

# Community Background Report

## Coopertown

### County

Miami-Dade

### Boundaries

North: Tamiami Trail

South: Tamiami Trail

West: Western boundary of Water Conservation Area 3B (L-67 extension)

East: Krome Avenue

### Community Type

Neighborhood

### History

Coopertown is a small, unincorporated community within the Water Conservation Area 3B of Miami Dade County. It is an outlying settlement with a resident population of less than 20 persons. It is located about 20 miles west of Miami on U.S. Route 41 (also known as State Road 90, Tamiami Trail or Southwest 8<sup>th</sup> Street). Coopertown is most notable as the home of Coopertown Airboat Rides, a tourist attraction founded in 1945. Originally a Seminole Indian Village occupied by Jimmy Osceola and other Seminole Indians, Coopertown was founded by John Cooper and has remained with the Cooper family since. Originally from White Oak, Missouri, where they came from a large farming family, the three Cooper brothers came to the Tamiami Trail from Melbourne, Florida, looking for better frog hunting in the Everglades. By 1945, John Cooper had a small frogging boat he used on the East-West Canal along the Tamiami Trail. Passing motorists noticed it and would ask for a ride in the interesting-looking airboat. At first, it was a few people, but as more and more curious people stopped, John built a small passenger airboat to accommodate them. As the traffic down the Tamiami Trail grew, so did Coopertown. Today, the Kennon family, direct descendants of the Coopers, run the Coopertown Original Airboat Tours. This place has become an Everglades landmark, with a store and restaurant.

After World War II, a series of levees, canals, and control gates were created by the Army Corps of Engineers. Water Conservation Areas 3B contains such levees to control water flow from the Everglades from flooding populated areas near the coasts. This also acted as a buffer by protecting sensitive regions of the Everglades and surrounding wetlands from future development, as set forth by state law. Due to changes in weather, wildlife, hunting seasons, and

human environmental impact, the control of water has to be maintained frequently. This responsibility belongs to the state agency called the South Florida Water Management District.

## Business Landscape

Coopertown and nearby businesses depend on tourism to the Everglades. Major activity in this area is also dependent upon Everglades restoration and related legislation. In March 2009, Congress approved an Omnibus Appropriations Act, that included a directive to the National Park Service: "To immediately evaluate the feasibility of additional bridge length, beyond that to be constructed pursuant to the MWD Project (16 U.S.C. SS 410r-S), including a continuous bridge, or additional bridges or some combination thereof, for the Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41) to restore more natural water flow to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay and for the purpose of restoring habitat within the Park and the ecological connectivity between the Park and the Water Conservation Areas." In response to the mandate came the "Next Steps" plan, with several alternatives proposed for adding various lengths of elevated bridging to the roadway, allowing for increased passage of water under the bridging. The recommended course of action for the Next Steps plan would add up to 5.5 miles of additional bridging, with a 1.77-mile section of bridge running directly past Coopertown.

## Transportation

With its remote location in the Everglades, the only roadway serving Coopertown is U.S. Route 41, also known as State Road 90, Tamiami Trail, and Southwest 8<sup>th</sup> Street. As part of Phase 2 of the Next Steps plan for Everglades water flow restoration, additional features were added to the plan in 2019, as follows: "Replacing the six proposed 72-foot wide culverts with 60-foot wide slab bridges; enlarging the swale system treatment capacity by 50% to meet the Outstanding Florida Water (OFW) designation for ENP; adding left turn lanes to improve traffic safety at the Coopertown and Gator Park commercial sites, the Airboat Association, and the Miccosukee Osceola Camp; and adding a new access lane, diagonal parking, retaining walls, and wider shoulders for improved safety at the Miccosukee Tigertail Camp."

## Reference

1. Wikipedia. Coopertown, Florida, 2020. Url: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coopertown,\\_Florida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coopertown,_Florida)
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3. Google Maps. Coopertown, Florida, 2020. Url: <https://www.google.com/maps/>
4. CoopertownAirboats.com. Coopertown History, 2020. Url: <http://coopertownairboats.com/package/history>

5. National Park Service. Series: Mega-Projects Fact Sheets. Tamiami Trail: Next Steps. Updated August 11, 2020. Url: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/tamiami-trail-next-steps.htm>
6. National Park Service. Tamiami Trail Modifications: Next Steps Project/EIS, Phase 2. April 9, 2020 Update. Url: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=26159>