

PINES
SHADE
HISTORY



Ft. Zachary Taylor Historic Park



Stop the Massacre

Ft. Zach is a unique place where the public can enjoy the beach and yet have a large area that is protected from the sun by a canopy of Australian Pines. There is no other park on the island where it is possible to do both. It is a haven for social, cultural and recreational activities with ample opportunity for education, art and historic appreciation.

Unless current State plans are changed, the pines will continue to be removed until they are eliminated.



Section of picnic area at Fort Zach, March 9, 2007



**"The beach is shaded by several acres of Australian Pine trees so it is always a bit cooler than the rest of the island."
-TRAVELHOST, Sept. 2006 description of Fort Zachary**



"The threat of losing our park as we know it is real and imminent... It would appear that our tiny bit of nature is being sacrificed..." -Nils Muench, Ph.D.



"It seems that in this case a blanket enforcement of this directive [to remove all Australian Pines] will result in a major loss of shade and beauty...with no significant gain... Like many laws, rules and directives, the intention of this one was good, except in certain cases where enforcement would gain nothing and would result in major negative impact." -Dr. Ray McAllister, President, Coastal Engineering Assoc., Lighthouse Point, FL



"...the pine cones are used by finches and other species ...Indigo Bunting and Blue Grosbeak forage in the cones during spring and fall migration...Yellow-rumped and pine Warblers forage in these trees in winter... migratory birds feed within the pine canopy...these trees also play an important roll as a beacon for birds in migration" -Carl Goodrich, Local Birding Expert



The Real March Madness

For eleven years local citizens have been trying to persuade the State of Florida to take a different approach to its restoration of Fort Zachary Taylor State Park. It's easy to think that this is just another bunch of do-gooders and tree-huggers who want to stop progress, but it is really about the State's management of Key West's favorite park.

- The State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) wants to cut down the Australian Pines that provide shade and shelter to the park. DEP says that the Australian Pine is an invasive exotic species that is toxic to its surroundings. A major part of its plan is an Army Corps of Engineers permit for beach restoration. DEP wants to restore Ft. Taylor's beach with a type of Bahamian sand that is (drumroll...) an invasive exotic. This type of sand is incompatible with the coral that surrounds our island. It will erode. It will smother seagrasses that are a habitat for marine life. The Army Corps of Engineers has failed to

study the ecosystem and has not produced an Environmental Impact Statement related to this issue.

- Fort Zachary Taylor is a national historic landmark which is deteriorating and needs the attention of the State. It sits on a 54-acre parcel which includes the park. This entire parcel (including the pines) is a historic site. The State does not appear to understand this. DEP has provided no evidence that its proposed restoration of the park land has undergone the necessary historical preservation review.





- Fort Taylor is located within the boundaries of Key West. Key West is “an area of critical state concern”, meaning that development is subject to extra State scrutiny. DEP has provided no evidence that an area of critical state concern review (along with its public records notice and hearings) has occurred.

- The State received Fort Taylor by a deed from the federal government. That deed contains conditions. The State has to obtain permission from the Department of Interior for any proposed actions that will change “the character of the grounds or structures.” DEP has provided no evidence that this has occurred.

This obvious circumvention of law and reason by DEP begs a question: if you owned property in the historic district of Key West what would happen if you decided to redevelop it without the proper permits, permissions, and environmental reviews? You would get a cease and desist letter from DEP!

DEP: This is a cease and desist letter from the citizens of Key West. You are doing irreparable harm to our cherished park.

DEP: Your science is faulty. Didn't you learn anything from your sister agency, the Department of Agriculture, in its ill-conceived effort to stop the spread of citrus canker? It cut down thousands of backyard citrus trees throughout South Florida, alienating tens of thousands of citizens (and failing to obtain the necessary warrants to enter their property), only to have to abandon the project after realizing that it couldn't control the wind.

“All trees are a chapel for your mind.” -Dink Bruce

And what other little nugget did Agriculture learn? That Australian Pines are an effective windbreak. DEP: you can't control nature. The best you can do is to be its silent partner.

