



P.O. Box 30211
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33303

March 18, 2014

Superintendent Dan Kimball
Everglades National Park
40001 State Road 9336
Homestead, FL 33034

Re: Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)
for Acquisition of Florida Power and Light Company Land in East
Everglades Expansion Area

Dear Superintendent Kimball:

Thank you for once again allowing South Florida Wildlands Association (SFWA) the opportunity to comment on the disposition of land owned by Florida Power and Light inside the borders of the East Everglades Expansion Area. We have shared our position with you on this topic several times - through written comments, small group meetings, as well as oral comment provided at public meetings.

Our written comments of July 25, 2011 (submitted with the Center for Biological Diversity or CBD and Public Employees for Environmental Protection or PEER) can be found at the link below. We wish them to be incorporated into these comments in their entirety. See:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/sy8ubmd14pp87iq/FPL%20Corridor%20scoping%20comments%20SFWA%20CBD%20PEER.pdf>

We have also recently submitted comments on the latest Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) along with a coalition of twenty other local, state, and national environmental organizations. We wish to incorporate these into our current comments as well.

See:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/zetvgiedwbgbpbiz/FPL%20DEIS%20Group%20Comments%20Mar14.pdf>

These additional comments from SFWA are more limited in scope.

First of all SFWA supports Alternative 2 as a means of NPS acquisition of the FPL property. As described in the DEIS:

"Under alternative 2, the 320-acre FPL corridor would be acquired directly by purchase or through the exercise of eminent domain authority by the United States. This alternative would result in an increase of 320 acres of NPS owned land within the authorized boundary of the park and would allow for flowage of water on this property. The construction scenario associated with alternative 2 assumes that FPL would likely acquire a replacement corridor east of the existing park boundary to meet its transmission needs and the transmission lines would be built outside the park."

However, while we fully support this acquisition "by purchase or through the exercise of eminent domain authority", SFWA makes no assumption as to future FPL transmission lines "outside the park." These lines would emanate from FPL's Turkey Point Nuclear Plant - which the company is attempting to expand dramatically with the addition of two new nuclear generators of more than 1000 MW each. As a result of:

- rising sea levels which are predicted to inundate coastal areas of Miami-Dade in the near future;
- negative impacts to the environs of Biscayne Bay - and numerous listed and non-listed species for which the bay is habitat - from releases of steam and small aerosol droplets from planned cooling towers. Water coming from those towers will contain many undesirable constituents - e.g. viruses, cleaning chemicals, pharmaceuticals - due to the use of recycled Miami-Dade waste water which cannot be completely purified before use even by means of reverse osmosis. Droplets will not evaporate due to the high humidity of the area and have the capacity to disperse over a wide area to include the bay, reefs, islands, and the mainland;
- increased likelihood of saltwater intrusion into the Biscayne Aquifer due to the use of cooling water drawn from beneath Biscayne Bay during periods when sufficient Miami-Dade waste water is not available for cooling;
- the potential for a catastrophic situation at the nuclear plant from the impact of a high intensity hurricane which has already shown the capacity to cause widespread damage to the Turkey Point facility. See the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's assessment of damage to Turkey Point from Hurricane Andrew during the early nineties:

<http://www.osti.gov/scitech/servlets/purl/10158520>

"The plant lost all offsite power during the storm and for over 5 days...All offsite communications were lost during the storm for about 4 hours, and the access roads to the plant were blocked with trees and utility poles."

Other damage - including the destruction of a chimney from one of the existing fossil fuel plants on the site - was also reported.

With thousands of pounds of spent radioactive fuel rods already piling up on the shores of Biscayne Bay, SFWA strongly opposes any further expansion of the Turkey Point Nuclear Plant and associated power lines. The plant needs to be phased out now as existing structures near the end of their operational life spans. As former Biscayne National Park Superintendent Mark Lewis shared with me during a meeting on the plant expansion in Homestead, "Even if I supported nuclear power in Florida, this would be the last place I would put a new nuclear power plant."

SFWA agrees with that statement wholeheartedly. Underneath the bureaucratic language of the DEIS lies, what is frankly, a completely illogical plan which puts at risk not only the Everglades ecosystem and its many resident plants and animals, but millions of inhabitants who will not be able to make a timely evacuation in the event of nuclear catastrophe at the plant. SFWA will continue to oppose the expansion of the Turkey Point Nuclear Plant and the power lines associated with that expansion regardless of whether the lines are located inside the park or outside of it.

