



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

National
Forests in
Florida

Seminole Ranger District
40929 State Road 19
Umatilla, FL 32784
(352) 669-3153

Ocala National Forest

Lake George Ranger District
17147 East Highway 40
Silver Springs, FL 34488
(352) 625-2520

File Code: 1950/2300/2720

Date: November 1, 2011

PUBLIC SCOPING LETTER
SILVER GLEN SPRINGS RECREATION ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

Ocala National Forest
Lake George Ranger District
Marion County, Florida

Dear Forest Visitor:

The Ocala National Forest of the National Forests in Florida has developed a proposal (Proposed Action) and initiated an environmental analysis that will assess the effects of improvements to the Silver Glen Springs Recreational Area. The project area is in T 14S, R26E/ R27E Sections 25 and 30 in Marion County. Silver Glen Springs is located between Lake George and State Road 19, approximately 6 miles north of State Highway 40. Approximately 485 acres lie between State Road 19 and the west shore of Lake George, while the remaining 46 acres lie west of State Road 19.

In May 1990, the USDA Forest Service purchased the 531-acre Silver Glen Springs tract from the St. Johns River Water Management District and the land became part of the Lake George Ranger District on the Ocala National Forest. The Silver Glen Springs tract provides an exceptional opportunity for visitors to enjoy crystal clear springs in a natural setting. The Silver Glen Springs tract is a unique recreation area that holds great ecological, historical, and recreational value. Silver Glen Springs is one of two first magnitude springs on the Ocala National Forest.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

PROJECT NEED

Due to the high levels of visitation to this area, management actions are needed to protect the ecological and cultural resources while providing meaningful recreational activities. There are three compelling reasons to improve upon the current management and infrastructure within the project area:

- 1. The current infrastructure is antiquated, poorly located and insufficient given the level of recreational use of the area.**

Currently, the Silver Glen Springs Recreational area is used for swimming, snorkeling, picnicking, canoeing, and boating. The infrastructure in place consists of structures left from the acquisition of the property in 1990. The only available restroom and changing facilities are temporary non permanent structures. The use of port-a-lets are not appropriate for long term use and their current location may overtime provide for the leaching of nitrates into the spring. The current parking area is not fully accessible and does not maximize the space for current use nor provide for bus parking.



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2. Recreational activities off hardened routes and in sensitive areas are contributing to cultural and ecological resource damage.

People have been attracted to the mysterious, crystal blue waters flowing from Silver Glen Springs and its run for at least 6-8,000 years. The spring is the site of pre-Columbian Native American habitation, evidenced by several large middens (mounds of shell) on the land around the spring. These middens were built or accumulated by Indians that once lived in the area. Although much was removed in the early 20th century for roadbed construction, remnants still remain. The material history contained within the remaining middens is of great interest to Native Americans and historians.

Scarred and trampled native grasses and the invasion of exotic hydrilla into the spring run have damaged Silver Glen's fragile ecosystem. Current use patterns by patrons have threatened the existence of the middens while causing sheet erosion and sedimentation to the spring's edge.

3. The project area lacks a clearly defined and hardened portal for recreationists originating from watercrafts.

Silver Glen Springs has traditionally been a popular destination for boaters during the summer holidays. Currently, the area lacks a defined area for boaters to access facilities and services offered on site. Boaters enter the site from various locations. This lack of designation has resulted in increased erosion, the trampling of eel grass and increased sedimentation. The spring is utilized by the manatee, a federally listed species, during the winter months. Continued unmanaged portals by boaters have the potential to threaten the safety of the animals as well as the overall habitat. The lack of designation of an entrance for boaters has also caused management issues for the concessionaire. This is due to the fact that patrons accessing the area via land pay at a clearly defined entrance station. The lack of a defined boat access portal limits efficient collection of entrance fees from boaters.

PROJECT PURPOSE

For the reasons stated above, the purpose of this project is to improve upon the management capabilities and recreation infrastructure of the Silver Glen Springs Recreational Area. These improvements will advance public safety, access, and overall satisfaction while providing resource protection of the area. Specific project objectives are to:

1. Improve the quality of the current infrastructure associated with the project area with a design that is sustainable, conforms to the surrounding area, and incorporates the historical and cultural use of the area:

Improve the quality of the current infrastructure while focusing on safety, accessibility, and "green design". Incorporation of a design that allows the best use of the area that includes the traditional native vegetation and interprets the cultural resources of the area. Improve upon the quality of experience of recreationist by installing permanent restroom facilities, changing rooms, and concession area to replace existing temporary structures.



