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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Format of the Comprehensive Plan

The Monroe County Year 2010 Comprehensive Plan is divided into three volumes: a Technical Document, Policy Document, and Map Atlas. The Technical Document contains background information including the technical support data and analyses for the various elements of the plan. The Policy Document contains the goals, objectives and policies for each element, the capital improvements implementation program, and the Comprehensive Plan monitoring and evaluation procedures. The Map Atlas contains maps depicting background information for the various elements (Existing Land Use, Natural Features, Existing Transportation, etc.), as well as the Future Land Use and Future Transportation Map series.

Pursuant to Chapters 163 and 380, Florida Statutes (F.S.), the Technical Document does not require adoption by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). The unadopted status of the Technical Document allows for continual updating and refinement of the data contained in this section of the Comprehensive Plan without requiring plan amendments. The following sections of the Comprehensive Plan require adoption by the BOCC:

- (a) the Goals, Objectives and Policies contained in the Policy Document;
- (b) the requirements for capital improvements implementation, including the Five-Year Schedule of Capital Improvements, contained in the Policy Document;
- (c) the procedures for monitoring and evaluation of the plan, contained in the Policy Document;
- (d) the Future Land Use and Transportation Map series, contained in the Map Atlas; and
- (e) the Plan Adoption Ordinance, included as an appendix to the Policy Document.

## 1.2 Regional Setting

Monroe County is located at the southernmost tip of the State of Florida. The Keys portion of Monroe County consists of a series of islands, or keys, extending in a southwesterly direction into the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. The mainland portion of Monroe County is bordered by Collier County to the north and Dade County to the south (see Figure 1.1).

The total area of Monroe County is approximately 1.2 million acres, or approximately 1,875 square miles (see Table 1.1). Large portions of this total consist of submerged lands associated with parks and preserves under the jurisdiction of the federal and state governments. The total area of the County exclusive of submerged lands is approximately 566,655 acres, or approximately 885 square miles. The Keys account for approximately 65,443 acres or 102 square miles of this total, including the unincorporated portion of the Keys and the three incorporated cities of Key West, Key Colony Beach and Layton.

**Table 1.1 Monroe County Land Area**

Division	Area
<b>Mainland</b>	
Everglades National Park	943,725 acres (1)
Big Cypress National Preserve	126,437 acres (2)
<b>Subtotal/Mainland</b>	<b>1,070,162 acres</b>
<b>Incorporated Cities</b>	
City of Key West	3,730 acres (3)
City of Key Colony Beach	285 acres (4)
City of Layton	85 acres (5)
<b>Subtotal/Incorporated Cities</b>	<b>4,100 acres</b>
Keys (Unincorporated Portion)	61,343 acres (6)
Fort Jefferson/Tortugas	64,739 acres (7)
<b>Total/Monroe County</b>	<b>1,200,344 acres (8)</b>

Notes: (1)The total area indicated for Everglades National Park includes approximately 568,989 acres of submerged land and approximately 374,736 acres of upland. Source: National Park Service.

(2)The total area indicated for Big Cypress National Preserve includes 75 acres held in private ownership. Source: National Park Service.

(3)Source: City of Key West Comprehensive Plan, 1991.

(4)Source: City of Key Colony Beach Draft 1990 Master Plan, 1990.

(5)Source: City of Layton Proposed Comprehensive Plan, 1990.

(6)Monroe County Growth Management Division and Wallace Roberts & Todd, 1991. Area is for the unincorporated Keys portion of the County only, exclusive of Fort Jefferson/Dry tortugas and offshore islands.

(7)The total area indicated for Fort Jefferson/Dry Tortugas includes 64,700 acres of submerged lands (61,480 acres Federal, 3,220 acres State of Florida) and 39.3 acres of upland (Federal). Source: National Park Service, Florida Department of Natural Resources.

(8)Total for all areas indicated in Table 1.1. Includes submerged lands and uplands, but does not include offshore islands. Upland portion estimated at 566,655 acres.

As shown in Table 1.1, approximately 90 percent of the area of Monroe County is located on the mainland. The entire mainland portion of the County is located within either the Everglades National Park or

Big Cypress National Preserve. This part of Monroe County is virtually uninhabited and consists almost entirely of federally owned and managed park lands. Therefore, the Monroe County Year 2010 Comprehensive Plan is focused primarily on the Florida Keys exclusive of the three municipalities of Key West, Key Colony Beach, and Layton, which were incorporated in 1928, 1955 and 1963, respectively.

The unincorporated portion of the Florida Keys includes 38 main keys which are connected to mainland Dade County and to each other by US 1 (the Overseas Highway). The Keys extend along US 1 from the Dade County line to Key West for a distance of approximately 112 miles. Because of their unique configuration, the Keys are commonly grouped into three areas: the Upper Keys, Middle Keys, and Lower Keys. The Upper Keys consist of unincorporated Monroe County north of the Whale Harbor Bridge between Windley Key/Holiday Isle and Upper Matecumbe Key/Islamorada. The Middle Keys extend from the Whale Harbor Bridge to the Seven Mile Bridge at Bahia Honda, exclusive of the cities of Layton and Key Colony Beach. The Lower Keys consist of the area south of the Seven Mile Bridge, exclusive of the city of Key West.

The unincorporated Keys also include over 200 offshore islands and the Dry Tortugas, the site of Fort Jefferson. The offshore islands consist of numerous small, mostly undisturbed islands which are not connected to US 1 or other roads by bridges. The Dry Tortugas, the las outer islands of the Keys, are located approximately 70 miles west of Key West (see Figure 1.1). The Dry Tortugas were discovered by Ponce de Leon in 1513 and were used by pirates as a refuge until 1821, when Florida became part of the Union. After the islands gained strategic significance, the Army started construction of Fort Jefferson. The fort was later used as a prison during the Civil War. Given its importance in American history, the islands and their surrounding waters were designated as Fort Jefferson National Monument in 1935.

### **1.3 Government Structure**

Monroe County, created in 1824, is a political subdivision of the State of Florida. The powers and authority of Monroe County government emanate from the Florida State Legislature. Monroe County is a non-chartered county and the government functions in accordance with the Florida Constitution.

The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), which performs the legislative and executive function of the county government, consists of five members elected at large by the citizens. Each commissioner represents one of the five county districts and is elected for a term of four years.

### **1.4 Area of Critical State Concern Designation**

Because of the extent and diversity of its natural resources, and in order to protect these resources and the environment of the Florida Keys, the unincorporated area of Monroe County (excluding the mainland) was initially designated an Area of Critical State Concern pursuant to Chapter 380.06, F.S. by order of the Governor and Cabinet sitting as the Administration Commission. However, those provisions of Chapter 380.05, F.S. governing designations of Areas of Critical State Concern were subsequently declared unconstitutional.

In 1979, the Florida Keys Areas of Critical State Concern was redesignated by the Legislature as set forth in Chapter 380.0552, F.S. In 1980, the Administration Commission ratified the Area of Critical State Concern designation. More recently, the Administration Commission extended the boundaries of the Florida Keys Area of Critical State Concern 250 feet from the existing shoreline boundaries.

In conjunction with designation of the Florida Keys as an Area of Critical State Concern, the Florida Legislature enacted the "Principles for Guiding Development" which are set forth in Chapter 380.0552(7). The Goals, Objectives and Policies contained in the Policy Document of the Comprehensive Plan must be consistent with these principles.