



EVERGLADES COALITION

Resolution in Support of Acquiring the Mineral Rights within Big Cypress National Preserve

WHEREAS, the Greater Everglades is recognized as one of the world's most unique and spectacular natural wonders, and there has been a long-term interest in protecting and restoring the ecosystem due to its incredible economic and ecological value;

WHEREAS, the wetlands of the Greater Everglades play a crucial role in flowing waters to vital estuaries and recharging the aquifers that supply drinking water to nine million people and thereby supports Florida's tourism, fishing, and real estate economies;

WHEREAS, the Greater Everglades includes within it the western Everglades, a substantial portion of which is protected by Big Cypress National Preserve, an integral watershed that provides over 40% of the water flowing through the Greater Everglades and into Everglades National Park and Florida Bay;

WHEREAS, Big Cypress National Preserve conserves over 729,000 acres of freshwater swamp and native habitats in the Greater Everglades ecosystem, and contains a mixture of tropical and temperate plant communities that are home to diverse wildlife, including the endangered Florida panther and the famous ghost orchid;

WHEREAS, Big Cypress National Preserve was established by Congress in 1974, "to assure the preservation, conservation, and protection of the natural, scenic, hydrologic, floral and faunal, and recreational values of the Big Cypress Watershed..." (16 U.S.C 698f(a)) and the enabling legislation provided for the customary use and occupancy rights of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida;

WHEREAS, the subsurface mineral rights in Big Cypress were retained by the private landowner resulting in a "split estate," and several oil drilling sites continue to operate with various oil companies leasing the rights to drill over the years;

WHEREAS, in 2017-2018, the Burnett Oil Company conducted a seismic testing survey that caused damage within 110 square miles of the preserve, including cutting down over five hundred of the preserve's iconic cypress trees, and subsequently applied for permits to initiate new oil development;

WHEREAS, the damage and scars on the landscape from the seismic exploration are visible in the preserve to this day;

WHEREAS, oil and gas exploration and development pose a significant threat to Florida's water supply, tribal cultural resources, wildlife, ecosystem and community health, and the success of ongoing state and federal investments in Everglades restoration;

The Everglades Coalition is a 501(c)3 alliance of local, state, and national conservation organizations dedicated to the full protection and restoration of America's Everglades.

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WHEREAS, protecting Big Cypress National Preserve from further oil and gas exploration and development is of paramount importance;

WHEREAS, a partial acquisition by the Department of the Interior of the mineral rights underlying Big Cypress National Preserve held by a given private owner would not provide adequate protection from further oil and gas exploration and development by such owner;

WHEREAS, an acquisition by the Department of the Interior of privately held mineral rights underlying Big Cypress National Preserve must fully extinguish the rights of entities leasing such rights to provide adequate protection from further oil and gas exploration and development;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED ON MARCH 26TH 2025:

The Everglades Coalition supports acquisition by the Department of the Interior of all mineral rights within Big Cypress National Preserve held by any given private owner, with the effect of preventing any further exercise of such mineral rights, to protect the lands, waters and cultural resources of the Greater Everglades ecosystem and prevent further harm to Big Cypress National Preserve from the negative impacts of oil and gas exploration and development within a unit of the National Park system.



Mark Perry
Co-Chair



Kelly Cox
Co-Chair

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