

ITEM 9:

Consider a 10-year update to the Oleta River State Park Management Plan (Lease No. 3154).

LOCATION:

Miami-Dade County

APPLICANT:

Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP)

STAFF REMARKS:

Background

Oleta River State Park (ORSP) protects over 1,032 acres of natural communities that include a mosaic of mangrove swamps, ponds, and lagoon. Considered Florida's largest urban park, it is located 30 minutes from bustling downtown Miami. The park's name sake, the Oleta River, is the only remaining river in Miami-Dade County not having been dredged or channelized. Spanning over seven miles, the river allows fresh water to mix with the Atlantic Ocean. ORSP was initially acquired using funds from the P2000 Additions & Inholdings Program. The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Trustees) hold fee simple title to the park and on June 6, 1980, the Trustees leased the property to DRP under a 50-year lease (Lease number 3154).

ORSP is classified as a recreational area in the DRP's unit classification system. In the management of a state park, a balance is sought between the goals of maintaining and enhancing natural conditions and providing various recreational opportunities. Natural resource management activities are aimed at management of natural systems. Development in the park is directed toward providing public access to and within the park, and to providing recreational facilities, in a reasonable balance, that are both convenient and safe. Emphasis is on interpretation on the park's natural, aesthetic, and educational attributes.

Management Plan Overview

The Florida Natural Areas Inventory has identified five distinct natural community types and four altered landcover types at ORSP. The predominant natural community is mangrove swamp followed by marine unconsolidated substrate. Twelve species of imperiled plants and 14 species of imperiled animals have been identified at ORSP.

The Division of Historical Resources maintains a Master Site File that documents many of Florida's archaeological and historical features. Two archaeological sites and one historical structure have been identified at ORSP.

Existing recreational activities at ORSP include picnicking, swimming, paddling, and fishing. The park's 15 miles of off-road biking trails are considered among the best in the region and are popular with mountain biking groups. A primitive group camp and primitive cabins provide opportunities for visitors to camp overnight. Paddling opportunities through the park's stretch of mangroves have become a popular activity. Sandspur Island, located in Biscayne Bay, is a popular destination for recreational boaters. Visitation at the park is steady throughout the year but tends to pick up during the summer.

The Florida Legislature requires that all land management plans include long and short-term goals. These goals must be measurable objectives, and short-term goals must be achievable within a two-year planning period. Pursuant to section 253.034, Florida Statutes, the Division of State Lands began compiling the short-term goals from each land management plan approved since July 1, 2016. The management plan identified objectives under the following short-term goals: hydrological preservation and restoration, habitat restoration and improvement, imperiled species habitat maintenance, enhancement, restoration or population restoration, invasive and non-native species maintenance and control, and public access and recreational opportunities.

While the 10-year management plan serves as the basic statement of policy and future direction for each park, several annual work plans provide more specific guidance for DRP staff to accomplish many of the resource management goals and objectives of the park. Where such detailed planning is appropriate to the character and scale of the park’s natural resources, annual work plans are developed for prescribed fire management, exotic plant management and imperiled species management. Annual or longer-term work plans are developed for natural community restoration and hydrological restoration.

Public Involvement

DRP solicited public input by conducting an advisory group and public workshop meeting on March 9, 2022. The purpose of the advisory group meeting was to provide the members the opportunity to review and discuss the management plan. Based on the results of these meetings, staff recommendations to the draft plan include the addition of a timber assessment to the plan’s addendum. Johnson’s seagrass will be delisted as in imperiled species and will be removed from the Imperiled Species Inventory Table (Table 3) in the plan. Mention of its status will also be removed. Recommended editorial corrections will be made along with updating the natural community map to reflect its current state. Lastly, an additional objective will be added regarding Sandspur Island with supporting text of the park’s current and future management procedures to manage the island.

Surplus Lands

An evaluation by DRP determined that no portion of the ORSP is recommended for potential surplus designation.

State Land Management Review Team

This property has not been subject to a recent review by an interagency land management review team.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the management plan.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

- APPROVE**
- APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS:** _____
- DEFER**
- WITHDRAW**
- NOT APPROVE**
- OTHER:** _____



OLETA RIVER STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Park History

Park Significance

Park History

Oleta River State Park was initially acquired on June 9, 1980 with funds from the P200 / A& I program. The park is currently 1,032.69 acres.

