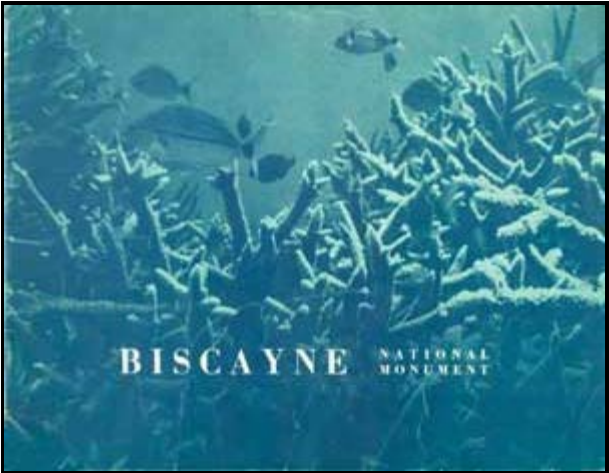


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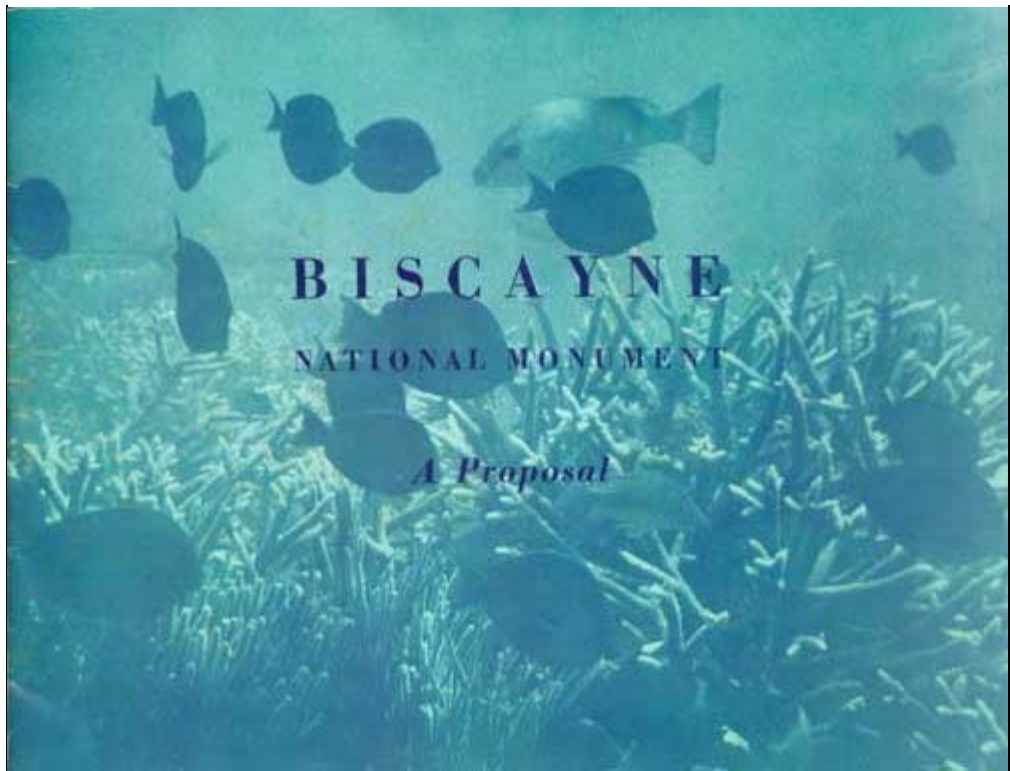
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A preliminary professional report, published in 1965, offered alternative plans for preserving significant portions of south Biscayne Bay, the upper Florida Keys and the adjacent coral reefs to the east. This report discusses a proposal for developing a modified Plan 1, now considered the best of the three original alternatives.

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FOREWORD

In their present relatively undeveloped state, the upper Florida Keys and the adjoining waters and submerged lands of Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean are an environmental element highly important to Florida and a valuable recreation resource for the nation.

Responding to interest expressed by the Dade County Board of Supervisors and conservation minded individuals and organizations, the Secretary of the Interior directed the National Park Service and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation to study the area. After carefully evaluating the natural and recreational resources, professional park planners strongly recommended preservation of this nationally significant area. To move toward this end with the best possible guidance, the National Park Service, in its 1965 report, invited the public to make suggestions and comment on three alternative proposals—described in the report as Plans 1, 2, and 3. Responses clearly indicated overwhelming support for the establishment of a national monument.

Suggestions from persons intimately acquainted with Biscayne Bay and the Florida Keys led to selection of a modified version of Plan 1. Details of this plan are shown in the map on page 19. If carried out, this plan will assure optimum public use and enjoyment of the area. Without preservation and effective management, intensive private development will greatly alter existing values of the area.

George B. Hartzog, Jr.
Director
National Park Service



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THE RESOURCE

The upper Florida Keys are a chain of narrow islands that separate Biscayne Bay from the Atlantic Ocean. They lie three to seven miles off the Florida mainland south of Miami, and generally consist of an outer barrier of coral limestone on the ocean side and sheltering mangrove swamps on the inner side. A nearly flat sheet of limestone, without appreciable change of slope and with little trace of wave scarp, lies beneath the sea on the ocean side of the Keys. At most places, shoal water extends several miles and then the underlying sheet slopes abruptly to greater depths. Living coral reefs partly cover these shoals.

