

## VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

As a preface to this chapter, it should be stated that an earlier version of this report was made available as a Draft Report. Following dissemination of that draft a Public Comment Period was held to obtain additional data from all interested parties that could be taken into account and incorporated into this Final Report. The USACE recognized that there are others who have ties to the historic Gladesmen community that were not interviewed as part of this study, and the comment period allowed an opportunity for other Gladesmen to come forward. Thanks are extended to all those who contributed supplemental information toward the completion of this study.

A press release was issued by the USACE, Jacksonville District, on July 1, 2009, seeking public comment on the report draft. A link was provided for accessing the document online, and comments were accepted by USACE through August 28, 2009. Public comments included phone conversations with Grady Caulk, USACE, and a meeting with the Dade County Full Track Club held on July 23 that was attended by 25-30 people. A coordination meeting was also held between USACE and three representatives of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians on September 11, 2009, from which notes were taken and made available. All comments received were processed and reviewed by USACE and provided to New South Associates on October 8, 2009. This supplemental information served to validate results within the draft, identified the need for textual clarifications or corrections, and provided suggestions for future research. Feedback also contributed to a better understanding of continuity and change in the use of properties through time, which has allowed for a refinement of the TCP evaluations. Again, while all of the locations evaluated as part of this study have been recorded as sites, not all qualify as TCPs.

This chapter summarizes the content of public comment; submissions will be appended to the volume containing the informant interviews on file with the Division of Historical Resources and USACE, Jacksonville District. Written comments (n=28) were received from 22 self-identified Gladesmen as well as representatives of Big Cypress National Preserve, Everglades National Park, Florida Department of State, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Palm Beach County, and the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Specific editorial comments submitted by both Gladesmen and representatives of State and Federal agencies have been addressed and and/or cited throughout this report, and are not summarized here. Some of the specific agency comments are addressed in the concluding chapter.

### GENERAL DISCUSSION OF COMMENTS

Most of the comment letters came from additional self-identified Gladesmen who talked about personal, lifelong associations with Gladesmen Culture. In these, several of the same locations were mentioned as warranting inclusion as either historic properties or TCPs. Specific places mentioned included segments of Tamiami Trail, the Francis Taylor Wildlife Management Area, Upper Wagonwheel Road, and Janes Scenic Drive. One letter suggested that all Water Conservation Areas could be considered TCPs, as well as Big Cypress National Preserve, Fakahatchee Strand,

and Picayune Strand State Forest. Most of the letters also called for recognition of old but currently used Gladesmen hunt camps throughout the entire CERP region “so those planning CERP know there are many cherished sites there.”

Mack’s Fish Camp was also mentioned in two letters as significant. Two letters were brief reminiscences of lives spent in the backcountry, and one was a detailed, eight-page account of the life of an 80-year old Gladesmen. One letter was a cautionary missive regarding the problems that can be experienced as a result of environmental alteration, as well as the difficulties that can arise from well-intentioned environmental restoration.

## SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Many of the specific comments on the draft were editorial; those corrections have been made throughout the report. Some statements in the draft were found to be contradictory or incorrect, and additional information provided to address those concerns has also been incorporated. There were also topics suggested for a much broader study, and it is the intention of USACE that research outside the scope of the present study be addressed as part of project specific studies in the future.

Some of the specific comments received on the draft that provide perspectives warranting special mention, or that are not treated above or within this final report, are presented below.

### BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE

Superintendent Pedro Ramos (2009:5) wrote: “There is no attempt by the author to verify the statements of the interviewees,” and “[the report] continues to repeat an attempt to validate trespassing.” [Note: the information obtained from interviews represents personal opinions that were recorded on tape and transcribed. No attempt is made to validate or encourage trespassing.]

Ramos (2009:4) provided this clarification to claimants of “access rights:” “[an interviewee] makes a common error expressed by many who assert their preference on how public lands are managed by describing loss of access “rights” to areas they have a history with. It is a disservice to those who call themselves “Gladesmen” and any future reader of the document to assert “rights” where only “privileges” exist or existed. This page also contains discussion on the unique values attributed only to “Gladesmen,” without acknowledging that those same values are held by many conservation-minded organizations and individuals.” [Note: the purpose of this study is to identify Gladesmen TCPs, not to promote access. Conservation-minded individuals do share values with Gladesmen, but they may not consider themselves to be part of the Gladesmen Culture.]

### EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

Superintendent Dan B. Kimball (2009:2) wrote: “As discussed in the report, it is confusing whether the recommendation of “unrestricted access” is what New South recommends to preserve Gladesmen Culture, or whether it is what the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recommends to manage the properties in the CERP area. It may be more appropriate to state that the Gladesmen feel that unrestricted access is necessary to continue their cultural traditions and that the Corps

supports the goal of accessing TCPs that does not conflict with ecosystem restoration goals and is in compliance with all existing legal descriptions. This issue was clearly articulated in public scoping for the Recreation Plan.