Park Significance

The park's name sake, the Oleta River, is the last remaining river in the Miami area not having been dredged or channelized due to increasing development. Naturally draining into Biscayne Bay, the river allows fresh water to eventually reach the neighboring Atlantic Ocean. Largely undeveloped, the seven-mile stretch of the river provides scenic viewing opportunities of various wildlife and the only remaining riverine mangrove forest, situated in view of the skyline of North Miami.





OLETA RIVER STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Purpose and Significance of the Park

Park Interpretive Themes

Central Park Theme

Oleta River State Park is restoring wild Miami along the shores of Biscayne Bay, where communities have gathered long before the area became a modern metropolis.

Primary Interpretive Themes

Park History

People have gathered along the water's edge for the opportunity to hunt and fish South Florida's natural diversity, beginning with the Tequesta people thousands of years ago.

Hydrology

Oleta River feeds into regionally significant Biscayne Bay, but hydrological alterations have permanently changed this from fresh to a saltwater environment.

Natural Communities

Just like the bustling city, Oleta River's vibrant mangrove forests are filled with diverse life and provide valuable ecosystem services to the surrounding communities.

Restoration Efforts

Although human action and development have altered the land, park staff and partners work to restore habitats so that the park can be a refuge for future generations of people and animals.





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Park Quick Facts

Natural Community Composition

- ◆ **Agency:** Department of Environmental Protection - Division of Recreation and Parks
- ◆ **Acreage:** 1,032.69
- ◆ **Location:** Miami -Dade County
- ◆ **Lease Management Agreement Number(s):** 3426
- ◆ **Use:** Single
- ◆ **Responsibility:** Public Outdoor Recreation and Conservation
- ◆ **Sublease:** None
- ◆ **Encumbrances:** See Appendix 1 for details
- ◆ **Public Involvement:** See Appendix 2 for details
- ◆ **Optimum Boundary:** None
- ◆ **Surplus Lands:** None

Natural Communities	Acreage	Percentage
Mangrove Swamp	462.03	44.74%
Altered Landcovers	356.50	34.52%
Marine Unconsolidated Substrate	154.85	15.0%
Maritime Hammock	47.36	4.58%
Marine Consolidated Substrate	11.21	1.08%
Beach Dune	2.38	0.23%
Total Acreage	1,302.69	100%



OLETA RIVER STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Park Accomplishments: 2008 — 2022

Ten-Year Planning Period Objectives

Previous Accomplishments

Since the 2005 approved unit management plan, significant resource management and protection accomplishments have occurred. Two resource management projects were developed for removal of the invasive Australian Pine along with a mitigation project for Johnson's seagrass within a former borrow area. Visitor use was also improved with the interior renovations of park cabins, along with fishing pier renovations at the south beach access area. Renovations were also done at the Blue Marlin Fish House Concession. In 2015, the park recorded over 667,000 visitors.

Future Objectives

Moving forward throughout the next 10 years of this Unit Management Plan, the park plans to continue resource management efforts by removing non native plant and animal species such as the green iguana, Australian Pine, and Burma reed. Restoration efforts of the parks uplands include removing all Australian Pine and to revegetate the area with native vegetation representative of maritime hammock such as Sabal palmetto and Wax myrtle. Two isolated mangrove swamp areas, containing a mix of red, white, and black mangroves, will be restored. This will be accomplished by replacing or repairing existing culverts to allow improved tidal flow to reach the mangroves. The park will continue to implement monitoring of *Johnson's Seagrass* with annual assessments to monitor growth. To continually enhance the visitor experience, improvements will be made to all use areas including adding a new fishing pier at the Intracoastal Use Area, replacement and or renovations of the cabins, and restroom renovations at the beach area. New interpretive opportunities focused on roving and guided programs highlighting the park's natural communities including the stretch of mangroves, which is a popular area for paddling, hydrology of adjacent waters including the Oleta River and Biscayne Bay, as well as continued restoration efforts of the park's uplands.



OLETA RIVER STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Hydrological Management

Natural Community Management

Hydrological Management

Goal: Protect water quality and quantity in the park, restore hydrology to the extent feasible and maintain the restored condition.