A bulkhead line has been established along the Keys. This is a line fixed by local authorities and trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund, an instrumentality of the state of Florida. Shoreward of this line, filling is permitted; seaward, it is not. Dredging and filling within the present established limits would permit an almost doubling of the present land area of the upper Florida Keys. Such excessive underwater disturbance would greatly damage natural values.

The proposed National Monument is located south of Miami and is accessible only by boat. It includes a portion of the upper Florida Keys, together with portions of the adjoining waters and bottoms of the Atlantic Ocean and Biscayne Bay.



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PRESENT USE

Currently the area along Florida's southeast coast from Sands Key to North Key Largo is used principally for outdoor recreation—boating, sports fishing, snorkeling and scuba diving, picnicking, camping, weekendng, and vacationing.

Dade County's 90-acre Elliott Key Park, maintained primarily as a "primitive area," offers good harbor facilities, limited swimming, camping and picnicking, as well as fishing and hiking. Homestead Bayfront Park has a fine marina on the mainland. Both of these parks are in the Dade County Park System. Contiguous to the proposed National Monument and immediately south of it, John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park provides an unusual underwater experience for the accomplished diver. Glass-bottom boats open underwater coral reef scenes to those who prefer viewing from the surface.



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THE CLIMATE

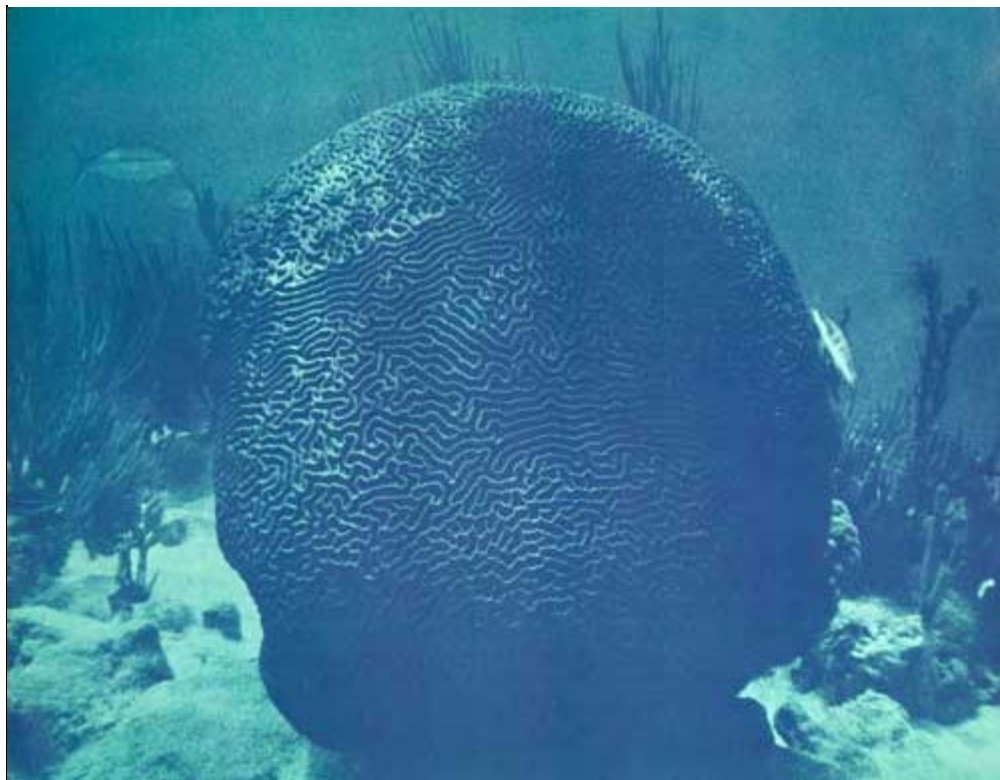
"Subtropical" aptly describes the warm, mild climate of this part of the United States. The Gulf Stream, a few miles off shore, keeps the waters of Biscayne Bay and the Florida Keys at fairly even temperatures year round; trade winds warm the air in winter and cool it in summer.

In Dade County, mean maximum temperatures range from about 77 degrees in January to about 90 degrees in August. Mean minimum temperatures range from about 54 degrees in February to near 72 in July and August. Killing frosts are infrequent. Temperatures of 32 degrees or less occur about every other year at Homestead and much less frequently near the ocean. From June through October, the relatively high humidity averages from 60 to almost 90 percent; in the dry winter season, however, the comfort index improves 5 to 10%.

Average annual rainfall runs between 50 and 60 inches. The rainy season occurs in summer and early fall, most rain coming in September and October, while the winter months, November through March, are usually quite dry. Over 60 percent of the days are classified either as clear or partly cloudy, with most of the clear days occurring during the winter months.

Astronomical tides along the coastline of the upper Florida Keys ebb and flow twice during each lunar day. Mean tide ranges vary from about 2 feet at Sands Key to about .2 foot in lower Barnes Sound, and mean high tide in the same area varies from about 1 foot to about .1 foot. Although maximum hurricane tide of 16 feet may occur, surf and heavy wave action are almost entirely absent along the oceanfront of the area proposed for National Monument status.

Occasionally this section of the country is struck by hurricanes, some of which cause heavy damage. Especially severe hurricanes occurred in September 1926, November 1935, September 1945, October 1950, and September 1960. Hurricanes occur most frequently in September and October.



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THE ECOLOGY

At the beginning of the Sangamon inter-glacial stage (Wicomico time) when the Floridian Plateau lay beneath water 100 feet deeper than the present sea level, a coral reef began to grow on the southeastern edge of the Plateau. By Talbot time, the sea had dropped to about 40 feet above its present level, a depth favorable for the growth of coral reefs, and the Key Largo limestone reef grew upward until it was within 20 or 25 feet of the surface, perhaps less. Meanwhile, the Miami oolite was accumulating in the shallow water behind the reef. When the sea fell during the Wisconsin glacial stage, the coral reef died. It was submerged again briefly during the mid-Wisconsin recession (Pamlico time), but soon emerged and has since remained above water except in the low passes between the present Keys.

