

In the USA, the Fakahatchee Strand forms part of the Florida Everglades. Three hundred and fifteen Ghost Orchids are scattered across the Fakahatchee's 84,000 acres.

The Florida Ghost Orchids were the inspiration for the book "The Orchid Thief" and the film "Adaptation".

Visitors are charged \$40.00 for swamp walks, to catch a glimpse of an elusive orchid.



Cayman's unique Ghost Orchid

Here in Cayman, the Ironwood Forest is just 70 acres. Individual trees carry an amazing 30 Cayman Ghost orchids or more!!!

Do we think OUR natural heritage is WORTHLESS?



See inside for details

FROM READING THE LOCAL PRESS you could be forgiven for thinking that...

The giant roundabout once slated for the forest was recently removed as a compromise to environmentalists **IN FACT** it was removed several years ago for economic reasons.

We will all pay the price of preserving the Ironwood Forest **IN FACT** We have ALREADY paid for it. There is almost \$21 million dollars in the *Environment Fund* - money taken from US and visitors to the Islands. Locked away by Government, OUR Environment Fund is helping balance THEIR budget - not protect OUR environment.

"Little or nothing" can be done to reroute the road. **IN FACT** Little or nothing will be done, IF YOU do little or nothing. Our politicians may not all care about your NATURAL HERITAGE... but they DO care about your VOTES.

Be the change you want to see

Mahatma Gandhi

www.ironwood-forest.com

**IRONWOOD
FOREST**

FAQ



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

How big is the Ironwood Forest and where is it?

About 70 acres. The forest is adjacent the University College - within walking distance of many George Town schools.

How many species of plants and trees are there?

Over 70 seen to-date. Twenty species are listed as *Critically Endangered* in Cayman. "Old George" naturally survives only in this forest – nowhere else in the world.

How can a road be run through a forest containing so many protected species?

The species in the forest are NOT protected. There is NO law to protect any species of plant or tree in the Cayman Islands, nor to establish the forest as a "protected area" – both are provisions of the seven-year delayed *Conservation Law*.

What part of the forest is the most important?

What part of your car is the most important - the steering wheel or the engine? The Ironwood forest is a complicated *mosaic* of different interdependent habitats. Different parts of the forest are important for different reasons. Some areas contain more rare plants and trees. Some have interesting geological features, like cliffs and caves. Others are low-lying and swampy. The swamp provides the moist air which enables the forest to support such an exceptional diversity of plants – similar to a warm and humid hot house.

What difference does it make, if the road runs through the middle of the forest, or around the edge?

If the road runs through the middle, the potential value of the forest as an outdoor classroom for our children and a nature-tourism attraction for visitors will be lost. No one wants a nature walk next to a busy highway. The middle route will also expose the heart of the forest to *edge effects* which could destroy the delicate balance of the whole forest system.

What are edge effects?

Edge effects occur at the "edges" of forests. A road through the middle of the forest affects, not only the land beneath, but also the forest edges on either side. The road will introduce sunlight and dry air to the moist air system, and encourage fast-growing weed species like Wild Tamarind to flourish in the heart of the forest (this is why you see Wild Tamarind along Cayman's roads; not slow-growing Ironwood). Another important *edge effect* is wind damage. During storms, winds tend to blow OVER the top of intact tree-tops, but trees lining the edges of a road are exposed to the full force of the wind. This is why trees often fall across roads during a hurricane. Once they topple, fast-growing weed species replace them. In this way, an *edge effect* can work its way deeper into a forest over time.

Similar high-speed 2x2 lane highways are now gazetted through both the Mastic Reserve and the Salina Reserve

SOCIAL IMPACT

Who owns the Ironwood Forest?

Approximately one quarter of the Ironwood Forest is CROWN LAND. This portion is in the south-west corner of the forest, adjacent the College. The rest is in PRIVATE OWNERSHIP, by individuals who have maintained the forest in pristine condition. Several land owners own the land immediately to the south of the proposed road. A single land owner owns the land to the north, and it is his land through which the road will run. He has more to lose than most from the building of this road, and he is in FAVOUR of the road being rerouted.

