

Stilt houses in bad repair

State postpones access by public

BY CURTIS MORGAN
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Stiltsville may be legally in public hands Dec. 1, but it will be weeks, perhaps months, before the public will be allowed to physically set foot in any of the colorful outcrops.

Building engineers who have surveyed the seven private homes in Biscayne Bay found safety flaws in all — from rickety decks to rotten floors to janky roofs. They'll need time before they can be cleared for use, Biscayne National Park Superintendent Linda Cazanovitch said Monday.

"They are worse than I had anticipated," she said. "I'm a little disappointed with the seriousness of some of the issues."

Stiltsville residents, who have fought for two years to have their leases extended or the homes removed from the park, said.

"This is nothing that should come as a shock to the National Park Service," said Bill Tuttle, a Miami attorney who has led negotiations with the park. "This whole thing was contracted from beginning to end."

Residents believe Cazanovitch, who has said the park's ultimate goal is to remove the homes, will simply declare them too expensive to repair and lease.

The park's August announcement to make the homes public, they say, was a ploy to delay community concern about the landmark structure, the last remnants of a ramshackle collection of fishing shacks, gambling dens and nightclubs dating to the 1920s.

"The agenda is to create a paper trail that they hope will justify their actions," said Mike Jenks, an attorney who is co-chairman of the preservation committee for the Miami Springs Power Boat Club, a 77-member group that owns one of largest and best-stocked homes.

Cazanovitch said the remains committed to some still-to-be-defined public use.

"I may just be Pollyanna, but I'm not going to be discouraged by that," she said. But she also admitted "there may be a few more hurdles."

The problems were found during Nov. 1 inspections by park service staff and consultants for the U.S. attorney's office. The consultants raised enough concerns that the U.S. attorney's office sent residents a letter outlining the defects.

THE KEYS

SELLING IN THE SUNSET
PALM LEAVES GET A TWIST



John McKinley of Key West weaves a hat made from the fronds of palm trees Monday at Snappers Beach. McKinley weaves his hats for \$25 at the sunset celebration, a single water-tight event featuring his performance of all types, which takes place each night at Malory Square.

Officials oppose ban on sponging

Favor moratorium on issuing licenses

BY LISA FISHER
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KEY COLONY BEACH — Despite protests from Upper Keys recreational fishermen and charter boat captains, local marine officials have voted against recommending a ban on commercial sponging in the Keys and have passed a resolution that calls for regulation of the fishery, including a moratorium on the issuing of sponging licenses.

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council met Friday in a second marathon sponging workshop to get further comments about the proposed sponge harvesting ban and to decide how to address the controversial activity in sensitive near-shore areas.

A group of Islamorada water enthusiasts has been lobbying for an all-out prohibition of the practice locally, claiming that it adversely affects water quality and wipes out critical refuge for millions of aquatic organisms.

Meanwhile, commercial sponge fishermen and sponging industry representatives have argued that the activities don't pollute Keys waters and say banning it would rob them of their livelihood.

Following a full day of breakout sessions that included testimony from spongers and their opponents, the 18-member council overwhelmingly voted against a sponging ban — only three members favoring a prohibition — and chose to take a less radical approach to the fishery.

Council members are asking the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, which regulates sponging, to coordinate a research program on sponges and the sponging industry in the Keys and adopt comprehensive sponging regulations. The council is also recommending that there be an immediate moratorium on the distribution of commercial sponging licenses except for spongers who have recorded landings in one of the previous three years.

Although the moratorium might sound like an inevitable ban in disguise, sanctuary officials say the recommendation could be interpreted a number of ways depending upon the commission, which has the ultimate say in the matter.

Sanctuary spokeswoman Cherya Heck contends that sponging licenses could be made transferable to keep the fishery open to newcomers or the moratorium could be implemented only temporarily to slow the number of people entering the profession. Although the commission has already banned sponging in both the Everglades and Biscayne Bay national parks, the agency could even waver up ignoring the sanctuary's recommendation and have sponging completely unregulated in the Keys.

"The sanctuary is not recommending a ban, but the message is, 'There's nothing to say they couldn't deal with the issue on entirely different way,'" Heck said. "People from the sponging industry come ready to compromise but the advisory council was not so ready to suggest a ban after all the information they were given."