The emerged coral reef forming the seaward shore is composed of Key Largo limestone containing coral heads in their original position. Coral-bearing Key Largo limestone is used as building stone. Although quite hard, the limestone contains so many cavities that crushed stone may occupy less space than the original rock.

Because the surface rocks of the mainland contain almost no quartz, they have yielded little sand for the seashore. Very little sand has drifted southward along the coast beyond the entrance to Biscayne Bay. As a result, the ocean shores of Elliott and Rhodes Keys are mostly rough coral rock with very little sandy beach. Only on Sands Key are there good beaches of any size.

The flora of the Florida Keys includes a number of species not found on the mainland. These species are supposedly carried in from the West Indies by the Gulf Stream which flows northward just off the coast. Woody vegetation covers the keys almost completely. Red, white, and black mangroves, occupying from one-fourth to one-third of the total area, cover the western side and all land subject to tidal overflow. Tropical hardwoods dominate the higher central portion of these keys and come down to the ocean shore except in the lower places where mangroves border the shoreline. Most of the tropical hardwood growth is 20 to 40 year-old second growth that followed cultivation or fire. Only very small areas of the original forest remain here and there, but even so these Keys are reported to have the best remnants of the once splendid tropical forests of South Florida. Some few large mahoganies, vestiges of the fine stands cut for ship building over the past 200 years, still exist on these islands, especially on Sands Key. Rhodes Key has the largest proportion of undisturbed hammock while the woody vegetation on Totten Key is principally mangroves, as is the case with the other smaller Keys.

Among the plants of interest is the Hog Palm or Sargent Palm (*Psuedophoenix vinifera*). This close relative of the Royal Palm, once abundant on Elliott Key, was for some years thought to be exterminated but recently has been seen again on Elliott Key.

Other trees of interest are Red-Berried Eugenia (*Eugenia confusa*), Torchwood (*Amyris elemifera*), Joewood (*Jacquinia keyensis*), Seven-year Apple (*Casasia clusiifolia*), and Jamaica Dogwood (*Ichthyomethia piscipula*).

The Australian Pine also occurs on the islands, having been introduced by winds and birds. However, if indigenous vegetation is to be preserved, this exotic weed must be eradicated.

A number of land and sea mammals are present. The racoon and opossum have been observed, as well as that interesting creature, the manatee, which frequents the creeks of the Keys and feeds on the grass flats of Biscayne Bay.

Except for marine life, birds provide perhaps the most interesting animals to be seen. Elliott Key may be the northern breeding outpost for such West Indian species as the White-Crowned Pigeon and Cuban Golden Warbler. Some of the rare species—much in need of protection wherever they occur—include the Reddish Egret, Swallow-tailed Kite, and Short-tailed Hawk, each of which may have small breeding populations in the area.

In general, the ecology of the Keys does not favor an abundance of water birds because wetlands are limited except for the dense mangrove swamps. The one exception is the wide tidal mud flat between Old Rhodes Key and Totten Key which seems to be a productive feeding ground. The northeastern island of Arsenicker Keys appears to be the nesting place of most of the colonial water birds that feed on these flats. The Arsenicker Keys-Old Rhodes Bight area apparently is an ecological unit as far as water birds are concerned.

Of most interest in conservation of rare reptilian species is the probable occurrence of the American Crocodile and several species of sea turtles. In addition to three Atlantic species of sea turtle (Loggerhead, Ridley, and Leatherback), almost certainly the Atlantic Hawksbill and, more rarely, the Atlantic Green Turtle occur in the proposed area. The scarcity of broad sand beaches, however, make this an unlikely sea turtle nesting area. In the past, the range of the American Crocodile included Biscayne Bay. In fact, as recently as two years ago this beast was still to be found on northern Key Largo at a point some seven miles below the southern boundary of Dade County. Definite records are wanting, but scientists consider it likely that the crocodile occurs in the maze of islands and waterways around Caesar Creek and Broad Creek.

The numerous keys present a varied series of habitats for marine life. The bay side of the keys is typically marl mud with marine grasses forming dense meadows which are the principal nursery grounds for shrimp, spiny lobsters, and many marine game and food fishes. Also numerous outcroppings of the limestone afford a settlement for numbers of sponges, many of commercial value, although now largely unexploited.

On the seaward side of the Keys the shore is low, usually rocky with bottom shoal and covered with corallines, small cluster corals, algae, and marine grasses, but more rapidly deepening than the bay shore and exposed to moderate wave action. Coral linaceous rock outcrops covered with low coral growth and seafeathers, sea whips, and sponges usually occur a few yards offshore. Numerous fishes and spiny lobsters frequent this area.

The corals are formed by millions of tiny, soft-bodied, colonial animals, depositing lime secreted from their bodies. Except for brain corals, which are massive, the stony skeletons are fragile even when alive. In this, the northernmost range of corals along the Atlantic Coast, they live perilously, sometimes being torn up and overturned by hurricane seas.

From an underwater naturalist's point of view, these marine gardens display four separate communities:

1. Pastures of turtlegrass where one can find thirty-two different kinds of starfish alone and six species of sea anemones. Here also are curiosities like the sea cucumber and the sea hare.

