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Subject: 2nd email with more attachments - Koptur comments on proposed development at Coral Reef Commons
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 3:22:57 PM
Attachments: [Koptur2006ConservationPollination.pdf](#)
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[Linares&Koptur2010NAJ.pdf](#)
[LiuetaINAJ2005fire_intensity.pdf](#)
[MaschinskiWrightSK&EPT2013BIOC5409.pdf](#)
[Possley_et_al_2008\[1\].pdf](#)

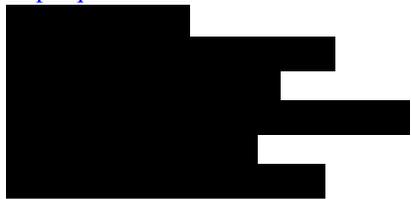
Here is the remainder of the articles I wanted to send along with my comments.

Thanks!

Suzanne

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Plant–Pollinator Interactions

FROM SPECIALIZATION TO GENERALIZATION

Edited by Nickolas M. Waser and Jeff Ollerton

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Conservation of Specialized and Generalized Pollination Systems in Subtropical Ecosystems: A Case Study

Suzanne Koptur

They paved paradise and put up a parking lot
—Joni Mitchell

If one is lucky enough to hike in a pristine natural area and to come upon a display of native plants in bloom, one may see native visitors pollinating flowers and enjoying the floral rewards. These visitors may even have evolved over time to best exploit the rewards and the flowers, to best export their pollen for dispersal to another individual of the same plant species. Much important research has been conducted in natural areas with minimal disturbance, and from these studies a body of ecological and evolutionary theory has grown about these striking mutualisms. This idyllic scenario is becoming the exception, however because many parts of the planet now have a disproportionately large percentage of the fauna made up of one species, *Homo sapiens*. The earth's human population has doubled in the past 40 years (surpassing six billion in 2001). Humans are prone to taking the nicest places and transforming them into places where they will live and work, often in isolation from anything natural. Even areas that superficially seem to be “pristine” often or always show the imprint of humans (McKibbin 1989); for example, nonnative plants or pollinators are likely to join the natives in the idyllic scenario just described (Brown et al. 2002; Memmott and Waser 2002).

Habitat destruction and fragmentation often shift the balance of nature in remaining habitat patches so that native organisms can no longer persist. Large predatory animals that require large areas for their home range provide the most obvious indication when they disappear, and, with the demise of predators, cascading effects of increased herbivore abundance may affect plants (Anderson 1997; Malcolm 1997; Dicke and Vet 1999; Jeffries 1999; Terborgh et al. 2001; Dyer and Letourneau 2003). Smaller animals, including insects, may hold on longer in remaining habitat patches as long as their survival requirements are met, but many groups show increased species richness with larger fragment size

(Robinson et al. 1997; Steffan-Dewenter and Tschamntke 2002; Steffan-Dewenter et al., chap. 17 in this volume). Predators and parasitoids are more strongly affected by habitat fragmentation than are lower trophic groups (Gibb and Hochuli 2002). Various phenomena accompanying fragmentation may lead to the decline or disappearance of organisms, including negative consequences of inbreeding, which results from isolation of small populations (Holsinger 1993; Hastings and Harrison 1994), and stochastic extirpation without recolonization due to greater distances from other populations (Hanski 1997). Smaller animals may have even greater effects on plants, because many of them serve as pollinators (Steffan-Dewenter et al. 2002) and seed dispersers (Bierregaard and Stouffer 1997) as well as herbivores (Rao et al. 2001) and seed predators (Donoso et al. 2003). Animals disappear more quickly than plants from landscapes affected by humans, but plants without their mutualistic animal partners may not persist long into the future.

In many situations it is not possible to preserve wild habitats, especially in the vicinity of urban areas, where human population pressures are great. Forward-thinking governments may set aside preserves, but these are often smaller and fewer than what conservation biologists might deem optimal or desirable. Plant species may be preserved in protected and/or managed habitat remnants, but, if their pollinators are lost and they cannot reproduce sexually, they may be evolutionarily dead. Habitat destruction can incur an "extinction debt" that will not be realized for decades or centuries; this is the reasoning behind using successful pollination as a measure of ecosystem health (Aizen and Feinsinger 1994), although using pollination deficits to infer pollinator declines may not be entirely straightforward (Thomson 2001).

In conquering the natural world, we humans have been largely oblivious to our dependence on pollinators for much of what we eat and use (Nabhan and Buchmann 1997) and have "forgotten pollinators" (Buchmann and Nabhan 1996). For over a decade, there have been declines in pollinators and pollination disruption has been reported worldwide (Kearns et al. 1998), though there is less direct evidence than many have presumed and such conclusions may be premature (Cane and Tepedino 2001). Long-term data are needed to track changes (Kearns 2001; Roubik 2001), and it is difficult to tell if changes are truly declines, or just supra-annual fluctuations (Roubik 2001; Williams et al. 2001) or statistical artifacts (Cane 2001; Kerr 2001).

Indeed, there are some anthropogenically fragmented habitats where many of the mutualistic plant-animal relationships remain fairly intact, and not all mutualistic interactions show negative effects of habitat fragmentation or land-use intensity (Klein et al. 2001). Humans may actually enhance their own habitats in ways that can attract and sustain pollinators—to the benefit of native plant species dependent on specialized and generalized pollinators. The quality of the matrix—the space between the habitat fragments—can play a role in

reducing negative effects of fragmentation (Perfecto and Vandermeer 2001). In subtropical southern Florida, extensive plantings of nonnative ornamentals provide abundant floral rewards to sustain pollinators of native plants in the urban matrix between the remaining fragments of natural habitat. Native-plant enthusiasts have promoted gardening with indigenous species, further enhancing the seemingly inhospitable between-fragment spaces for pollinator attraction and survival.