Secondly, at both the public meeting held on February 19, 2014 and in the "Draft Environmental Impact Statement - Acquisition of Florida Power and Light Company Land in the East Everglades Expansion Area" released to the public, NPS explained its decision not to release a "preferred alternative" in this way:

"NPS PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

NEPA regulations do not require identifying a preferred alternative in a draft EIS if the agency does not have one. NPS does not have a preferred alternative at this time and wants to obtain public, agency and tribal comments on the alternatives under consideration during

the public comment period on the draft EIS to help inform this important decision. Furthermore, much of the technical information associated with transmission line siting, construction, and impact assessment contained in this draft EIS is derived from documents submitted for the state site certification process. Since this process is nearing conclusion, the NPS would use any new or additional information from the final certification decision and record to also assist us in making a decision about the agency preferred alternative. A preferred alternative would be identified and announced in the final EIS."

While we accept the fact that, for whatever reason, NPS is unable to release a preferred alternative at this time, we strongly object to NPS's intent - announced at the most recent public meeting at Florida International University and in the passage above - of going straight to a Final EIS and then Record of Decision (ROD) without the public having a chance to offer formal public comment on the decision at both a public meeting and in writing. The waiting time between the release of a final decision document (and its publication in the Federal Register) and the signing of a ROD does not constitute in any way shape or form a meaningful process where the public can weigh in on the decision. Public comments on a future decision might well bring up areas of analysis that NPS has not considered or overlooked - or might even bring up entirely new information.

A good example of this type of new information can be found in a recent paper published in the peer reviewed journal "Conservation Biology."

See - Tyler, N., Stokkan, K.-A., Hogg, C., Nelleman, C., Vistnes, A.-I. and Jeffery, G. (2014), Ultraviolet Vision and Avoidance of Power Lines in Birds and Mammals. *Conservation Biology*.
doi: 10.1111/cobi.12262

A good summary article appeared in the "Independent" (as well as numerous publications world-wide) and began with this paragraph:

"Wild animals see overhead power cables in remote regions of the countryside as disturbing lines of flashing lights, which could explain why many species avoid electricity pylons to the point where their natural territories become seriously fragmented, scientists said."

See: <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/powerlines-disturb-animal-habitats-by-appearing-as-disturbing-flashes-of-uv-light-invisible-to-the-human-eye-9187631.html>

See also this research on the widespread sensitivity of mammals to radiation in the ultraviolet frequency in a peer-reviewed study titled "The spectral transmission of ocular media suggests ultraviolet sensitivity is widespread among mammals" and published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society - Biological Sciences in the United Kingdom.

<http://rspb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/281/1780/20132995.full.pdf+html>

A great deal of additional research on a huge variety potential impacts must be thoroughly investigated before any decision - especially one which would allow FPL to build three massive transmission towers along the east side of Everglades National Park - takes place. The area is home to numerous federally listed animal species as well as serving as the gateway to Florida's iconic natural area for hundreds of thousands of park visitors annually.

I should also point out that the legislation referred to in the DEIS which authorized (but did not mandate) this federal action was inserted into the body of a much larger piece of federal legislation (the 2009 Public Lands Omnibus Act). My understanding is that

no debate on the floor of either the House or Senate was ever carried out on this significant piece of legislation prior to its passage. It is therefore up to the public and the NPS to conduct the necessary analysis BEFORE a final decision is reached. Some of that analysis might include information from the very processes NPS identifies as the reason they have not yet identified a preferred alternative - but which will be resolved at a future time. The public needs to review that information as well - in addition to NPS.

While NEPA may not require a preferred alternative be included in a DEIS, the lining of the Shark River Slough with massive powerlines which can seriously impact both the biological environment and the human, is not a decision which should be made without a formal public comment period. That omission should also not be taken lightly. SFWA strongly urges NPS to allow this process to take place in the spirit in which NEPA was written and do not hide behind a technicality of the law to shut the public out of a review and comment period on a final agency action. Too much is at stake.

Best regards,

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