2. "Hard pan" bottoms where forests of sea fans, sea whips, and giant sponges grow.
3. Miniature reefs and coral heads which include a number of delicate, shallow water forms.
4. The dark, still water under the mangrove labyrinth a fantastic marine nursery.

On the west side of Elliott Key, near the County Park, these four communities can be found in miniature in two or three feet of water, each one only a few yards from the other. Through the medium of a face mask and snorkel tube even young children can safely enter this shallow underwater fairyland of brilliantly colored tropical fish. They thrill to the sight of young shark and barracuda that look big underwater but actually may be only eight or ten inches long. From beneath the surface, a ten inch limestone cliff, complete with caverns full of snapper, lobster, and parrotfish, looms as large and mysterious as Captain Nemo's caves. Adults are no less thrilled than children at these amazing underwater sights.

Between the Keys are various passes or creeks, as they are locally termed, some of which are fairly wide and shallow, and some narrow, only a few hundred feet wide, but deep, twisting, down to 25-30 feet in crystal clear water. These creeks are the haunts of teeming thousands of fishes which live among the corals, sponges, and sea-feathers on the bottom. Here one finds such fishes as groupers, snappers, jewfish, Spanish hog fish, barracuda, yellowtails, and many others. Over 250 species of marine fishes occur along the shore.



Wild Shore of Elliott Key



Mangroves on Sands Key



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MAN AND THE CORAL REEFS



Archeological sites are often found on the upper keys from Key Largo south. Thus it might be expected that they would occur within the area of the proposed monument as well. This supposition is further supported by a number of small artifacts which were observed on Sands Key during early field investigations.

The Florida Keys were known to Europeans from about 1500 onward. Ponce de Leon named them Los Martires in 1513. A young Spanish boy, Escalante de Fontenada, taken prisoner from one of the frequent shipwrecks that occurred on the uncharted reefs, was held captive by the Indians for 17 years before making his escape. His *Memoirs* gave us the first written account of the South Florida natives.

Pirates made these keys their base of operations and an inlet between Elliott and Old Rhodes Key was a refuge for such notorious pirates as the Black Caesars. Black Caesar the Second is said to have kept both loot and prisoners on Elliott Key.

Under different flags (Spanish, English, United States), the upper Florida Keys and surrounding waters have borne differing names. Biscayne Bay, for example, was once known as Sandwich Gulf.

The emancipation of slaves in the Bahamas in 1834 caused the failure of many plantations. Thus pioneer families who had originally emigrated from Georgia and the Carolinas to the Bahamas, Green Turtle Cay, and Governor's Island again crossed the Gulf Stream and homesteaded on the Florida Keys.

Colonel Robert E. Lee, under instructions from General Joseph Totten (Totten Key), Chief of Engineers, Washington, visited Biscayne Bay in 1849 to consider the advisability of local military installations. Captain M. C. Meigs (Meigs Key) was later Captain of Engineers based at Key West during the Civil War. Key West was the largest salvage center in the United States.

Dr. A. J. Hanna writes in his *Flight to Oblivion* that General John Breckinridge, Confederate Secretary of War, sailed down Biscayne Bay to Elliott Key and escaped through Caesar's Creek, taking what was left of the Confederate treasury to safety. One diary of that era recorded that "scores of Flamingoes, vermilion scarlet" were on Elliott Key.



Sponge fishermen on Sands Key

In 1886, The United States granted land on Elliott and Adams Keys to Jeremiah Saunders who came from Green Turtle Cay in the Bahamas. Saunders was a planter and lived with his family on the ocean side of Elliott Key, a mile north of Caesar's Creek. In those days, according to one of his daughters-in-law, the land grew large trees some "two feet in diameter and 100 feet tall." After these trees were cut, the planters then burned the cleared land and "the rock went to lime and pineapple slips were planted in the powder." Eventually, almost all the high land was burned.

Among other early inhabitants were William D. Albury and his family who lived at the south end of Elliott Key. Albury's parents lived on neighboring land along the ocean front, and the Henry Filers lived at the northern end of Elliott Key. Of all the early settlers' homes, only that built by Arthur and Edgar Higgs still stands on the Key.

Although relatively undeveloped, the keys within the area studied are by no means undisturbed by the hand of man. Much of the higher land was farmed until the early 1900's. The largest of the keys, Elliott, was rather extensively cleared and planted to pineapples and cane. Hogs were raised here in considerable numbers.

Bridging the gap from past to present, we find that commercial harvesting of natural resources is confined largely to the waters of Elliott Key. Neither agriculture nor harvesting of forest products is now carried on within the area. The relatively young even-aged trees which replaced the valuable original tropical hardwood forest have little commercial value.

Today, outdoor recreation is the area's principal attraction. Boating enthusiasts and sports fishermen are ever present. Increasing underwater wonders are attracting more and more snorkelers and scuba divers. Picnicking is good, and some camping is done.

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THE CASE FOR PRESERVATION

In December 1960, the upper Florida Keys in Dade County were incorporated as the City of Islandia. Included in the new city are Elliott Key Park and other publicly owned property as well as 385 tracts of land owned by 346 individuals. Proposals for causeways, deep water channels, real estate, and industrial developments, are immediate threats to natural features within the study area.

The proposed National Monument area is a combination of land and water and the terrestrial, marine and amphibious life found on and in them, much of which is rare in continental United States. The best vestiges of South Florida's tropical forest are within the proposed boundaries; some of the plants are species not found on the mainland. As mentioned previously, some of the land and water species are rare, and sorely need protection.