According to the council's recommendation, the sanctuary would conduct a field and literature research program on sponges and the industry, with a preliminary report to be completed no later than Dec. 31, 2001.

Study topics would include, but not be limited to, the impacts of commercial sponging on diversity of the ecosystem, and the significance of sponges related to water quality — a current source of contention in water-conscious Monroe County.

KEYS CALENDAR

MUSIC

TODAY

- ▶ Bob Smith, 8 p.m., the Hurricanes, mile marker 48.5.
- ▶ Mike McCLOUD, noon to 5 p.m., Schooner Wharf Bar, Key West.

WEDNESDAY

- ▶ Bob Smith, 8 p.m., the Hurricanes, mile marker 48.5.
- ▶ Mike McCLOUD, noon to 5 p.m., The Magic of Frank Everhart, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., Schooner Wharf Bar, Key West.

THURSDAY

- ▶ Blue Skies, 7:30 p.m., Truman's Bar Waterside Restaurant, Hawk's Cay, Duck Key.
- ▶ Sheeba and the Rhythn Kings, 9 p.m., the Hurricanes, mile marker 48.5.
- ▶ Sheeba and the Rhythn Kings, 9 p.m., the Hurricanes, mile marker 48.5.
- ▶ Dan Sullivan, 7:30 p.m., Truman's Bar Waterside Restaurant, Hawk's Cay, Duck Key.
- ▶ Mike McCLOUD & Friends, noon to 5 p.m., Caffeine Carl & The Funky Beans, 7 p.m. to midnight, Schooner Wharf Bar, Key West.

SATURDAY

- ▶ Fifth Annual Historic Seaport Music Festival: For details, call Barbara Wright at 296-7162.
- ▶ Sheeba and the Rhythn Kings performs at 9 p.m. at the Hurricanes, mile marker 48.5.
- ▶ Scott Youngberg performs at 7:30 p.m. at Truman's Bar Waterside Restaurant, Hawk's Cay, Duck Key.
- ▶ Mike McCLOUD & Friends, noon-5 p.m., Caffeine Carl & The Funky Beans, 7 p.m. to midnight, Schooner Wharf Bar, Key West.

FRIDAY

- ▶ Dany Morris performs at 9 p.m. at the Hurricanes, mile marker 48.5.
- ▶ Mike McCLOUD & Friends, noon-5 p.m., The Riggins Party 6:30-10:30 p.m. at Schooner Wharf Bar, Key West.

NOV. 28

- ▶ Dany Morris performs at 9 p.m. at the Hurricanes, mile marker 48.5.
- ▶ Mike McCLOUD & Friends, noon-5 p.m., The Riggins Party 6:30-10:30 p.m. at Schooner Wharf Bar, Key West.

NOV. 29

- ▶ Dany Morris performs at 9 p.m. at the Hurricanes, mile marker 48.5.
- ▶ Mike McCLOUD & Friends, noon-5 p.m., The Riggins Party 6:30-10:30 p.m. at Schooner Wharf Bar, Key West.

NOV. 30

- ▶ Blue Bayou performs at 7:30 p.m. at Truman's Bar Waterside Restaurant, Hawk's Cay, Duck Key.
- ▶ Mike McCLOUD & Friends, noon-5 p.m., The Riggins Party 6:30-10:30 p.m. at Schooner Wharf Bar, Key West.

FRIDAY - SUNDAY

- ▶ Moon Over Buffalo, 8 p.m. at Marathon Community Theater. Force about a stage couple who get a shot at starring in a movie. Misunderstanding rule on madcap adventures. For details, call 742-0886.

ART

FRIDAY

- ▶ Arts and crafts show at Holiday Isle Resort. For details, call Elmer at 664-2321.
- ▶ Paintings by Yasu exhibition at Bummus Gallery, Key West Museum of Art and History, Key West. Call 295-6919 for details.
- ▶ Performances of Key West by Paul Collins at Key West Museum of Art and History, 201 Front St., Key West. Details call 295-6919.
- ▶ Photography by Ed Cox of today's Cuba at Key West Museum of Art and History, 201 Front St., Key West. Details call 295-6919.

OTHER

THURSDAY

- ▶ Pirates in Paradise 2000 festival at Key West Historic Seaport and Mal Fisher Maritime Museum. For details, call Julie McEnroe at 299-9653.