Kimball (2009:2) also wrote: "It is important to recognize that listing sites as TCPs does not afford Gladesmen with the same rights of access as Federally Recognized Indian Tribes. Further, it is important to recognize that listing as TCPs does not guarantee access or preservation in perpetuity to these properties, just that they be considered as significant resources in Federal undertakings."

Kimball (2009:2) also wrote: "The report should clearly indicate that the opinions of those interviewed...are personal opinions; further the report should not include statements as to the validity of such opinions."

Finally, Kimball (2009:2) wrote: "It should also be articulated in the report that in addition to public land managers, private landowners of TCPs have an obligation to maintain the character-defining features of the properties and their historic use for the continued eligibility for listing on the National Register. Further, listing on the National Register requires their consent and involvement in the process, and listing may have implications under local historic preservation ordinances."

#### FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Commenting Program Administrator Mary Ann Poole wrote: "Due to the importance of Everglades Holiday Park (previously known as King's fish camp) and the Sawgrass fish camp to the Gladesmen's culture, reconsideration of these sites as TCPs is crucial. Everglades Holiday Park alone has been the most important access point for our Gladesmen to the largest area of the state-owned Everglades for over 60 years. We recommend New South Associates strongly consider these properties eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as TCPs." [Note: Monroe County Resolution No. 301-2006 echoes this comment; Everglades Holiday Park and other locations can be evaluated for eligibility as TCPs if future impacts are proposed.]

#### MICCOSUKEE TRIBE OF INDIANS

Comments from a meeting between representatives of the Miccosukee Tribe and USACE provided specific comments that allowed for clarification and the inclusion of additional information. Comments indicate that the Tribe is considering identifying its own TCPs. Also, the Tribe is concerned with the future management of cultural resources; they do not want the management of historic and/or Tribal properties to change.

#### PALM BEACH COUNTY

County Archaeologist Christian Davenport provided several very good suggestions for future work related to the Gladesmen that is outside the scope of this preliminary study. Selections from his emailed comments to USACE are included below, with slight editorial changes.

...there are more people that should have been interviewed including George Boyer Sr., George "Boots" Boyer Jr., Roswell Harrington, Dale Erickson, Dot Tucker, the Thomas Sisters (Mutt Thomas daughters), Flora Todd and Fritz Stein to

name just a few. All of these people have helped me understand the history of the southeastern portion of Lake Okeechobee and all of these people have oral traditions that exemplify the goal of this undertaking.

Other traditional cultural properties (landscapes) like Holy Land, Birds Nest, Monkey Box, Big Bare Beach, Boy Scout Cut, Dynamite Holes I & II, and Grassy Island to name just a few should also have been identified within the report. These are the areas that Gladesmen would visit (do visit) over and over again. They were hunting grounds, meeting places and ending destinations. These places are no different than traditional cultural properties claimed by various Native American groups across the nation. With the plan to restore the Everglades such historically and culturally important areas could be overlooked since they do not appear in the Florida Master Site File. I am sure specifically named places exist throughout the Everglades and some effort needs to be made to catalog these areas before they are developed, destroyed or forgotten.

I would recommend that some consideration...be given to the Islands within Lake Okeechobee (Ritta, Kreamer, Torry, and Observation). (Except for) Observation Island, all of these islands had Gladesmen communities at one time. The history present on the islands is of critical importance to history of Palm Beach County and likely the State as well. For example: archaeological remains of the commercial fishing industry exist on the northern end of Ritta Island. In fact I would classify these as some of the most complete resources that exist of this once multi-million dollar industry. The Boyer Steam Wreck is likely Hamilton Disston's missing dredge. This resource was located during the drought of 06-07 and represents the very beginning efforts to drain the Everglades. On Kreamer Island is the remains of a Glades Skiff and a modern day Airboat clubhouse that is built within a large ficus tree.

There should also be some mention of the historic towns of the area that are now gone since all of the early pioneers would have fit the definition of a Gladesmen. Towns like Gardena, Okeelanta, Gladescrest, and Bean City. Even present day towns like Lake Harbor (originally called Ritta), Canal Point (Long Beach), Pahokee (East Beach), and Belle Glade (Hillsboro) all have strong ties to the Gladesmen tradition.

The importance of bootlegging is also somewhat under represented. After the 1928 Hurricane, Dr. William Buck had survivors wash off in moonshine to kill the bacteria on the skin. People who collected the dead were also given moonshine to "fortify" themselves for the task at hand. With just these two tasks there had to be massive amounts of moonshine available for such an undertaking. Some authors have even stated moonshine was Palm Beach County's biggest cash crop during and immediately following prohibition.

Lastly, I am not sure if the Loxahatchee River is within your project area but it is on par with Fisheating Creek. It contains much in the way of Gladesmen Culture including the remains of homesteads, hunting cabins, and water control structures. If this is within your project area, then I really think some mention needs to be made of this resource.

In summary, the public comment period was the final data gathering aspect of this preliminary study of contemporary Gladesmen Culture. Building on background research and informant interviews, the information and perspectives obtained have strengthened this report, as well as the results of the historic property recording and TCP evaluation treated in the following chapter. Additionally, the responses provided useful information to be considered in future work related to sites associated with the Gladesmen Folk Culture.