Although no industrial development appears to be planned for the Keys, in the proposed area, industrial construction on the mainland—an oil refinery, for example—would probably cause water and air pollution that would damage the monument area's natural values, especially its marine life. The construction and use of a deep water channel or causeway would certainly alter natural conditions, and would materially change the marine ecology.

Most significant of all the area's attributes are the clear, sparkling waters, marine life, and the submerged lands of Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Here in shallow water is a veritable wonderland. Corals, sponges, grasses, crabs, shellfish, starfish, and reef fishes are but a few of the life forms inhabiting this colorful underwater kingdom. The whole area is an enormous underwater nursery where reef and pelagic fish hatch and grow before venturing to the ocean.

Intimately associated with the natural features are significant outdoor recreation values. The type and quantity of public use must be compatible with preservation of natural conditions and should be governed accordingly.



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THE OPPORTUNITIES

The area provides highly significant water-related outdoor recreation opportunities. Those pre-eminent for their own sake, such as boating and fishing, are enhanced by both the natural beauty and the climate of the area. Also rewarding are those activities engaged in primarily as a means of viewing and enjoying underwater life. Unusually fine skin-diving and underwater nature study conditions are made possible by the clear waters of Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Large stretches of water only two to three feet deep offer rare opportunities for children to fish-watch and observe other subsurface life. In fact, the underwater attractions in this area make the Biscayne National Monument proposal outstanding.

High ground within the proposed area is now covered with a 20-40 year old second growth tropical hardwood forest, said to be the best that remains of South Florida's once splendid tropical forests. If preserved undisturbed, this second-growth forest will eventually approximate the size and composition of the original forest.

Only by bringing these resources into public ownership will they be protected and preserved adequately and permanently for public use and enjoyment.



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THE PLAN

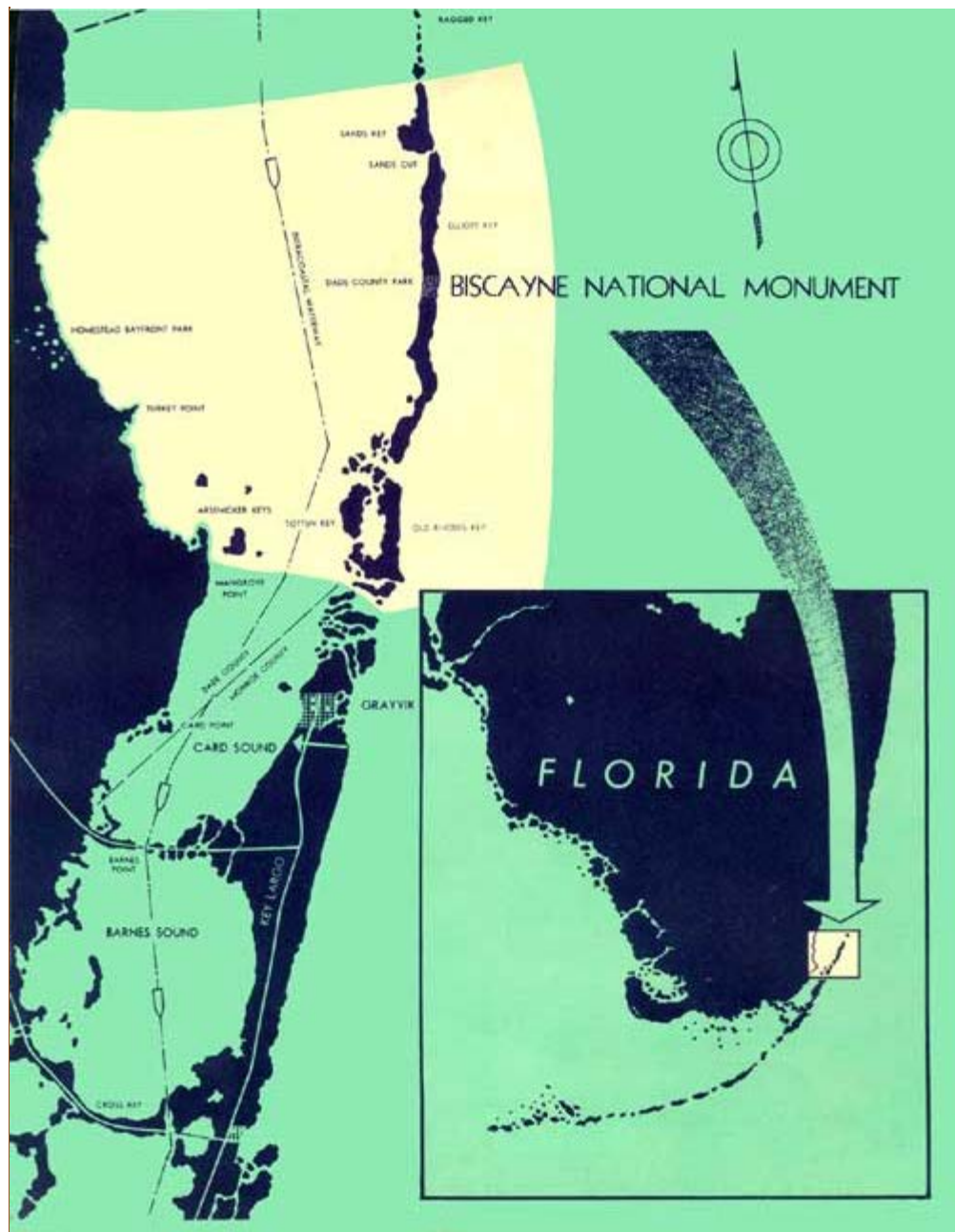
Boundaries suggested in this plan encompass a geographic confine which can be developed and effectively managed for public use and enjoyment. The plan to accomplish this envisions cooperation with several conservation agencies and Dade and Monroe Counties to provide resources, facilities, interpretation, and protection for visitor use. The State of Florida administers John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park which lies immediately south of the proposed monument. The State Park would not become a part of the national monument. Two units of the Dade County Park System are also found in the vicinity. On Elliott Key a 90-acre primitive area known as Elliott Key Park has been proposed for eventual inclusion in the national monument. Nearby on the mainland, Homestead Bayfront Park would maintain its separate status as a county park and the monument's mainland headquarters would be located in the vicinity of the county park area.

