

L58-ORP (WSC)

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Memorandum

To: Assistant Director, Cooperative Activities

From: Chief, Office of Resource Planning, WSC

Subject: Trip Report Wassaw Island

Through arrangements made with Mr. Charles Ewing, one of the Trustees of Wassaw Island, Bill Smith and I spent two days, October 25-26, on Wassaw familiarizing ourselves with its resources.

With Mr. Ewing as guide, we thoroughly explored the forest, beach, dry marsh, and pond areas of this most natural northernmost piece of the Golden Isles chain. We were highly impressed with the forest cover predominated by slash pine, live oak, southern magnolia, and palmettos. The soft sand and easy sloped beach compliments the spanish moss hung vegetation and the processes of natural sand erosion and accretion livened the interest.

The most important factor evident, however, is the overall naturalness of the island. Except for the main housing complex and the primitive road system, it has hardly been altered by the hand of man. Even these two man-made intrusions are anything but oppressive. This is especially true of the roads which have been so aligned and maintained that they are a part of the landscape and provide pleasant foot access to all parts of the island.

Unfortunately, Wassaw is too small to consider individually as an addition to the System. Its best use would be as part of an overall Golden Isles complex with Wassaw retaining its integrity as a natural reserve area, with selected others of the group, which have already been altered by man, fulfilling the recreation needs of a seashore. It would be most unfortunate to plan any development on Wassaw that would attract hordes of visitors. This textbook example of the shore processes should be protected from destruction.

There is evidently some concern among the Trustees that the State is casting covetous eyes on the island. A causeway has been proposed to connect Skidaway Island with the mainland, thus, shortening the overwater distance to Wassaw to only four miles. The rumor is that the State would like to complete such a structure the remainder of the way and turn it into another Jekyll.

If Wassaw, Cumberland, Ossabaw, Sapelo, and St. Catherines are worth saving perhaps we should get our ducks in a row and proceed with the Golden Isles study. Only then can we make a solid determination for a National Seashore and the parts each individual island will play in the overall scheme.

(Sgd.) Edward S. Peetz

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cc:

Mr. Steenhagen ORP-WSC

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