For the past decade my students and I have been studying plant-animal interactions in the South Florida pine rocklands. In this chapter I will review the effects of habitat destruction and fragmentation on native plants that remain in the natural landscape, consider the role of the matrix in ameliorating some of the negative effects of habitat fragmentation on pollinators, and discuss some measures that are being taken to conserve pollinators in the human-dominated landscape of subtropical South Florida in the United States. My hope is that this example will serve to illustrate problems and possibilities for more general maintenance of pollination systems in human-dominated landscapes.

Effects of Habitat Destruction and Fragmentation in Pine Rocklands of South Florida

The basic result of habitat destruction is that less habitat is available in which native plants can persist. I will illustrate this point by using the pine rocklands habitat from the uplands of extreme southern peninsular Florida. Pine rocklands, a fire-maintained subclimax vegetation with many endemic taxa, used to be nearly continuous albeit divided occasionally by freshwater wetlands or "transverse glades" (Snyder et al. 1990). The area covered by the rocklands ecosystems was never large (fig. 15.1A) and shrank rapidly from the mid- to late 20th century because of economic development. Rockland sites were preferred areas for clearing, building, and (after the invention of the rock plow) vegetable fields. Today, less than 2% of the original habitat outside of Everglades National Park remains, composed of a highly fragmented patchwork throughout urban and suburban Dade County (fig. 15.1B). Many of these anthropogenic fragments are protected as parks, but only some are maintained with exotic-pest-plant control and periodic fires. Other fragments are in private ownership; most of these have management problems similar to those of the parks, or precarious preservation status.

Fragments of pine rocklands also dramatically illustrate the "edge effects" resulting from increased perimeter-to-interior ratio: greater invasion by exotic species (especially weedy pest plants) that crowd out natives. The edges are greatly influenced by the surrounding inhabitants in terms of fire suppression: without periodic fires, pine rocklands undergo succession to hardwood hammock forest, losing their diverse understory of herbs and shrubs (Snyder et al. 1990; DeCoster et al. 1999). Many of these understory plants are endemic to this

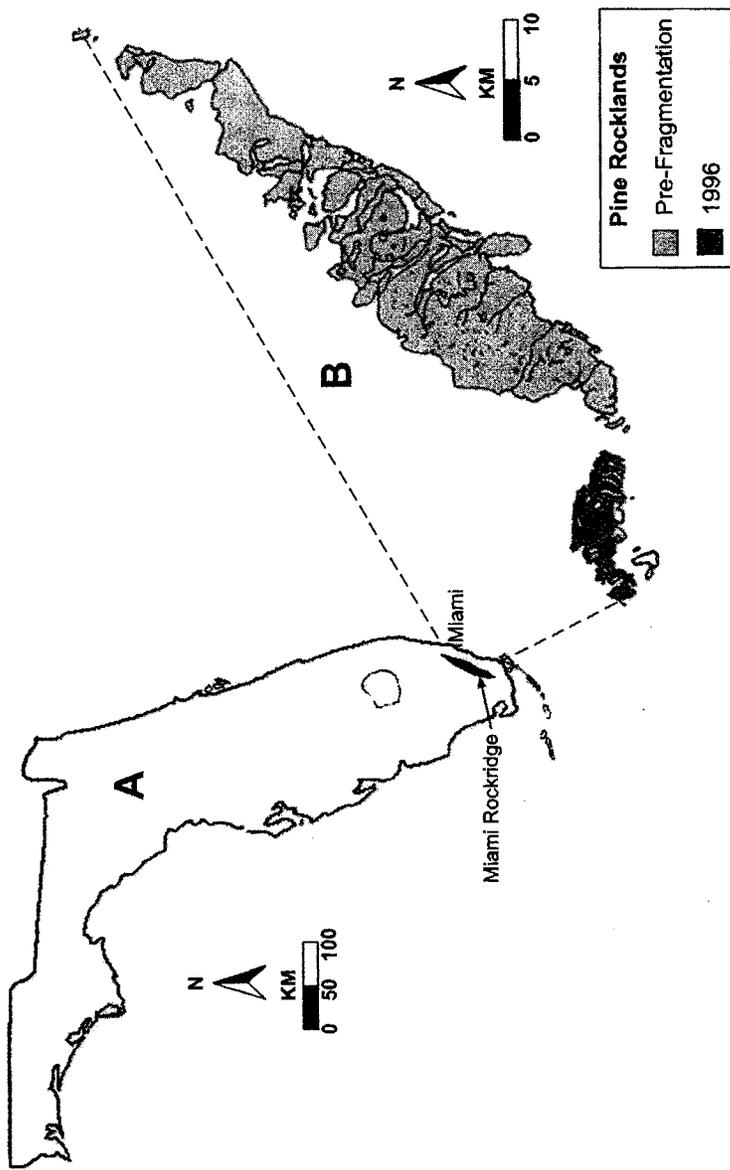


Figure 15.1 Original (left) and present-day (right) extent of pine rocklands in mainland southern Florida. There are also pine rocklands in the lower Florida Keys but they are not shown at the scale of the state map. (Left) Location and extent of Miami Rockridge is shown in black, and that same area is shown outlined at a much larger scale in the projection to the right. (Right) Prefragmentation extent (outlined) and extent in 1996 (black areas). Most remaining intact rocklands are protected within Everglades National Park; outside this park, less than 2% of the original rocklands remain.

habitat, and many are rare and becoming more so. Many former pine rocklands fragments have been degraded so completely that there is no longer a central core with native species, only a monoculture of Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) or a mixture of pest-plant species (Bradley and Gann 1999).

Exotic plants are not the only pests; exotic insects can compete with and eliminate native beneficial insect mutualists as well. Many areas in the southern United States (as well as Central America), formerly species-rich in native ants (and other insects), have become dominated by exotic ant species such as fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*). Fire ants can limit the numbers of herbivores and pollinators with their aggressive, omnivorous foraging behavior (Fleet and Young 2000). Honeybees may be kept by beekeepers in groves adjacent to, and even in, some natural forest areas and may usurp floral resources that originally supported a diversity of native insects (Cairns 2002).