A secondary visitor contact station would be located along Card Sound in the northern part of Key Largo to provide access to the monument from the south.

The National Monument boundaries would extend to the 60-foot depth line in the Atlantic Ocean to the east; between Boca Chita and Sands Keys in the north; paralleling the mainland along the west; through Broad Creek and thence along the northern boundary of John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park on the south. The western boundary of the monument on the shoreward side of Biscayne Bay would lie east of the established bulkhead line at a distance off shore sufficient to allow riparian owners access to their property by water.

This would preserve for public use a National Monument of about 100,500 acres; 4,000 acres of which would be land and 96,500 acres water.

The underwater resource is fragile. Its preservation must, of necessity, include careful planning for its use. The area preserved in this plan will provide sufficient bay and ocean bottom to spread visitor use over a large area, thereby minimizing man's impact on the marine values. By extending the boundaries to near the mainland in the west, opportunity will also be afforded to protect the submerged lands of the Bay from the effects of unwarranted channel improvements, commercial dredging and filling, pollution or other activities which might alter or upset the marine ecology and underwater circulation patterns.



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DEVELOPMENTS FOR VISITOR USE

Developments will include visitor contact areas on the mainland east of Homestead and on Key Largo in the Card Sound vicinity. Visitor centers at these two locations will provide exhibits to interpret and invite land and underwater observation. Concessioner conducted tours will be available from these points. The concessioner will also provide passenger ferry and water taxi service from these points to other parts of the National Monument.

Another primarily visitor contact point will be located on Elliott Key in the vicinity of the existing Dade County Park. Here developments will include a shelter in which visitors may change clothes, enlarged docking facilities for concessioner and private boats, primitive campgrounds and land and underwater interpretation. Fishing, diving, snorkeling, bicycling, picnicking and hiking will also be possible. Visitor facilities in this location would serve recreation activities along the bayside as well as the seaside and off-shore reefs, including such underwater attractions as self-guiding nature trails, submerged viewing rooms, viewing piers, conducted snorkeling trips and glass-bottom boat excursions. Perhaps even closed circuit underwater television may be provided.

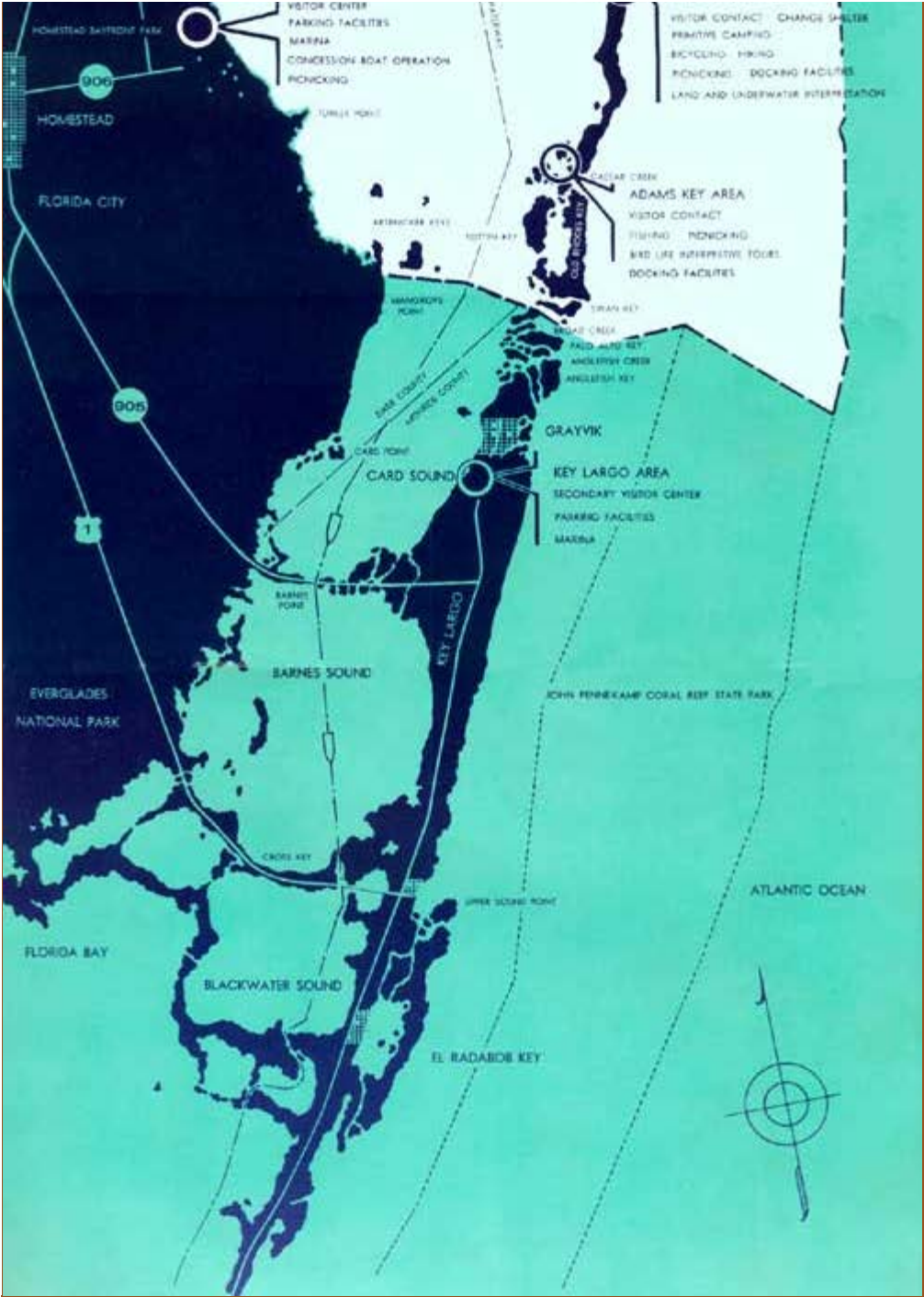
A secondary public use facility to supplement the one on Elliott Key will be on Sands Key, to the north. Visitor contact, picnicking, boat docking, and interpretation of archeological and marine features will be available here.