Objective: Restore and improve water flow to isolated mangrove swamps and reduce flooding in developed areas

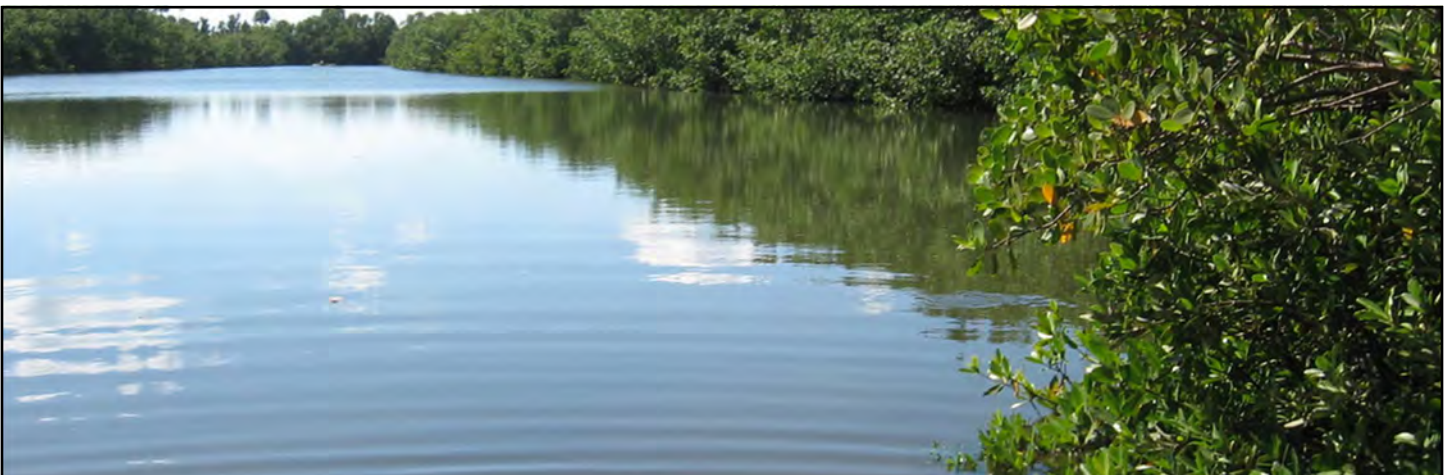
The hydrological conditions of two isolated mangrove areas are to be restored by replacing, adding or repairing existing culverts. Improved tidal flow will aid in restoring the ecological function of this natural community. Feasibility studies will first take place to assess conditions of current culverts (i.e. locations and functionality). Continued maintenance will be performed annually on these culverts to ensure functionality and the exchange of fresh water. Monitoring of the isolated mangroves will be done to assess health and functionality of mangrove health.

Natural Community Management

Goal: Restore and maintain the natural communities / habitats of the park.

Objective: Conduct natural community restoration on 170 acres of spoil area by transitioning area into representative maritime hammock .

Within in the spoil areas, efforts to remove Australian pine will take place. Current spoil areas have a heavy overstory dominated by Australian Pine. Removal will be done through mowing and later mulching. Once the area is cleared, revegetation will take place.





OLETA RIVER STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Non-Native Invasive & Nuisance Species

Cultural Resource Management

Invasive Species Management

Goal: Remove invasive species from the park and conduct needed maintenance control

Objective: Annually treat 86 infested acres of non-native invasive plant species in the park
86 infested acres (170 gross acres) of non native/ invasive plants are to be treated annually. Australian pine has been the main focus of removal along with Burma reed and Brazilian pepper. Once removed, native vegetation representative of maritime hammock natural community will be planted, those include: Sabal palmetto, white indigo berry, and Jamaica caper. Annual work plans will be updated for continued removal of invasive plant species and maintenance. Additional known non native invasive & nuisance plant species found within at Oleta River State Park include:

- Oyster plant
- Air potato
- Burma reed
- Coconut Palm
- Wedelia
- Brazilian pepper

Objective: Implement control measures on 1 exotic animal species in the park

Continued monitoring of Green iguanas will take place in an effort to remove their populations within the park. Park staff will survey and opportunistically remove the green iguanas following occasional frost and cold events. While total eradication is unlikely, it is important to keep populations reduced to minimize impacts on the parks native species and natural systems.

Cultural Resource Management

Objective: Conduct a level 1 archeological survey for priority zones identified by the predictive model

Three sites within the park boundary are listed on the Florida Master Site File. Two archaeological sites from the Glades Period and structural remnants from the original Blue Marlin Fish House. A level one archeological survey will be conducted for priority zones identified by a predictive model.