Animals kept as pets (or feral colonies maintained by kindhearted but misguided humans) can, in some cases, also have a profound impact on natural habitats. Many natural areas have networks of people who feed stray cats, capture them, neuter/spay them, and release the strays. Rather than controlling the populations, the presence of the colony serves as an “attractive nuisance,” so that more cats are abandoned at the parks and populations continue to grow from the continual “immigration” of new individuals (Clarke and Pacin 2002; Castillo and Clarke 2003). The effects of domestic cats (Churcher and Lawton 1987; Schneider 2001) and other feral animals (Woodroffe et al. 1990; Schneider 2001) on wildlife are destructive and profound. Birds, lizards, and small mammals eat a variety of insects; when cats reduce their numbers, then insect populations can grow to levels that severely limit plant growth and reproduction. Some residents of Miami keep chickens that roam freely, which may travel through local parks in their search for food—eating seeds, seedlings, and small plants (and sometimes themselves providing food for resident foxes!). Goats and rabbits may similarly alter the landscape in their quest for forage and make “natural” areas less diverse and more barren, just as livestock does in midwestern U.S. forests (Dennis 1997).

Native animals may also be influenced by human interaction that in turn can affect their habitat. Sportsmen hunted the charismatic, endangered Key deer to near extinction as the Keys were exploited for tourism (Silvy 1975; Frank et al. 2003). Since their protection, Key deer have grown so numerous that populations have reached carrying capacity (Lopez 2001) and their grazing effects may have a larger impact than ever in the past (Folk et al. 1991; Koptur et al. 2002). Key deer herbivory, especially after fire, significantly reduces plant stem length and eliminates flowers on many preferred species (S. Koptur et al., unpublished data).

There is clearly need for management of pine rocklands fragments in the urbanized landscape of South Florida. County natural-areas managers prioritize

activities in lands they manage and are fairly effective in controlling exotic plants via manual removal and herbicides. It is more difficult to use fire to manage fragments, especially those in close proximity to residential areas, but on occasion progress is made in this aspect of pine rocklands habitat conservation. Urban and suburban areas inhabited by humans are also managed for problem insects, especially mosquitoes, cockroaches, and ants. Pesticides that are used to control insects in adjacent areas can certainly affect survival of nontarget insects in natural area fragments in the urban landscape. Closer to humans, more pesticides are used: more than 20,000 pest control firms and 100,000 service personnel treat 12 million dwellings nationally, including most of the 280,000 retail food outlets, 480,000 commercial restaurants and kitchens, and 66,000 hotels and motels in the United States (National Pest Management Association 2001). In subtropical southern Florida, I estimate that more than 90% of homes use chemical pest control inside the dwelling, and more than 60% use some sort of chemical pest control in the yard. Termite control in dwellings is ubiquitous but usually has little broadcast effect. Certain pesticides (some used for fleas, ticks, and juvenile mosquitoes) are fairly specific; but broad-spectrum insecticides (such as those used for adult mosquito or fruit fly control) can certainly cause a decline of beneficial insects. The aerial application of pesticides to crops and forestry plantations has been shown to depress pollinator populations (Kevan 1975; Johansen 1977; Johansen et al. 1983; Kearns and Inouye 1997; Spira 2001). Coincident aerial insecticide spraying and flowering of endangered entomophilous plants puts those plants in peril (Bowlin et al. 1993; Sipes and Tepedino 1995). Even application of *Bacillus thuringensis* by organic gardeners can be detrimental to butterfly pollinators if *B. thuringensis* spores drift to weedy and native larval host plants adjacent to vegetable gardens.

Empirical Examples

Observations of pollinator–plant interactions in relatively pristine pine rocklands of the Everglades and lower Florida Keys provide a basis for comparison of the interactions of the same plants occurring in fragments of pine rocklands in suburban and urban Miami-Dade County and in the developed areas of Big Pine Key. We imagined that fragmentation of habitat would be detrimental to plant–pollinator interactions, and it seemed reasonable to hypothesize that species especially vulnerable to negative effects of fragmentation would include specialists and obligate outcrossers. Therefore, we selected to study native plant species that span a range of pollination systems, from specialized to generalized. I will choose examples from this research to illustrate that “all is not lost” for some plant species persisting in pine rocklands fragments.