A similar facility will be on Adams Key to the south. Developments will provide for visitor contact, picnicking, fishing and bird life interpretation.

To the extent compatible with preservation of the natural resource, further developments will be provided to meet any growing demands or pressures for public use.

The map on the following page shows the locations for proposed visitor use developments.

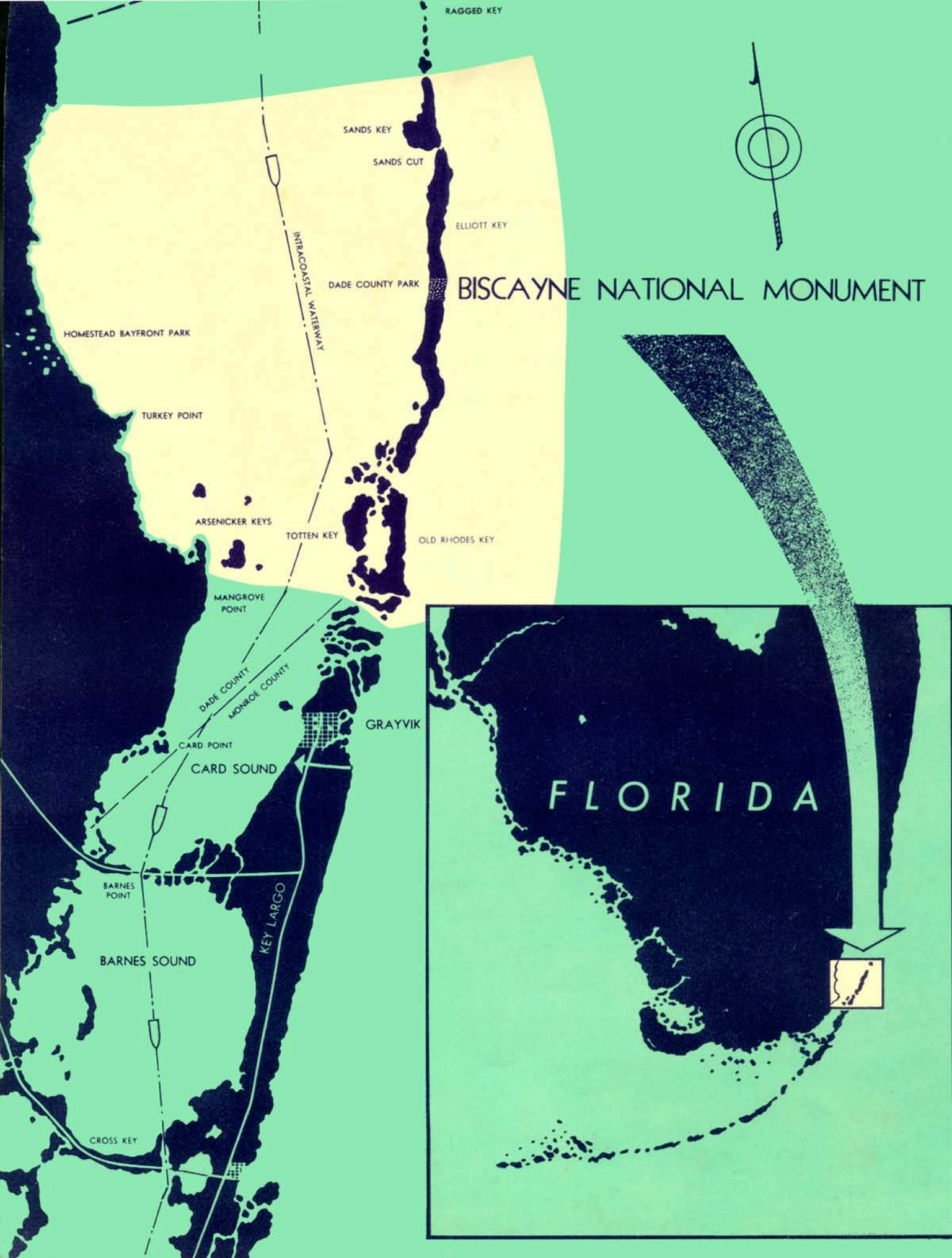




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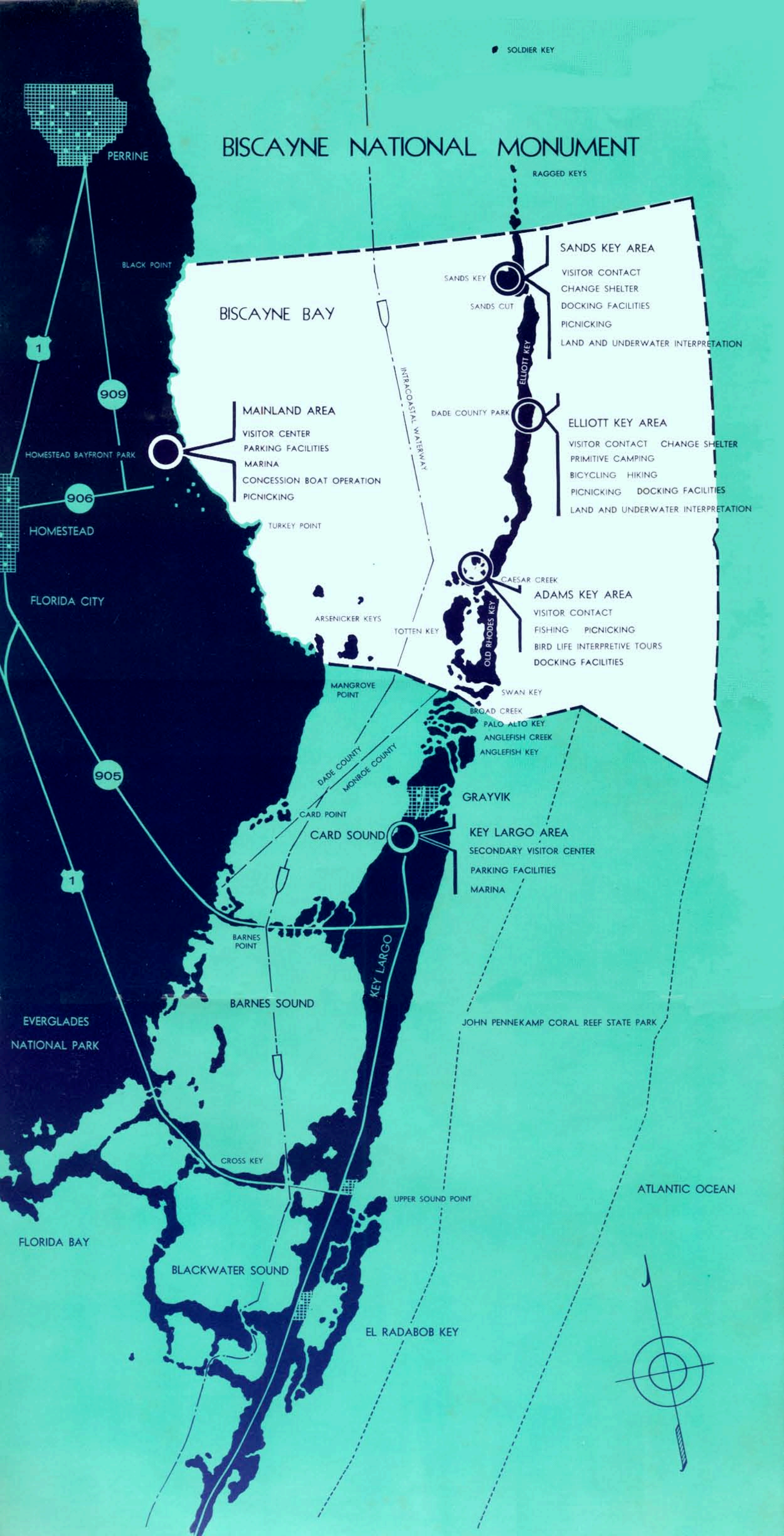
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BISCAYNE NATIONAL MONUMENT

FLORIDA



BISCAYNE NATIONAL MONUMENT

SOLDIER KEY

RAGGED KEYS

SANDS KEY AREA

- VISITOR CONTACT
- CHANGE SHELTER
- DOCKING FACILITIES
- PICNICKING
- LAND AND UNDERWATER INTERPRETATION

SANDS KEY

SANDS CUT

ELLIOTT KEY

ELLIOTT KEY AREA

- VISITOR CONTACT
- CHANGE SHELTER
- PRIMITIVE CAMPING
