



Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Florida Park Service
District I Administration
4620 State Park Lane
Panama City Beach, FL 32408

Rick Scott
Governor

Herschel T. Vinyard, Jr.
Secretary

June 19, 2013

Walton County Board of Commissioners
P.O. Box 1355
DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435

Dear Commissioners:

The Florida Park Service District 1 would like to express support for the plan to replace culvert and causeway road crossings of Coastal Dune Lakes in South Walton County with bridges.

The Florida Park Service practices natural systems management of the natural communities preserved in the parks that we manage. This style of management strives to maintain examples of natural communities in a pre-settlement condition, as well as reduce to the extent possible, the impacts to those natural communities from adjacent infrastructure.

It is a long standing, accepted principal that road crossings of wetlands and open water bodies which utilize properly designed and sensitively constructed bridges, are less disruptive to ecological process than causeways and culvert crossings. The replacement of the existing culvert and causeway crossings over coastal dune lakes would be a significant and important component in the restoration and preservation of the coastal ecosystem that remains in South Walton County.

This bridges project complements the ongoing effort of the Florida Park Service to restore the ecological function of the natural communities under our management which occur in the watershed of seven of the globally imperiled coastal dune lakes in South Walton County. We are pleased that the County and its residents recognize and are working to preserve the ecological integrity of the extremely diverse coastal ecosystem of the Panhandle of Florida.

Sincerely,

Daniel R. Jones, Chief
Florida DEP, Division of Recreation and Parks
Bureau of Parks, District 1