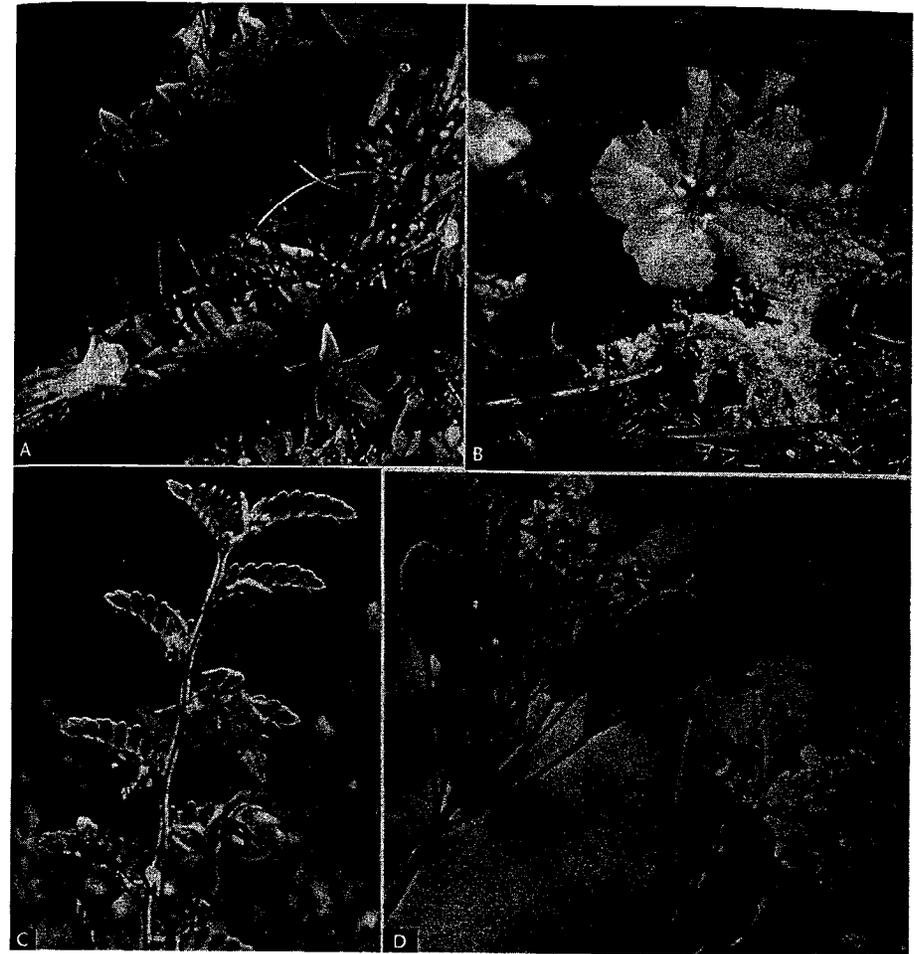


Figure 15.2 Flowers of pine rocklands plants: (A) flowering shoots of the pineland clustervine, *Jacquemontia curtissii*; (B) a small individual of the pineland petunia, *Ruellia succulenta*, in full bloom; (C) the Big Pine partridge pea, *Chamaecrista keyensis*, with flowers and developing fruit; and (D) fast-moving bee (*Centris errans*) collecting oil from flowers of locustberry, *Byrsonima lucida*.

Pollinator Fauna

There are certainly differences in the pollinator fauna between pristine habitat and habitat fragments. For most of the plant species we have examined, pollinator species richness is greater in pristine habitat and in larger fragments than in medium-sized and small fragments. The composition of the fauna varies as well, as illustrated by the following examples.

The pineland clustervine, *Jacquemontia curtissii* (Convolvulaceae), has numerous white flowers with rotate, open corollas about 2–3 cm in diameter, with nectar in the center of the flower available to a wide array of visitors (fig. 15.2A);

some flower visitors also collect its white pollen. Three pristine pine rocklands sites in Everglades National Park had a total of 22 species of flower visitors, of which 19 were probable pollinators (determined by size and activities on flowers): three large (greater than 10 ha) fragments had 12 probable pollinator species, medium (3–9 ha) fragments had 11 pollinator species, and small (less than 3 ha) fragments had 6 pollinator species (Koptur and Geiger 1999). We recorded 26 species of floral visitors and observed certain visitors only in fragments, indicating that the pollinator fauna of *J. curtissii* in fragments is not simply a subset of pollinators in the intact habitat.

The pineand petunia, *Ruellia succulenta* (Acanthaceae), has large, showy flowers with a lavender funnelform corolla (fig. 15.2B), suggesting that visits are limited to insects with long proboscises. Geiger (2002) found this was not the case because numerous bees, as well as Lepidoptera visitors, crawl down the corolla tube to reach the nectar and pollinate the flowers. There were highly significant differences in the proportions of Hymenoptera (bees) and Lepidoptera (butterflies and skippers) visitors by habitat size class: bees make up an increasing proportion of the total floral visitors as one moves from small to intact/pristine size classes, and Lepidoptera are more important in the smaller fragments (Geiger 2002).

The Big Pine partridge pea (*Chamaetista keyensis*, Fabaceae: Caesalpinioideae) has large, showy, yellow flowers (fig. 15.2C) that are buzz-pollinated by carpenter bees (*Xylocopa micans*) and two species of *Melissodes* bees (Liu and Koptur 2003); they are also visited by other, nonbuzzing bees who pick up the pollen scattered on the petals by the buzzing bees but usually do not contact the stigma in the process. *Chamaetista keyensis* flowers received substantially more visits by *X. micans*, but fewer visits from *Melissodes* spp., in urban edge versus forest sites in the Key Deer Refuge. Unexpectedly, the buzz-pollinators made up a substantially greater proportion of the bee visits in urban edge sites than in forest sites, where nonbuzzing visitors were more common (Liu and Koptur 2003). The numbers of buzz-pollinating bees at partridge pea flowers declined after repeated aerial mosquito spraying in Big Pine Key (Liu and Koptur 2003). This aerial spraying has been observed to depress Lepidoptera populations in the Keys as well (Salvato 2001; S. Carroll and J. Loye, unpublished data).

Byrsomima lucida, the sole member of the tropical plant family Malpighiaceae native to South Florida (fig. 15.2D), has a specialized pollination system: oil is secreted as a floral reward and is collected by andrenid bees in the genus *Centris*, of which only two species occur in this area (*Centris errans* = *C. versicolor*, and *C. lanosa*). Our hand-pollination experiments show that flowers need visitation to set fruit, and plants set substantially more fruit with cross- than self-pollination (Koptur and Geiger 2000). Copious fruit production in this species is, therefore, evidence of not only visitation, but also likely deposition of pollen from other

individuals. Everglades plants fruit heavily, as do plants in or near some of the larger fragments, and it is common to see *C. errans* bees at these sites. Plants in smaller fragments also set fruit, though sometimes only modestly; even plants in gardens and planted landscapes set fruit. *Centris lanosa* is the more common visitor to these plants, although both *Centris* spp. have been observed in urban areas.

Pollinator Activity in Disturbed Habitats

Native plants do exist in the urban landscape, either persisting in fragmented or semideveloped land or planted back into the landscape as garden specimens or in landscaping projects of varying size. The native plants are visited by some of the same insect species that visit them in natural environments, and by some species that are more common in disturbed situations. Plants that are both generalists and specialists in their pollinator affinities have been observed to maintain pollinator relationships in urban situations in South Florida.

