



# Everglades Coalition

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

## A RESOLUTION OF THE EVERGLADES COALITION OPPOSING OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE GREATER EVERGLADES

**WHEREAS**, the Everglades is the largest subtropical wilderness in the United States and is home to plants and animals that occur nowhere else on Earth;

**WHEREAS**, the Greater Everglades Ecosystem is a vast network of wetlands and watersheds, spanning from the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes to the Florida Keys and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico; and is a key economic driver for Florida, a significant national resource, an international treasure, RAMSAR Wetland of International Importance, World Heritage Site, and International Biosphere Reserve;

**WHEREAS**, the Everglades delivers immeasurable ecological and economic benefits to Florida and help define the iconic Florida lifestyle which includes hiking, bird and wildlife watching, boating, fishing, snorkeling, and diving;

**WHEREAS**, the Everglades has a unique hydrology and geology with its flat topography, rain-driven aquifer recharge, porous limestone, and inconsistent confining layers that are extremely sensitive to potential adverse impacts from oil and gas exploration and extraction;

**WHEREAS**, Big Cypress National Preserve covers 720,567 acres of a water-dependent ecosystem in southwestern Florida and includes much of the western Everglades. The Big Cypress Swamp is a western extension of the Everglades hydrologic system. The Big Cypress basin provides over 40 percent of the water flowing into Everglades National Park and is a vast hydrologic network—among the least altered remaining in South Florida. Water flows on the surface of the Preserve in marshes and sloughs and below ground through porous substrate in aquifers. Big Cypress Swamp serves as a significant aquifer recharge area to aquifers that provide drinking water to nearby communities;

**WHEREAS**, drilling and well stimulation techniques, such as hydraulic fracturing and acidizing, threaten water quality. Throughout oil drilling and subsequent production activities, operators must manage and dispose of several types of waste, including “produced water,” which can contain treatment chemicals, heavy metals, produced solids, bacteria, and naturally occurring radioactive materials;

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**WHEREAS**, spills and leaks of oil and gas wastewater are one of the leading causes of environmental impacts from oil and gas operations, particularly impacts to water resources and soils. Oil and gas operations threaten groundwater resources both from surface spills and because wells must be drilled through the shallow aquifers that provide Floridians with fresh drinking water. Oil exploration activities pose significant risks to surface waters, such as turbidity and oxygen depletion due to vehicle and foot traffic, and leaks and spills of vehicle fluids, which could leach into shallow groundwaters. Other threats include groundwater contamination resulting from poorly cased or cemented wells;

**WHEREAS**, the oil and gas industry has exemptions from provisions in major federal environmental statutes intended to protect human health and the environment that otherwise protect the Everglades ecosystem including the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act; Resource Conservation and Recovery Act; Safe Drinking Water Act; Clean Water Act; and Toxic Release Inventory under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act;

**WHEREAS**, the Greater Everglades Ecosystem is currently under serious threats of oil and gas exploration and development, including significant contributions to greenhouse gas emissions and the climate crisis. Several proposals for exploration are either pending or are already underway;

**WHEREAS**, while oil development has historically taken place in discrete portions of the Big Cypress National Preserve, new areas of the Preserve have been made available to the Burnett Oil Company for seismic testing to explore for oil by driving heavy “vibroseis” vehicles off-road throughout 110 square miles consisting mostly of roadless wetland areas. This is only the first of four planned phases of seismic testing, which will ultimately encompass 366 square miles of the Preserve. The first phase of seismic testing has already caused significant damage within sensitive environments, including unique dwarf cypress forests, high-diversity marl prairie wetlands, and habitat for the endangered Florida panther;

**WHEREAS**, seismic testing to explore for oil has been approved throughout 110 square miles in Collier and Hendry Counties on a combination of private and state-owned lands located just north of the Big Cypress National Preserve, including in endangered Florida panther habitat and parts of Dinner Island Ranch Wildlife Management Area. Tocala, LLC plans to use the “shot-hole” method of seismic testing to explore for oil by detonating explosives in thousands of holes drilled up to 100 feet below the surface, and driving heavy drilling vehicles through wetlands. The confining layers between the surficial and intermediate aquifer systems will be breached by the explosives, making drinking water supplies susceptible to contamination;

**WHEREAS**, a Florida District Court of Appeal ordered the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to issue a permit to Kanter Real Estate, LLC, authorizing an exploratory oil well in the Everglades’ Water Conservation Area 3 in Broward County, and Governor Ron DeSantis recently announced that the state of Florida would acquire the lands to permanently save them from oil drilling;

**WHEREAS**, The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has expressed concerns about oil drilling in the Everglades in opposing the construction of exploratory oil wells in, adjacent to, and/or under any of the Water Conservation Areas because of the Board’s concerns for the protection of the Everglades ecosystem, aquifers, water supply sources, the environment,

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and to prevent secondary impacts associated with any producing wells. The SFWMD Board also cited concerns regarding “potential interruption of sheet flow to the Everglades National Park if contamination occurs” and that such drilling “will be in conflict with the Everglades restoration efforts and the significant public and private investments toward Everglades Restoration.” See SFWMD Resolution No. 93-18;

**WHEREAS**, the restoration and protection of the Greater Everglades ecosystem is vital to protecting Florida’s environment, economy, natural and cultural resources, and drinking water supplies; and is better accomplished by prevention of contamination and environmental degradation, rather than attempting to clean up contamination and restore degraded environments after the fact;

**WHEREAS**, Everglades restoration is a multi-billion-dollar investment, which could be thwarted by oil and natural gas exploration and extraction. Further oil exploration and development in the Everglades could also jeopardize Florida’s tourism industry, including visitation to Everglades National Park and the Big Cypress National Preserve and other nearby public lands;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,**

The Everglades Coalition, with its more than sixty member organizations committed to the protection and restoration of America’s Everglades, hereby opposes oil and gas exploration and development within the greater Everglades ecosystem, including in and near publicly owned lands and Water Conservation Areas.

The Everglades Coalition further resolves that, while we recognize that oil and gas development has historically taken place in discrete portions of the Big Cypress National Preserve and existing private mineral rights remain beneath the preserve, the extraction of oil and gas causes damage to the preserve, which can be expensive to restore, and full restoration may not be feasible. While we question whether plans to increase the scale of existing oil and gas exploration and production are permissible under current law, and we urge federal and state agencies to evaluate all permit applications as stringently as the law requires, we would support a purchase or trade of private minerals beneath the preserve to protect natural resources. Further, we oppose any actions that violate existing federal and state approvals for oil and gas activities and support full restoration of any damage caused by recent oil exploration activities.

**APPROVED AND ADOPTED** this 24th day of April, 2020.



Mark Perry  
Co-Chair



Marisa Carrozzo  
Co-Chair

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