



Everglades Coalition

1000 Friends of Florida
Arthur R. Marshall Foundation
Audubon Florida
Audubon of Southwest Florida
Audubon of the Western Everglades
Audubon Society of the Everglades
Backcountry Fly Fishers of Naples
Bullsugar Alliance
Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association/
Riverwatch
Center for Biological Diversity
Clean Water Action
Conservancy of Southwest Florida
Defenders of Wildlife
"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society
Earthjustice
Environment Florida
Everglades Foundation
Everglades Law Center
Everglades Trust
Florida Conservation Voters Education Fund
Florida Defenders of the Environment
Florida Keys Environmental Fund
Florida Native Plant Society
Florida Oceanographic Society
Friends of the Arthur R. Marshall
Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Everglades
Hendry-Glades Audubon Society
International Dark-Sky Association,
FL Chapter
Izaak Walton League of America
Izaak Walton League Florida Division
Izaak Walton League Florida Keys Chapter
Izaak Walton League Mangrove Chapter
Last Stand
League of Women Voters of Florida
Loxahatchee River Coalition
Martin County Conservation Alliance
Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition
Miami Waterkeeper
National Audubon Society
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
North Carolina Outward Bound School
Ocean Research & Conservation Association
Reef Relief
Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation
Save It Now, Glades!
Sierra Club
Sierra Club Florida Chapter
Sierra Club Broward Group
Sierra Club Calusa Group
Sierra Club Central Florida Group
Sierra Club Loxahatchee Group
Sierra Club Miami Group
Snook and Gamefish Foundation
South Florida Audubon Society
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
The Florida Wildlife Federation
The Institute for Regional Conservation
The National Wildlife Federation
The Urban Environment League of
Greater Miami
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership
Tropical Audubon Society

January 13, 2018

Everglades National Park
Attention: Agnes McLean
Old Tamiami Trail Modifications EA
950 N. Krome Avenue, Homestead FL 33030

Re: Support for Modifications to Old Tamiami Trail to Benefit Everglades National Park

Dear Ms. McLean:

On behalf of the 62 member organizations of the Everglades Coalition committed to the protection and restoration of America's Everglades, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Old Tamiami Trail Modifications Environmental Assessment (EA) released by the National Park Service (NPS) in December 2017.

The Everglades Coalition supports advancing modifications to Old Tamiami Trail as outlined in the preferred alternative, which includes 5.45 miles of road removal to facilitate restoration of the natural ecosystem. This project was authorized by Congress within the Central Everglades Plan (CEP) in 2016. In combination with other CEP South project components, the removal of Old Tamiami Trail will enhance sheetflow from Water Conservation Area (WCA) 3A into Shark River Slough via the S-12C and S-12D structures. The Everglades Coalition fully supports the project purpose of enhancing natural resources of Everglades National Park (ENP) by improving marsh connectivity and wetland functionality.

We appreciate NPS leadership in advancing the EA for removal of Old Tamiami Trail.

As stated in the document, these modifications to Tamiami Trail will help accomplish the NPS mission to "preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations."

Tamiami Trail has been an obstruction to freshwater flow into the Everglades since its construction in 1928. The Everglades Coalition has long supported

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efforts to bridge Tamiami Trail, reestablishing freshwater flow and reconnecting habitat into ENP. With the first mile of bridging fully constructed and operational, and another 2.6 miles of bridging currently underway, we are beginning to realize the ecosystem benefits of that project. The urgent need for this project was highlighted during the extreme wet season events of 2017, when both Hurricane Irma and other isolated downpour incidents left the entire ecosystem inundated with water. Additional bridging and road raising along Tamiami Trail, coupled with the important work outlined in this EA to remove obstacles that currently inhibit flow, is critical for ENP and the entire Greater Everglades. Among other benefits, the preferred alternative will:

- **Improve hydrology and water quality.** “Removal of almost the entire Old Tamiami Trail would increase hydrologic connectivity, improve sheetflow, increase stages, and increase flow capacity at S-12C and S-12D” (Chapter 4, p. 57).
- **Expand wetlands and improve vegetation conditions.** The preferred alternative would expand critical ENP habitat, with up to 31 acres of uplands converted to wetlands. The outlined modifications to hydrologic connectivity would “improve vegetation and wetlands south of the roadway, resulting in beneficial impacts” (Chapter 4, pg. 60).
- **Provide benefits to the Everglades Snail Kite.** “Removal of 5.45 miles of the Old Tamiami Trail would result in long-term, direct and indirect, beneficial impacts from increased prey (apple snail) abundance and foraging opportunities associated with increased hydroperiods in the park and a net increase in wetland habitat. Cumulative impacts would be long term and beneficial” (Chapter 4, p. 64).
- **Provide benefits to colonial wading birds including the Little Blue Heron, Tricolored Heron, Reddish Egret, and Roseate Spoonbill.** “Removing 5.45 miles of the Old Tamiami Trail would increase wetland habitat in the project area by up to 31 acres and partially restore predrainage hydrologic conditions in the park, resulting in improved foraging conditions and long-term, direct and indirect, beneficial impacts. Cumulative impacts would be long-term and beneficial” (Chapter 4, p. 79).
- **Enhance visitor experience.** In addition to the increased recreational value of a restored ecosystem, the Everglades Coalition appreciates the NPS vision for cultural interpretation of 0.25 miles of the historic Old Tamiami Trail, which will be enhanced with educational signage about the significant role this roadway played in the state’s history.

Once again, the Everglades Coalition appreciates NPS leadership in working to advance removal of Old Tamiami Trail. We support the preferred alternative and the tremendous ecosystem benefits outline in the EA that will be achieved. As always, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comment and look

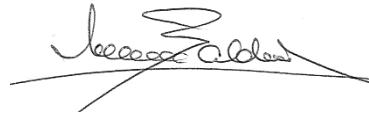
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forward to our continued partnership as we work toward our shared goals for the protection and restoration of Everglades National Park.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Perry', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mark Perry
Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael J. Baldwin', with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael J. Baldwin
Co-Chair

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