

May 10, 2021

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Acquisition and Restoration Council

To Whom It May Concern,

My family has been fortunate to have a home on Cayo Costa along the backwaters of the island at "the narrows" for over 20 years. We feel it is our responsibility to look out for the island resources and to protect them at all costs. Presently the narrows is being threatened by increased human impacts from commercial tour boats, 50' vessels that come into the shallow waters and land thousands of people at the island's narrowest point. This activity has been going on for over five years in spite of the efforts of many of us who have voiced our concerns to have this stopped. Resources are being damaged and there are a number of secondary threats as well.

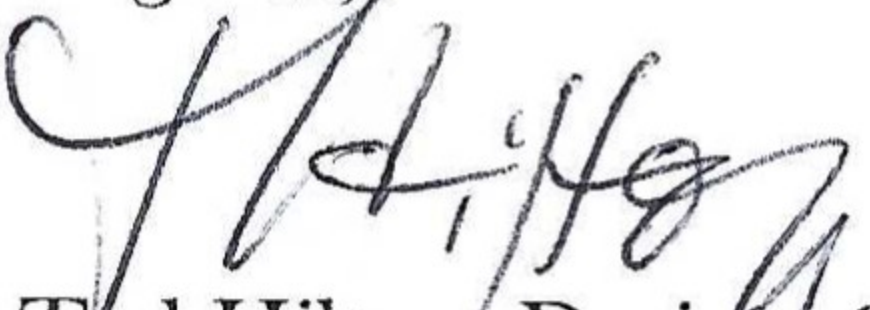
We have the home at the Faulkner Indian Mound area. Most of the surrounding complex was gifted back to the state by a former owner to be protected. We have noticed a significant decrease in the number of large shell artifacts which appear to be disappearing from the mounds and shoreline areas. We have also had many reports of people using our docks to access the beach because they can't use the state dock anymore. We feel the increased exposure from the multitude of additional people who pass by the mounds is contributing to these impacts.

The management plan addresses the importance of protecting archaeological sites which are defined by statute 267.021(3), F.S.. It says, "they are a finite and non-renewable resource. Once destroyed.....(they) cannot be renewed or revived." To my knowledge the state park has done little to protect the Faulkner Mound resources. Adding a new commercial operation to this area, historically known for breaches, is an irresponsible and unsustainable management practice.

We understand the state said they'd stop the big boats from coming to the narrows then suddenly reversed course. To continue this practice adds liability and stress to the park's irreplaceable resources and associated homeowner's rights. There was no public input when this happened in 2016. Had the state carefully evaluated the liability and implications of commercial use at the narrows this may have never occurred.

We urge the FDEP to immediately stop commercial activity at the narrows. Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,



Ted Hilton, Darien, CT