Governor Crist entered office this year with a renewed pledge of open government. Here is how DEP interpreted that pledge on March 9, 2007. Early that morning, without notice to the public, 20 park rangers, armed with chainsaws, and with a burst of "just following orders, ma'am" enthusiasm, destroyed a significant number of Australian Pine trees.

Look closely at the photographs that surround this text. Note that the massacre occurred in the midst of the annual Sculpture Key West exhibit. DEP's entry: "The Felled Trees of Fort Taylor." (It will win no awards.)

When Key West awoke to discover what was happening, it was too late. This March Madness couldn't be stopped. Nonetheless, calls were made to Tallahassee to protest. No one could be reached. The Tallahassee Fire Drill was underway: when upset citizens are expected to call, the distant bureaucrats leave the building?

Irreparable harm is occurring to the shade trees, to the park itself, and to ourselves. Be outraged, react and be heard. ☐



"Where crushed limestone has been applied over the roots of the pines the trees most likely will decline and eventually die..." -Way Hoyt, ASCA, BCFE



Section of picnic area at Fort Zach, March 9, 2007

History of Fort Zachary Taylor

The Nation's Southernmost Park

- 1845-1866** Construction of Fort
- 1947** Army turned Fort over to Navy to maintain
- WWI** Fort manned by National Guard
- WWII** Coastal guns removed & replaced with anti-aircraft guns
- 1964-1965** Park built with dredge material from ship channel dredging project
- 1968** Volunteers uncovered old armaments in the gun rooms from Civil War times (largest selection of CW cannons in US)
- 1971** Fort Taylor placed on National Register of Historic Places
- 1973** National Historic Landmark
- 1976** Land transfer to the State
- 1983** Key West Tree Commission (including the late Merilee McCoy) insisted the pines were not a pest in this location. Mark Glisson, Chief of FL DEP Bureau and Natural & Cultural Resources responded: "Due in large part to the local community support for the shade they provide and to the fact that they are growing on fill and do not pose a serious threat of spreading, there are not current plans for wholesale removal of Australian Pines at Fort Taylor's beaches."
- 2003** Old Town City Hall: Park Manager sponsored an open-forum to discuss a slow removal of pines in phases along with the addition of pavilions and natives to replace the pine's shade. In the face of public outrage of a standing room only crowd, Park Manager said: "We will not go forward if there is a major opposition to removal of the pines at Ft. Taylor."
- 2004** Trial area planted with natives.
- 2005** On June 15, city passed Resolution #04-13 which supports mature pines remaining unless a safety hazard but does not support new growth.
- 2006** A County Resolution (271-2006) was passed, stating:
SECTION 1: That the State of Florida is hereby urged to designate the canopy of Australian Pines at Ft. Zachary Taylor Historic State Park as an exception to any and all exotic and invasive removal programs.
SECTION 2: That the State of Florida is hereby urged to initiate a professional maintenance program to nurture and protect the pines and to institute a policy of "controlled growth" for replacement of any pines lost to natural disaster or man, so that Ft. Zachary will always have a canopy of Australian Pines.



Australian Pines in Ft. Taylor in the 1940s.



FROM FLORIDA TASK FORCE:

"IN SOME CASES exotic vegetation is allowed to remain because it is historically accurate and contributes to the character of a cultural landscape. For example, some introduced species were brought to an area during a certain time period or by a particular group and thus provide important information about the history of a site."



"...the contract with the park's sole concessionaire allows for the construction of new structures, including 3 large pavilions to be rented out for events... the timetable calls for 1 pavillion to be completed each year..."