The endangered crenulate leadplant (*Ammorpha herbacea* var. *crenulata*, Fabaceae: Papilionoideae) needs pollinator visits for fruit set, and cross-pollinations set considerably more fruit and seed than self-pollinations (Linares 2004). *Ammorpha crenulata* survives in only a few small pine rocklands fragments in Miami-Dade County, but, wherever it grows, it receives visits from a variety of native solitary bees (such as *Dianthidium curvatum floridense*) and nonnative honeybees (*Apis mellifera*). Even in sporadically mowed lots, crenulate leadplant produced abundant fruit. Planted in gardens within its native range and beyond, its striking inflorescences of tiny white flowers tipped with orange-yellow anthers are visited by native and introduced insects (figs. 15.3A, 15.3B).

The purple flowers of pine rocklands milkpeas, *Galactia* spp., are visited by nectar-collecting halictid bees which get brushed by the anthers and pollinate them (personal observation). While conducting a study of the distribution of rare milkpeas of southern Florida pine rocklands, O'Brien (1988) observed native bee pollinators (*Augochlora pura* sp. *mosieri*) visiting remnant milkpea individuals in manicured lawns of Coral Gables.

Role of the Matrix

The characteristics of the matrix—the space between habitat fragments in a fragmented landscape—are crucial to the maintenance of plant–pollinator interactions in fragments. Those fragments that are small and/or isolated from larger areas of intact habitat may depend in particular on the matrix for support of pollinators passing through or possibly even nesting and living in the matrix. A thorough comparison of ecology of species across fragmented landscapes must also consider matrix habitat (Jules and Shahani 2003). I will consider several types of matrix habitat found between pine rocklands fragments and their potential effects on plants and insects in remnant habitat.

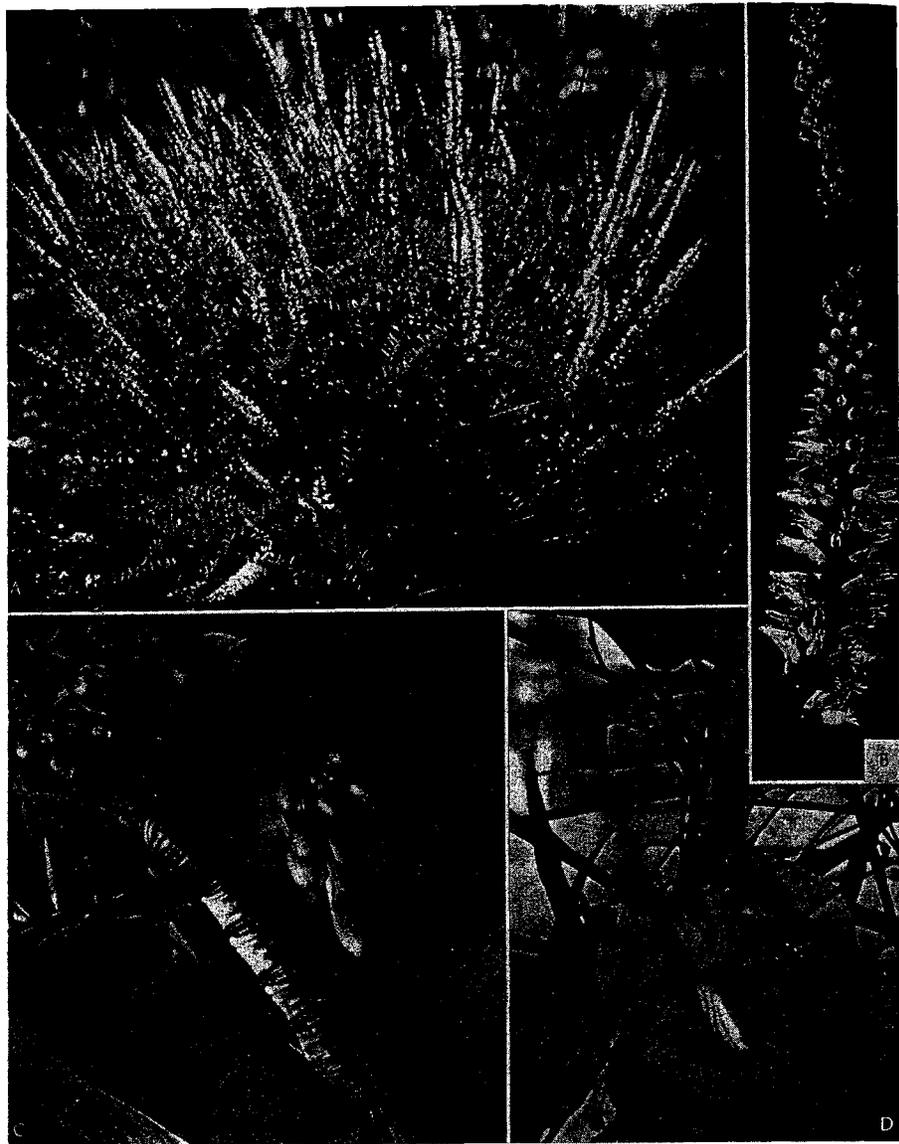


Figure 15.3 More pine rocklands plants and insects: (A) crenulate leadplant, *Amorpha herbacea* var. *crenulata*, plant habit; (B) inflorescence close-up of *A. herbacea*; (C) caterpillar of naturalized orange-barred sulfur (*Phoebis agarithe*) butterfly on native *Cassia bahamensis* (aka *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii*); and (D) flowering stem of the butterfly pea, *Centrosema virginiana*.

Concrete in the Big City

One aspect of urbanization (that is definitely not pollinator friendly) is the use of asphalt (tarmac) on roads and concrete on other horizontal surfaces to thwart the establishment and growth of any plant life. As the population of South Florida has grown, roads that were formerly unpaved became paved, then widened from two-lane, then four-lane roads, then to multilane expressways. Consequently, the area covered by asphalt has steadily increased over the past century. As areas have been developed for human habitation and other uses, more and more ground has been covered by concrete. Gardens have been eliminated from many lots for various reasons (they require care, attract unwanted animals, they look “too wild”). As in many parts of Latin America, a sign of success is a tidy, barren yard consisting of concrete (frequently painted) with a minimum of plants.

Suburban Lawns: A Golf-course Green in Every Yard?

