
Subject: Emerging Issue - Loxahatchee NWR

From: Chairman, FWS Retirees Association (chair@fwsretirees.org)

To: All Members

Date: Friday, October 28, 2016 7:13 PM



Dear Association Members:

Our Board wants you, our members, to be aware of an emerging issue, and to write to Florida Governor Rick Scott supporting the FWS position to work cooperatively.

ISSUE: The State of Florida is attempting to void the lease agreement for one of our most important National Wildlife Refuges.

BACKGROUND: The 144,000 acre Loxahatchee NWR is a cornerstone of the overall conservation of America's Everglades. The land is owned by the State of Florida. FWS has managed the area under a lease agreement since 1951 and has had much success given the myriad of challenges in the region. The Southwest Florida Water Management District has notified the FWS that the lease will be terminated under the pretext that management of invasive plants has not reached certain goals. However, FWS spent almost \$3 million to treat invasive plants on the Refuge this year alone. The Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission kicked in another \$2.5 million.

Invasive species are rapidly expanding in the Everglades. The issue confronts all land managers in South Florida. The FWS has repeatedly requested a more cooperative approach be developed to find the best ways to serve the public and protect the natural values of the Refuge given limited budgets, changing climate, and on-the-ground challenges. The involved state agency would rather terminate the lease. No alternative strategy to manage the lands and public use under state funding has been suggested. Other conservation organizations have sounded the alarm as additional concerns about the overall water quality of the Everglades may be at stake in addition to the national commitment to wildlife.

You can find additional background information at these web sites: [View Audubon Online](#) and [View NWRA Online](#) or by doing your own search.

Position: Our Board is generally opposed to the loss of any lands now within the National Wildlife Refuge System, actions that are not consistent with our heritage, and proposals that would remove federal protections from public lands. Please make your individual voice heard by sending a letter supporting FWS to Governor Scott with copies to the others listed:

Office of Governor Rick Scott
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dan Ashe, Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Main Interior
1849 C Street, NW, Room 3331

Washington, D.C. 20240-0001

Daniel O'Keefe, Director
SFWMD Governing Board
PO Box 24680
West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680

Sincerely yours in the Service Family,

*Bob Streeter, Chair
Association of FWS Retirees
929 Coho Run
Fort Collins, CO 80524*

P.S. We have Director Ashe's and Secretary Jewell's emails to all employees about the Malhuer NWR verdict and will be posting to our web page this weekend.

<http://fwsretirees.org/>.

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