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Maximize parking capabilities while incorporating native vegetation for shade; including spaces for buses and persons with disabilities.

2. Reduce resource impacts through a travel and recreational use design that facilitates sustainable use in appropriate areas.

Reduce the effects of visitor use on wildlife, soil, vegetation including aquatic and cultural resources through improved trail/route design and location. Designate areas that are appropriate for picnicking and sun bathing that tie into routes leading to trails and facilities. Incorporate a fencing and vegetative plan around the spring to protect the spring from sedimentation and erosion. Designate routes that get users from the parking area and facilities to the spring. Designate a route that allows boaters access to the area and amenities.

3. Design a portal for boaters located in an area that minimizes resource damage and is compatible with the surrounding use and atmosphere of the project area.

Reduce user conflicts by designing and installing a designated egress and ingress area for boaters separate from the swimming area. This area will minimize resource damage and improve enforcement capability by limiting the entrance points to the area via water.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Ocala National Forest is proposing the following actions to improve the use management and infrastructure of the Silver Glen Recreational Area:

1. **Accessible Trail Corridors, Sidewalk, and Boat Portal**: Installation of a sidewalk, approximately 300ft long, on the west side of the parking lot leading, from the restroom facilities/ parking area to the trail corridor leading to the spring (refer to map sheet 3 of 4). Installation of a native material trail corridor, approximately 450 ft in length, tying into the accessible sidewalk in route to the entrance point of the spring (refer to map sheet 1 of 4). Construction of a boat dock to serve as a portal accommodating 3-4 boats with a trail corridor approximately 300ft in length that ties into the Lake George Trail leading to the facilities and parking area (refer to map sheet 2 of 4).
2. **Parking area** : Construction of a green parking area with parking spaces to accommodate approximately 60 parking spaces, 6 accessible parking spaces and 2 bus parking spaces within the existing footprint of the current parking area. The green design of the parking area would reduce impervious cover and consequently, the amount of storm water runoff with the inclusion of islands, native vegetation, and whenever possible retaining large native trees for shade (refer to map sheet 3 of 4).
3. **Additional infrastructure and Facilities**: Construction of an approximately 750 sq ft concession area to contain information on the area and various items for purchase. Construction of a 1,183 sq ft bathhouse that would be utilized for showers, restrooms,



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and changing. All construction of buildings will be in the Old Florida architecture style. Construction of a drain field that would be utilized by the concession building, bathhouse and host sites. Reconstruction of the hosts sites, which would include removing one site bringing the total number down from 3 inaccessible sites to 2 accessible sites. Construction of a new entrance station approximately 160 sq ft with a turnaround area for traffic control (refer to map sheet 4 of 4). Decommissioning and rehabilitation of asphalt leading to the existing overflow parking, existing concession building, ice machine/kiosk area, and entrance station. Removal of all non permanent structures to include changing room and port-a-lets.

The proposed action would accomplish the following:

- Meet ADA/ABA accessibility standards
- Manage parking
- Decrease sedimentation and erosion
- Promote easier access to the area from the run for boater
- Increase user safety
- Protect cultural and natural resources
- Promote more sustainable access to the spring via land users

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The purpose of this scoping letter is to identify any significant issues related to the proposed changes. An interdisciplinary planning team will be developing the analysis to this proposed action based on your review and public comments. If you have concerns, believe that there are alternative methods to satisfy the purpose and need, or desire to express support, please direct your comments to:

Mike Herrin
District Ranger
Ocala National Forest
17147 Easy Hwy 40
Silver Springs, FL 34488

Comments may also be mailed electronically to comments-southern-florida@fs.fed.us.

Comments can be received throughout the process, but are most helpful if received by November 30, 2011. You will have another opportunity for comment if other alternatives have been developed.

Only those individuals commenting on the proposal, or specifically requesting a copy will receive a copy of the decision document. However, it will be available on the Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/ocala>



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For further information please contact Tonee Davis at 352-625-2520 ext 2516.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mike Herrin

MIKE HERRIN
DISTRICT RANGER