- BICYCLING
- HIKING
- PICNICKING
- DOCKING FACILITIES
- LAND AND UNDERWATER INTERPRETATION

DADE COUNTY PARK

CAESAR CREEK

ADAMS KEY AREA

- VISITOR CONTACT
- FISHING
- PICNICKING
- BIRD LIFE INTERPRETIVE TOURS
- DOCKING FACILITIES

OLD RHODES KEY

SWAN KEY

BROAD CREEK

PALO ALTO KEY

ANGLEFISH CREEK

ANGLEFISH KEY

GRAYVIK

KEY LARGO AREA

- SECONDARY VISITOR CENTER
- PARKING FACILITIES
- MARINA

MAINLAND AREA

- VISITOR CENTER
- PARKING FACILITIES
- MARINA
- CONCESSION BOAT OPERATION
- PICNICKING

TURKEY POINT

ARSENICKER KEYS

TOTTEN KEY

MANGROVE POINT

DADE COUNTY

MONROE COUNTY

CARD POINT

CARD SOUND

BARNES POINT

BARNES SOUND

CROSS KEY

UPPER SOUND POINT

BLACKWATER SOUND

EL RADABOB KEY

ATLANTIC OCEAN

PERRINE

BLACK POINT

BISCAYNE BAY

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909

HOMESTEAD BAYFRONT PARK

906

HOMESTEAD

FLORIDA CITY

905

1

EVERGLADES
NATIONAL PARK

FLORIDA BAY