As inhospitable as concrete is, matrix consisting of meticulously maintained lawns (turf grass) may be even more detrimental to the movements of pollinators. Turf grass science leads to the development of grass strains that are tough and easy to maintain; the goal is to make the lawn as uniform as possible. Extensive use of chemicals (fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides/insecticides) is needed to maintain the ideal lawn. Pest control operators leave signs in lawns so that humans can avoid these areas for at least one day, but few pollinators (or pets or children) are able, or take the time, to read these signs.

Pollinator Relief in the Land of Flowers

Fortunately, a number of features of the matrix between natural habitat fragments exist that are improvements over concrete. The penchant many residents of Florida (dubbed by the Spaniards “the land of flowers”) have for lush landscaping and beautiful flowers has led to an extensive array of cultivated ornamental plants that can provide pollinators with a variety of foods and shelter. Most pollinator foods are provided in flowers, usually in the forms of nectar and pollen, but certain species also provide oils (e.g., Malpighiaceae), resins (e.g., Clusiaceae), and extrafloral nectar (many families; Koptur 1992).

There are some spectacular sights involving animals and flowers to be seen on the streets of Miami. Brilliant yellow, black, and white spot-breasted orioles (*Icterus pectoralis*) visiting flowers of the sausage tree (*Kigelia pinnata*, Bignoniaceae) are the facultative pollinators of these bat-adapted flowers, the fruit of which resembles huge, pendant sausages. High up on the bare trunks of majestic Bombacaceae, squirrels drink nectar from the flowers of *Bombax malabaricus* and *Pseudobombax* sp. These visits rarely lead to fruit production because conspecific individuals of these species are few and far between. Fortunately, in big

cities (especially in the subtropics), there are many opportunists who use floral rewards, sometimes, though not always, pollinating in the process.

Isolated individuals of *Byrronomima lucida* in urban garden plantings receive visits from their specialized *Centris* bee pollinators even though no other *B. lucida* are in sight. Those bees visit alternative oil sources found in frequent plantings of several ornamental species of Malpighiaceae: *Malpighia coccigera*, *Stigmaphyllon* spp., and *Thryallis glauca*. And when the neighbors decide to add native *B. lucida* to their gardens, fruit set is then possible for formerly isolated individuals. Perhaps this fruit set is of less fitness consequence than fruit set on individuals in native habitats, but it can serve to perpetuate this species in the matrix between natural habitat fragments.

Nonnative species cultivated for their useful fruit are readily pollinated in South Florida. Passion fruit (*Passiflora edulis*) are usually grown along fences and are most effectively pollinated by carpenter bees, but a group of honeybees working together can also effect pollination (Hardin 1987). Flower beetles visiting the purportedly wind-pollinated flowers of jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*) growing in orchards or garden plantings may enhance fruit production and seed set in South Florida (El-Sawa 1998).

Ornamental, exotic congeners of native species can serve to attract and feed pollinators and can help pollinators make their way between fragments or between native species in the urban landscape. A very popular cultivated species, *Ruellia brittoniana*, has purple, pink, or white flowers that look very similar to the native *R. succulentata*. Ubiquitous plantings of this popular species ensure plentiful nectar for butterflies and bees, and maybe even larval food for specialist herbivore butterflies (Nymphalidae) such as the white peacock (*Anartia jatrophae*) and the malachite (*Siproeta stelenes*). Found throughout the tropics, *Lantana camara* volunteers readily as its seeds are dispersed by birds that eat the blue fruits; butterflies are nourished by its nectar and may contribute to its hybridization with native *L. depressa* in South Florida (Ramey 1999).

Even Weeds Serve a Purpose

Lantana camara is listed as a category I nonnative, invasive plant by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council and is one of the worst weeds in all the world (Holm 1977), forming dense thickets in 47 countries and a weed in many crops as well, yet it is frequently planted to attract butterflies in the United States and in South Florida is a well-used nectar plant for many butterfly species. Other pervasive weeds are nourishment mainstays for pollinators in the seminatural and disturbed landscape.

Devil's pitchfork (*Bidens pilosa*, Asteraceae) is a crop weed in the Old and New World tropics and a frequent resident of any disturbed ground or unmown lawn in South Florida. It is so favored by insects that one can obtain a good general collection of floral visitors for an area simply by observing its blossoms. A recent edi-

tion of a popular ecology textbook had a photo of a zebra butterfly (*Heliconius charitonius*) sipping nectar on this flower rather than any of the native plants in the area!

Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*, Anacardiaceae) is a woody species with attractive red berries that facilitate its dispersal by birds into natural areas; it frequently colonizes disturbed ground to form a monospecific stand (as in the former agricultural area within Everglades National Park known as the "Hole in the Donut"). Honeybees and other insects consume the floral nectar of this pest tree, and honey production is greatly enhanced by its presence (Ewel 1982).

Another notorious pest plant, the paperbark tree (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*), has attractive white flowers full of nectar that is collected by a variety of insects, including butterflies, skippers, moths, wasps, bees, and flies. Honeybees are the most abundant pollinators (Vardaman 1994), and, although the flowers can automatically self-pollinate, seed set is enhanced by insect visitors (Vardaman 1994). The beekeeper practice of placing their bees in natural areas may therefore promote the spread of noxious pest trees (both paperbark and Brazilian pepper) that provide nectar for honeybees and in turn receive pollinator services.

Exotic Alternatives When Natives Are Absent: Benefits to Butterflies

Lepidoptera feed in different ways as either adults or larvae, and larval food plants are necessary to maintain butterflies, moths, and skippers in the landscape. Some of South Florida's rare butterflies use not only native but also exotic host plants. The Atala butterfly (*Eumaeus atala*), once thought to be extinct, lays its eggs on coonite, a native cycad (*Zamia pumila*), and the extensive coonite starch industry of the early 20th century may have led to the extirpation of this butterfly in South Florida prior to its subsequent recolonization (Smith 2000). A reintroduction program undertaken at Grandon Park utilized extensive cycad host plantings and larval relocations from colonies at Fairchild Tropical Garden (Smith 2002), where Atala larvae also feed on the cultivated cardboard palm (*Z. furfuracea*) and other cycads in the garden's extensive collection—the reason the garden is eager to farm out the larvae of this endangered butterfly species! Atala adults visit many flowers, including native palmettos, *Lantana involucrata*, and weedy *Bidens pilosa* (Smith 2000, 2002).