OLETA RIVER STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Management Goals & Objectives

Imperiled Species

Imperiled Species Management

Goal: Maintain, improve or restore imperiled species populations and habitats.

Objective: Monitor and document imperiled plant and animal species in the park

Continued monitoring of Johnson's seagrass will take place from a mitigation project of a former borrow area. An annual assessment will take place to determine amount of seagrass coverage. Sparse amounts of gopher tortoises are found within the park's spoil areas, most likely through unofficial releases. Efforts should be made to monitor the gopher tortoise population in accordance with FWC guidelines. In 2018, an American crocodile was spotted within the park's mangrove swamp. Park staff will routinely monitor park boundaries for new sightings of crocodiles. As of April 2022, Johnson's seagrass is in the process of being delisted as an imperiled plant. Additional imperiled species located at Oleta River State Park include:

- Cassius blue butterfly
- Florida sandhill crane
- Golden leather fern
- Cinnamon bark
- Inkberry
- Osprey





OLETA RIVER STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Management Goals & Objectives

Recreational Use & Infrastructure

Recreation and Facilities Management

Goal: Develop and maintain use areas and support infrastructure

Park Entrance

- Improve Landscaping

Beach Use Areas (2)

- Restroom Renovations
- Landscaping Improvements
- Replace Fishing Pier
- Update Playground

Support Area

- New Shop Building
- Add Pole Barns (3)
- Small Administrative Office
- Reorganize Support Area

Intracoastal Picnic Area

- New Fishing Pier

Concession Area

- Renovate/ expand concession building
- Path Development
- Interpretive Panel(s)