Some landowners are angry that they have not been consulted about this project?

Yes. ALL interested parties should have been consulted about the proposed road during the very first stages of the planning process... and certainly long before the road was gazetted. There is no excuse for landowners to be kept in the dark. There is no excuse for damaging private property. The process of *Environmental Impact Assessment* EIA ensures that all Environmental, Social and Economic impacts of proposed projects are assessed and discussed – but there is no requirement for EIA in Cayman.

I heard that a *Compulsory Purchase Order* is the only way to protect the forest?

This is NOT TRUE. Firstly, there is NO LAW which enables the Cayman Islands Government to designate new protected areas on the land... so even if they were to get the land through compulsory purchase, it would only become "crown land" – it would not be protected in anyway.

The ONLY ways currently to protect the land would be either:

1. Private landowners decide, for themselves, not to develop their land, forgoing any profit from developing their property.
2. Landowners sell / donate their property to the *National Trust*.
3. Government enters into a *Management Agreement* with the landowners. A *Management Agreement* is a contract negotiated between the *Protection Agency* and *landowners*, in which the landowners receive an agreed annual payment in return for not developing their land. This provides a mechanism for the landowner to receive payment for the ecological value of their land, without losing ownership.

I want to save the forest, but I do not want to sit in traffic!

More roads are not a long-term solution to Cayman's growing traffic problem. A 2x2 lane highway cannot possibly feed into 1x1 lane Walkers Road without a bottleneck at the intersection. Effective traffic planning, regulation and management is the ONLY solution for us, as detailed in the NRA's own long-delayed *National Transport Plan*.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

What are the options?

Take a look at the map on the back cover.

1. The Government's *proposed bypass* follows the thick RED route, 2x2 lanes through the middle of the forest. This route DOES NOT "clip the edge" of the forest – it clips the edge of the crown land, which is in the middle of the forest.
2. An alternative 1x1 lane *alternative route* has been proposed around the edge of the forest. This is shown in ORANGE. This is less damaging, but GIVEN THE VALUE OF THE FOREST IS ANY DAMAGE ACCEPTABLE?
3. Government could determine a completely different route for this road, leaving the Ironwood Forest intact.
4. Government could go back to the drawing board, and decide if this road will really benefit Cayman in the long-term. The preservation of the Ironwood Forest could provide the impetus for a better public transport and traffic management system, as per the NRA's *National Transport Plan*.

Government has estimated that it will cost \$7-12 million to re-route the road. Is this true?

How can a 4000 ft 1x1 lane parkway cost \$7-12 million more than a 3200 ft 2x2 lane highway? Ask to see their calculations!

I heard the alternative route around the forest will cross swamp and high cliff?

BOTH routes cross swamp and high cliff. The topography of both routes is challenging... but both are similar. Ask to see an elevations map from *Lands and Survey*.

I heard more houses will be lost to the alternative route?

This is NOT TRUE. The *alternative route* is closer to houses, but is a 20-25mph parkway... similar to the dimensions of any other residential driveway. NO additional houses are effected by the alternative route, and many will suffer significantly less disturbance, compared to having a 2x2 40mph highway at the bottom of their yards. See the map on the back cover.

What is the Environmental Protection Fund?

Government Motion No.14/97 (1997), states that the Fund is established "for the purpose of defraying expenditure incurred in protecting and preserving the environment of the Islands". The Fund is a departure tax. Each time a visitor or a resident leaves Cayman, \$2-4 is added to the price of their ticket towards preserving our environment. The fund nets about \$5 million each year and CURRENTLY CONTAINS ALMOST \$21 MILLION. Landowners could be offered funds to help THEM protect the Ironwood Forest.

Make sure Government's decision is in the best interests of
**YOU
YOUR CHILDREN
CAYMAN**