

Topsail Hill Preserve 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 Topsail Hill Preserve 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

Overnight Accommodations Area

Objective: Expand/diversify overnight accommodations.

Actions:

- *Design and develop a park lodge.*

Two alternative concepts are proposed for the proposed lodge:

Alternative A

Alternative A is to construct a lodge, with up to 350-room capacity, southwest of the camping area. This location is consistent with the general location of existing overnight facilities and avoids critical habitat nearer the Gulf of Mexico while offering convenient proximity to the existing tram route for beach access.

Topsail Hill Preserve State Park Unit Management Plan Amendment

Alternative B

Alternative B entails substantial redesign of the campground, original cabin/bungalow area (east of the newer cabin area), and support area. Construction of the proposed lodge within the existing footprint of development would avoid critical habitat and minimize impact to general habitat while maximizing overnight capacity. Redesign of the subject area would allow for landscape beautification and enhanced separation of distinct types of recreational uses and structures.

Further evaluation is required to determine the necessary acreages and square footage of the various facilities.

Considerations:

- Sensitivity to the unit's classification as a preserve will be a priority, focusing proposed improvements within and/or adjacent to existing areas of park development and in avoidance of critical habitat.

Pickleball Courts

Objective: Introduce new recreation facilities.

Action:

- *Design and develop pickleball courts.*

Construction of up to four pickleball courts is proposed within a ruderal area just southeast of the entrance station. This location is in proximity to both overnight and day-use visitors. Parking and restroom facilities are provided at the nearby tram parking area.

Disc Golf Course

Objective: Introduce new recreation facilities.

Action:

- *Design and develop one disc golf course.*

Construction of a disc golf course is proposed in an underutilized area south of the park cabins. The course will be readily available to overnight visitors and accessible to day-use visitors via the tram path. Access to the course will correspond to a tram stop.

Considerations:

- The proposed course must avoid dune habitat and wetlands while offering a scenic experience through the flatwoods and hammock environments of the park.