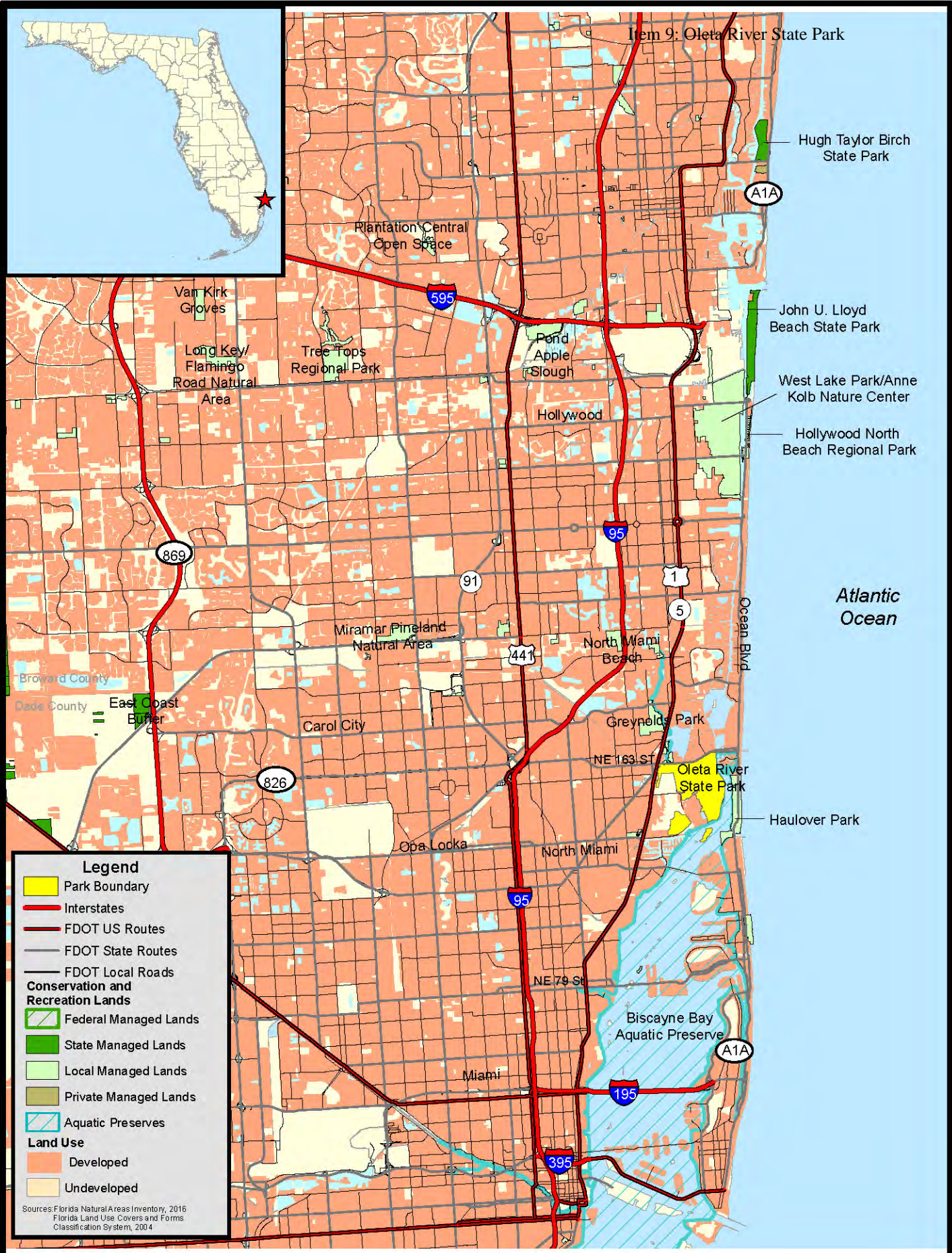
Cabin Area

- Cabin renovations / replacement
- Road Stabilization
- Volunteer site

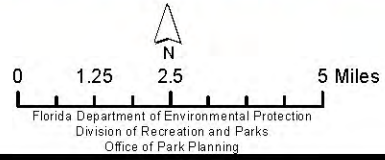
Residence Area

- New residences (2)