-Alyson Crean, The Keynoter

"So Australian pines are not indigenous to Fort Zachary Taylor but concrete-covered shelters are?" -Citizens' Voice, Feb 2007



"Key West is not plastic, not neon, not Disney World. We don't always readily embrace the latest dictates of scientists whose faddish ideas too often determine government policies. Moreover, we definitely don't want a park so over endowed with food, beverage, generic looking hospitality structures and other amenities that mimic the look of every other park in Florida." - editorial- *The Citizen*, May 19, 2006

CHICKEE HUT RENTALS

- LOUNGE CHAIR / UMBRELLA COMBO \$30
- LOUNGE CHAIR \$6 W/ \$5 DEPOSIT
- LOUNGE CHAIR W/ CUSHION \$10 W/ \$5 DEPOSIT
- UMBRELLAS \$10
- ADULT MASK & SNORKEL SET \$8 W/ FINS \$10
- CHILD MASK & SNORKEL SET \$7 W/ FINS \$9
- KAYAKS \$20 PER HOUR
- SINGLE SEAT KAYAKS \$18 PER HOUR
- BLUE WATER RAFTS \$10

* I.D. Required for Deposit * Daily Rentals due Back by 5:00



SUPPORTERS Harrison Gallery, Erick Erickson, Blue Heaven, White St. Deli, Sue & Al Sullivan, Bucko Pantellis, Peyton Budinger, Arnold Hermelin, Susan Mesker



Painting by Rick Worth

BOTTOM LINE

- The Australian Pines at Fort Zachary Taylor are cherished for practical, historic, aesthetic, cultural and social reasons. This small remaining stand of pines should be preserved without the ongoing threat of eradication.
- An exception can be made to preserve them as provided for in 2003FL Title XXVIII. There is no clear scientific data indicating that they are a detriment to the State's natural environment, since they have been effectively controlled by park management since 1976.
- Eradicating these trees that have thrived for over half a century is illogical, contrary to the charter of the state park service, contrary to the intent of 2003FL Title XXVIII, contrary to FL 258.037, and an affront to the citizenry of Key West as well as the city and county governments who have passed resolutions in support of their preservation.

RESPONSE – WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP ?

1. **VISIT** the web site www.saveourpines.com and learn more about the history and importance of these Australian Pines and sign the electronic petition – your voice will help.
2. **WRITE** your elected representatives and express your outrage at the park service plans to eradicate these wonderful trees despite the will of the people to have them preserved for future generations to enjoy.
3. **SHARE** your photographs, memories, articles, and recollections with us. Send anything that you think will help to saveourpines@mac.com . Share this information with others. As we gain in number, we gain in strength.



SAVE OUR PINES is a non-profit 501 (C)3 organization whose mission is to preserve and maintain the Australian Pine canopy at historic Fort Zachary Taylor State Park in Key West, Florida.

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Katie VanArenum, Jimmy & Susan Weekly, Ann Hurllock, Jean Carper, Lynn Kaufelt, Ann Henderson, Martin's Cafe, Lee Rohe, Sydney Waring, Richard & Mary Grusin, Eye Eye Eye, Al Sachs
 William Royan
 Michael Appollis
 Lynda Schuh
 Rosi & Jeff Ware
 Don Baxter
 Lydia Estenoz
 Janet Mueller
 Tommy & Kim Mack
 Dr. Jim & Adelle Gerbracht
 Ali & Alejandra Sullivan
 Margit Bisztray
 Jack Hockett
 Fran & Rob Silverman
 Bob Merritt
 Jill Coyne
 Sue Rodnon
 Rob McNeal
 Lindsay Malboeuf
 Karen Lockwood
 Monica Haskell
 Darlene Pruess
 Yolande Findlay
 Sharona Setlock
 and thousands more...

KW Light Gallery, Rick Boettger, Ed Reilly, Judy Blume, George Cooper, Ed Block, Bob Goldman, Kitty Clements, The Secret Garden, Rosalind Brackenbury, Joel & Erica Biddle, Jon McIntosh

Bob Thixon, Dick Duane, Sandy Lee, Marci Rose, Miles Frieden, Ed Swift, Marc House Nursery, Capt. Vicky Impollomeni, Cafe Med, Way Hoyt, Nils Muensch