



Everglades Coalition

January 9, 2020

Rick N. Argo, Park Manager
Cayo Costa State Park

Eric Draper, Director
Florida State Parks

Noah D. Valenstein, Secretary
Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Sent via email

RE: Letter of Support for Cayo Costa State Park to become an International Dark Sky Place

On behalf of the members of the Everglades Coalition committed to the protection and restoration of America's Everglades, we want to express our support for Cayo Costa State Park to apply and earn an International Dark Sky Place (IDSP) designation. We believe that protecting the Greater Everglades ecosystem also means protecting its nocturnal environment for the benefit of wildlife and people. We are delighted that two Dark Sky Places are already recognized within the Greater Everglades: Kissimmissee Prairie Preserve State Park and Big Cypress National Preserve. We encourage Cayo Costa State Park to also seek this designation.

Cayo Costa is indeed a jewel of nocturnal delight. Based on satellite and space station nighttime images and accounts from park visitors, the barrier island of Cayo Costa enjoys a naturally dark nightscape, likely the best among the beautiful islands within the Charlotte Harbor Estuary and Pine Island Sound located northwest of the Caloosahatchee estuary on the Gulf Coast.

This remote barrier island, accessible only by boat, is also an important habitat for shorebirds, sea turtles and countless other land and marine wildlife, many of which depend on natural darkness and/or presence of starlight or moonlight for parts, if not all, of their lifecycles. People camping overnight are also often delighted by the wondrous sight of starry nights, including the Milky Way, thanks to very few sources of outdoor artificial light within the park itself and low skyglow in its horizons. To continue protecting the park's nightscape resource, we encourage the park to commit to night sky and wildlife-friendly outdoor lighting best practices, including FWC's Sea Turtle Lighting Guidelines (1), and to recognize its ecological and recreational values in future updates of the park's unit management plan.

Committed to full protection and restoration of America's Everglades

1000 Friends of Florida
Angler Action Foundation
Audubon Florida
Audubon of Southwest Florida
Audubon of the Western Everglades
Audubon Society of the Everglades
Backcountry Fly Fishers of Naples
Calusa Waterkeeper
Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife
Center for Biological Diversity
Conservancy of Southwest Florida
Defenders of Wildlife
"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society
Earthjustice
Environment Florida
Everglades Foundation
Everglades Law Center
Everglades Trust
Florida Bay Forever
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
Lake Worth Waterkeeper
Last Stand
League of Women Voters of Florida
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
Peace River Audubon Society
Reef Relief
Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation
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
South Florida Audubon Society
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
The Florida Wildlife Federation
The Institute for Regional Conservation
The National Wildlife Federation
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership
Tropical Audubon Society

We believe earning a Dark Sky Place designation would be a moment of local pride and boost the region's ecotourism. It would also set a good example of natural night sky stewardship for nearby communities to follow. This designation has been known to inspire nearby cities to review and significantly improve their own outdoor lighting policies to reduce their contributions to regional light pollution. In this particular case, we hope for cities like Cape Coral and Fort Myers to take notice as they contribute significantly to skyglow in the region. And, earning this designation will reward park staff and volunteers dedicated to preserving the nocturnal environment and educating visitors about this invaluable natural resource.

As you work toward this designation, we anticipate broad local, regional and statewide support, including that from members of the Everglades Coalition. We look forward to celebrating Cayo Costa State Park as a future recognized International Dark Sky Place.

Sincerely,



Mark Perry
Co-Chair



Marisa Carrozzo
Co-Chair

cc: Bill Nash, Assistant Park Manager, Cayo Costa State Park
Friends of Cayo Costa State Park Committee

(1) Useful resources for the evaluation and reduction of light pollution in or nearby natural areas include:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Wildlife Lighting
<https://myfwc.com/conservation/you-conserve/lighting/>

US National Park Service, Best Practices for Outdoor Lighting, last updated October 4, 2019
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/night skies/practices.htm>

Longcore, T., and C. Rich. 2016 (revised August 2017). Artificial night lighting and protected lands: ecological effects and management approaches. Natural Resource Report NPS/NRSS/NSNS/NRR—2017/1493. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado.
<https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/DownloadFile/582058>

International Dark-Sky Association's outdoor lighting & dark sky park resources
<https://www.darksky.org/our-work/lighting/>
<https://www.darksky.org/our-work/conservation/idsp/parks/>

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