening upstream in the watershed. And
 7 that that should be addressed somehow somewhere in
 8 the management plan.
 9 That's it.
 10 THE REPORTER: Thank you.
 11 MS. MORRIS: Thank you.
 12 MS. REYNOLDS: The information center belongs
 13 in the front of the Park where people can get
 14 information where there's always a disturbance and
 15 plenty of parking and pavement, the parking lot is
 16 always empty there. And not back in the center of
 17 the Park where they would consume more land and
 18 build more roads and disturb more habitat.
 19 And the consumptive uses I think are nonsense
 20 that they are proposing for frond removal and
 21 harvesting and stump removal.
 22 It doesn't make sense. It's not -- there is
 23 no profit to be made off of it. It's just more
 24 disturbance into the Park.
 25 Thanks.

1 And it would be a real opportunity to get people
 2 out of their cars as soon as they arrive at the
 3 Park, rather than them feeling like they had to
 4 stay in their cars all the way to the Upper Lake
 5 congestive area.
 6 There's two properties in conservation
 7 management upstream of the Park, north of the Park
 8 boundary along Clay Gully Road. And there's about
 9 a mile of river there and I think that the optimum
 10 boundary map should include those two properties as
 11 a potential extension of the Park upriver a mile.
 12 I really oppose this idea of harvest for
 13 revenue that's in the written document. And the
 14 speakers tonight representing the State Park
 15 planners seem to be saying that the final draft
 16 would not have harvest of stumps, palm fronds and
 17 tree, timber, for revenue purposes, but the
 18 document still says that. And so I want to make
 19 sure that they revise that in the final plan.
 20 They also said that there would be harvest
 21 only for restoration purposes or for maintenance
 22 purposes. And I've talked to several people,
 23 several of the experts here tonight, and I'm not
 24 getting a very clear understanding of what harvest
 25 for maintenance purposes is. I understand harvest,

1 THE REPORTER: You're welcome.
 2 (The Public Comments concluded at
 3 7:15 p.m.)
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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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3 STATE OF FLORIDA }

4 COUNTY OF CHARLOTTE }

5 I, DEBORAH J. SLINN, Registered Professional
6 Reporter, Certified Shorthand Reporter, and Notary
7 Public in and for the State of Florida at Large, do
8 hereby certify that I was authorized to and did
9 stenographically report the Public Hearing and Public
10 Comments, and that the transcript numbering pages
11 01 through 58 is a true record of the proceedings.

12 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed
13 my name and affixed my seal this 14th day of March,
14 2017, at Rotonda West, Charlotte County, Florida.

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Deborah J. Slinn



Deborah J. Slinn, RPR, CSR, Notary Public
State of Florida at Large

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