The Miami Blue (*Hemiaris thomasi behrnbakeri*) utilizes balloon vine (*Cardiospermum* spp.) hosts. The larvae feed on the plant and hide in the seedpods to avoid predators. Balloon vine occurs adjacent to hammocks in the lower Florida Keys (Loye and Carroll, in press), and these hammocks are often close to roads, resulting in the mowing of these areas to appease safety concerns. Consequently, the state's Department of Environmental Protection has requested that an area several feet wide be left unmown to allow the plants to fruit, to perpetuate suitable host plant for the Miami Blue.

Common butterflies also utilize both native and cultivated species for their

val hosts: the native cloudless sulfur (*Phoebis semae*) and the naturalized range-barred sulfur (*Phoebis agarithe*) utilize native and cultivated *Cassia* spp. as their larval host plants (Glassberg et al. 2000). These butterflies visit a variety of flowers for nectar, and their activity is greatest in areas with abundant host plants, in both natural areas and urban areas (fig. 15.3C).

General Conclusions

Urban and Anthropogenic Landscapes and Pollinator Conservation

Our results do not show a marked difference in the response of specialized versus generalized pollination systems to habitat fragmentation (table 15.1). Aizen et al. (2002) surveyed the literature and concluded that the extent of specialization does not necessarily correlate with the likelihood of a species experiencing negative effects of habitat fragmentation. Ashworth et al. (2004) noted more recently that, although pollinators are sensitive to habitat fragmentation, plants that are pollination specialists do not appear to suffer more from habitat fragmentation than do generalists, and they proposed that this is because of asymmetry in the degree of specialization of the plants and their pollinators (see also Vázquez and Aizen, chap. 9 in this volume; Petanidou and Potts, chap. 11 in this volume).

Thompson (1997) makes the case for conserving interaction biodiversity as well as species diversity. Although this may be most easily done with large preserves, there are "chronically fragmented" landscapes where this option does not exist and there is much value in small preserves (Schwartz and van Mantgem 1997). If small preserves can be managed in ways that tip the balance of nature in favor of native species (using exotic removal, fire management, and augmentation of resources in the matrix between preserves), many plant-animal interactions will also be maintained. Generalized interactions are more flexible, and it will take more care to ensure the persistence of extreme specialists; it will certainly not be possible in all cases. One way of increasing the chances of the persistence of these interactions is by "gardening for pollinators."

Gardening for Pollinators

Some naturalists have promoted butterfly gardening (e.g., Minno and Minno 1999; Glassberg et al. 2000), as have plant societies, public and private gardens, and plant-related businesses. The most important message for nonbiologists is that gardeners need to plant not only nectariferous plants but also larval food plants to encourage the butterflies to linger and proliferate. The beneficial effects on urban wildlife (specifically Lepidoptera) are noticeable. Little has yet been done, however, to promote the numbers of other pollinators. It is essential not only to include plants with floral rewards for the pollinators, but also to consider the pollinators' other needs (larval host plants and nesting sites).

The idea of gardening for pollinators was expressed in a popular article

Table 15.1 Summary of fragmentation effects (FEs) on pine rockland plants (general conclusions from work in progress)

Species (family)	Specialist/generalist	Principle pollinators	FEs on flowering	FEs on pollen deposition	FEs on pollinators at flowers	FEs on fruit set
<i>Amorpha crenulata</i> (Fabaceae)	Generalist	Bees	Negative	No info	None	None
<i>Bysonima lucida</i> (Malpighiaceae)	Specialist	Centric bees	Positive	None	None	Slight negative
<i>Centrosema virginiana</i> (Fabaceae)	Specialist	Large and medium-sized bees	Mixed	None	Medium bees more common	None
<i>Dyschoriste angusta</i> (Acanthaceae)	Generalist	Bees and butterflies	Mixed	None	None	No info
<i>Evolvulus sericeus</i> (Convolvulaceae)	Generalist	Small bees and flies	Negative	—	None	No info
<i>Colofoa</i> spp. (Fabaceae)	Specialist	Medium and small bees	Negative	—	None	None
<i>Jacquemontia curtsisi</i> (Convolvulaceae)	Generalist	Bees, flies, wasps, butterflies	Negative	None	Fewer species	None
<i>Ruellia succulenta</i> (Acanthaceae)	Generalist	Bees and butterflies	Negative	None	Butterflies more common	None

(Tasker 1996) by a newspaper columnist influenced by the "Forgotten Pollinators Campaign" (Buchman and Nabhan 1996); since that time, local interest in making pollinators welcome has been growing. The Forgotten Pollinators Campaign directed much attention to disappearing pollinators in the southwestern United States, and worldwide, and a booklet entitled *Gardening for Pollinators* was published by the Sonoran Desert Museum for guidance in the arid southwest. The humid, subtropical climate of South Florida is vastly different from the arid southwest, and some parts are considerably more urbanized; nonetheless, both areas share problems in disappearing species and declining pollinators. Although bee diversity of the desert southwestern United States dwarfs that of Florida, Florida's bee fauna is still fairly rich compared with that of the rest of the United States (Pascarella et al. 1999, 2001).

