

Camp Helen State Park Unit Management Plan Amendment

INTRODUCTION

In support of Florida's Great Outdoors Initiative, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is working to enhance public access, recreation, and lodging at state parks—reinforcing the state's dedication to conservation, the outdoor recreation economy, and Floridians quality of life.

Land use planning and park improvement decisions are based on the dual responsibilities of DEP's Division of Recreation and Parks. These responsibilities are to preserve Florida's natural landscapes, heritage sites, and to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities for Florida's citizens and visitors. Over time, park-specific management plan amendments are implemented to accommodate park-specific needs in real time to boundary changes and land acquisitions, impacts from natural forces like hurricanes and severe weather, and to prioritize additional opportunities for outdoor recreation and other amenities as needed.

PLAN AMENDMENT

Overview

This amendment to the current Acquisition and Restoration Council-approved unit management plan for Camp Helen State Park includes the addition of overnight and recreation facilities. These proposals are organized and presented by use area. Design details and precise location of proposed facilities will be determined and developed according to conceptual land use elements described below and are contingent on funding and concession agreements.

Best Practices

All improvements shall employ best practices utilized by park systems across the country, ensuring that all facilities, functions, and amenities are welcoming and reflective of Florida's heritage, harmonious with park-specific resources, compatible with native lands and plants, aesthetically fitting within surrounding landscapes, and are functional.

CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLAN

Lake Powell Cabin/Camping Area

Objective: Increase public access to overnight accommodations.

Action:

- *Design and develop up to 10 cabins.*
- *Design and develop a glamping area.*

Alternative A – New Park Cabins

Construction of up to 10 cabins is recommended within the northwestern portion of the park, north of U.S. Highway 98. Cabins should be set modestly interior of the Lake Powell shoreline to occupy an upland footprint and protect the lakeshore scenery while still within convenient walking distance to a sensitively designed lakeshore access point or overlook.

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Alternative B – Glamping

As an alternative to the cabins concept, an loop of up to 10 glamping sites with water and electrical utilities may be considered in the northwestern portion of the park to meet growing demand for the comfort camping experience. The camping area would also be served by a centrally located bathhouse and set back from Lake Powell to environmentally and aesthetically buffer the coastal dune lake. Appropriate footpaths to the lakeshore should be considered as well. A sensibly designed system of footpaths or boardwalks to ensure privacy of visitors and wildlife should be considered as well.

Considerations:

- Avoidance of sensitive habitat will be priority in the design of the proposed facilities.