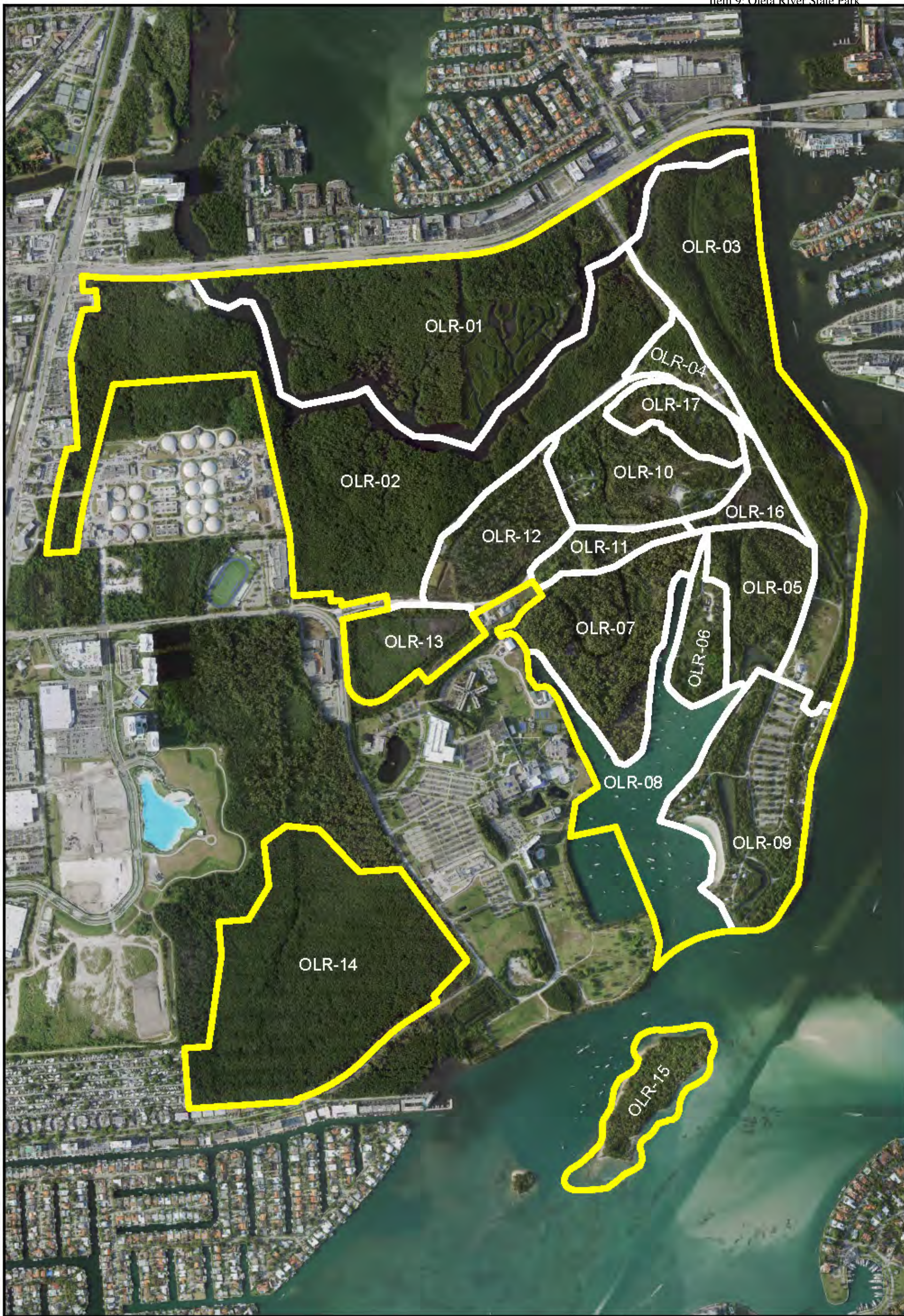




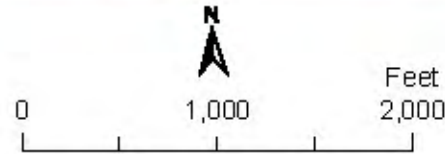
OLETA RIVER STATE PARK
August 2022 ARC Meeting



VICINITY MAP
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OLETA RIVER STATE PARK
Management Zones



User: Harrison_B
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Source: BERI; Florida Department of Environmental Protection
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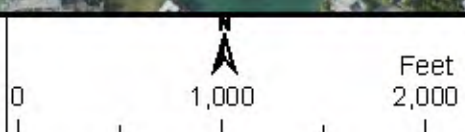
Legend

- 9 - Udorthents-Water complex
- 15 - Urban land
- 26 - Perrine marl, tidal
- 31 - Pennsuco marl, tidal
- 32 - Terra Ceia muck, tidal
- 99 - Water



OLETA RIVER STATE PARK
Soils Map

August, 2022 ARC Meeting



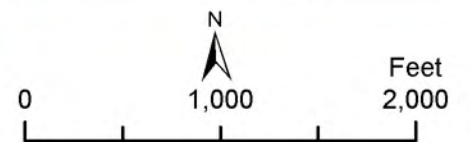


Natural Communities EC (in acres)

- BD - Beach Dune 2.38 ac.
- MCNS - Marine Consolidated Substrate 11.21 ac.
- MAH - Maritime Hammock 47.36 ac.
- MS - Mangrove Swamp 462.03 ac.
- MUS - Marine Unconsolidated Substrate 154.85 ac.
- AP - Artificial Pond 2.59 ac.
- CD - Canal/ditch 2.53 ac.
- DV - Developed 49.25 ac.
- SA - Spoil Area 302.13 ac.



**OLETA RIVER STATE PARK
Existing Conditions**



Sources: ESRI; Florida Department of Environmental Protection
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Legend

Biking	Park Road Stabilized
Hiking	Park Road Unstabilized
Hiking/Biking	Structures
Walkways	Marine Structures
State Road	Parking Lots
County Road	Park Boundary
Park Road Paved	

SMOKEHOUSE & INTERPRETIVE CENTER
DOCKS

SUNNY ISLAND BLVD SR-825

BISCAYNE BLVD

OLETA RIVER

NE 151 ST

MANGROVE PRESERVE

RESTROOMS & SHOWERS
ENTRANCE STATION

PAVILION

RESIDENCE

PRIMITIVE GROUP CAMP

SHOP AREA

RESIDENCE

BATHHOUSE

CABINS

CONCESSION

RESIDENCE

CANOE/KAYAK LAUNCH

RESTROOM

BBQ PIT

PLAYGROUND

PAVILION

BATHHOUSE

PICNIC PAVILION

CANOE/KAYAK LANDING

SWIMMING AREA

CANOE/KAYAK LAUNCH

RESTROOM

PIER

BATHHOUSE

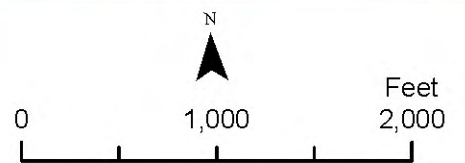
PICNIC PAVILION

BISCAYNE BAY

SANDSPUR ISLAND



**OLETA RIVER STATE PARK
BASE MAP**



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State of Florida, Maxar