Solitary bees may find it difficult to nest in gardens that are too neatly maintained: some of these bees nest in dead twigs, which they may stuff with pieces of leaves they cut; others nest in rocky crevices, or right in the ground in sandy patches. Carpenter bees nest in wood, including wooden structures, and are often more abundant in urban edge habitats (Liu and Koptur 2003). *Centrosema virginiana*, the butterfly pea (fig. 15.3D), is pollinated primarily by these large bees, and carpenter bee activity at flowers is much greater for plants near picnic tables and park visitor facilities than those farther from wooden structures (Cardel 2004). In the Redland agricultural area of South Florida, edible passion-fruit (*Passiflora edulis*) grown on fences with wooden posts, or in areas with wooden structures, receive more visits from carpenter bees; *P. edulis* on chain-link fences with only concrete structures nearby receive more honeybee visits (Hardin 1987). Therefore, it is important to have some habitat heterogeneity in

a garden to promote nesting by a variety of bee pollinators. Entomologists use pollinator nest traps to study bee diversity (Pascarella et al. 1999, 2001), but nest blocks/boxes have not been yet deployed in the South Florida landscape to attract pollinators. Wasps frequently colonize nest blocks (much more than bees) in South Florida studies (J. Pascarella, personal communication).

Importance of Education in Pollinator Restoration

Insects and Gardens (Grissell 2001) gives readers an appreciation of the diversity of insects maintained by plants in a garden. This innovative work not only educates about insect biology and natural history; it also guides gardeners to a coexistence in which humans and insects can share gardens, encouraging gardeners to tolerate many types of insects (such as bees, wasps, earwigs) that may at first seem undesirable—those that benefit garden plants not only by visiting and pollinating flowers but also by eating potential pests.

The most powerful conservation education starts with children, and many activities are aimed at young people. Butterflies are lovely, and butterfly gardening is the easiest hook for most people: once hooked, they are more likely to be open to appreciating the presence and activities of other insects in the garden, the home landscape, and in natural areas. Schoolyard ecology (Berkowitz 2000) brings students (and families) in touch with the natural environment, and students who are exposed to nature activities in school are more likely to care about nonhuman life in the future. Most organizations that have conservation of flora and/or fauna as part of their mission, therefore, have a substantial educational component, for example, botanical gardens, zoos, government agencies (federal, state, and county), and nongovernment organizations. Continuing to educate people after elementary school is perhaps the most important mission of many organizations if their goals of conservation are to be realized in our complex, modern world. One example is the North American Butterfly Association, whose Miami Blue chapter conducts semiannual butterfly counts, which increase public awareness of these insects. Adult education with public programs and special events displays and activities are ways to engage members of society who might otherwise never think about the importance of pollinators.

The Florida Native Plant Society and the Tropical Audubon Society regularly have plant sales to promote creation of a habitat for wildlife. As more native plants join the home landscape, the earlier planted individuals find mates, fruit and seed are produced, and, in some cases, new populations become self-sustaining. Admittedly, the genetic structure of remnant natural populations is very likely changed with these native plantings in the matrix between natural habitat fragments as pollinators move from fragment to oases of floral rewards (some from exotic plants, some from native plants). This is a dilemma in our irreversibly altered human-dominated landscapes.

Restoration of pollinator-plant interactions by gardening for pollinators can enhance plant and pollinator diversity and help rejuvenate landscapes in which plants have lost their partners. There are many examples of pollinators that have disappeared and are presumed extinct, from localized specialists to far-ranging generalists (Buchman and Nabhan 1996). Planting projects can serve to replace floral resources lost through development and may attract and support populations of floral visitors that would otherwise decline or disappear. These may be the only means that can conserve both generalist and specialist pollinators in the face of ever-growing human populations.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Influence of Host Plant Extrafloral Nectaries on Multitrophic Interactions: An Experimental Investigation

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Abstract

A field experiment was conducted with outplantings of the native perennial shrub *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii* in a semi-natural area adjacent to native pine rockland habitat in southern Florida. The presence of ants and the availability of extrafloral nectar were manipulated in a stratified random design. Insect communities were monitored and recorded over a period of six months with a view to addressing three main questions. Do ants provide biotic defense against key herbivores on *S. chapmanii*? Is the presence of ants on *S. chapmanii* mediated by EFN? Finally, are there ecological costs associated with the presence of ants on *S. chapmanii*, such as a reduction in alternative predator or parasitoid numbers? Herbivores on *S. chapmanii* included immature stages of three pierid butterflies, and adult weevils. Eight species of ants were associated with the plants, and other predators included spiders, ladybugs, wasps, and hemipterans. Parasitic, haemolymph-sucking midges (Ceratopogonidae) and parasitoid flies were also associated with the caterpillar herbivores, and possibly the extrafloral nectaries of the plants. The presence of ants did not appear to influence oviposition by butterflies, as numbers of lepidopterans of all developmental stages did not differ among treatments. Significantly more late instar caterpillars, however, were observed on plants with ants excluded, indicating that ants remove small caterpillars from plants. Substantially more alternative predators (spiders, ladybugs, and wasps) were observed on plants with ants excluded. Rates of parasitization did not differ among the treatments, but there were substantially fewer caterpillars succumbing to virus among those collected from control plants.

We provide a rare look at facultative ant-plant mutualisms in the context of the many other interactions with which they overlap. We conclude that ants provide some biotic defense against herbivores on *S. chapmanii*, and plants benefit overall from the presence of ants, despite negative impacts on non-ant predators.

Introduction

Extrafloral nectaries (EFNs) have been reported in 93 plant families and 332 genera [1], and may be found on almost any vegetative or reproductive plant structure [1, 2, 3, 4]. While extrafloral nectar (EFN) may be consumed by a broad range of arthropods, its discovery by ants is thought to be of greatest importance to plant defense [1, 5, 6]. While defending their resource, many ant species show territorial aggressiveness towards, or even prey on other insects that they encounter [1].

Since Thomas Belt first hypothesized the mutualism between plants and defensive ants [7], many studies have supported ants as biotic defenders of plants [6, 8, 9, 10]. Ant-plants may be placed into two categories based on their defensive strategy. Myrmecophytic plants provide nesting sites and are permanently occupied by specialized ant species, while myrmecophylic plants provide unspecialized food rewards, most commonly extrafloral nectar (EFN) or honeydew (through associations with honeydew producing hemipterans), and foster only facultative interactions with ants. While the defensive role of ants on myrmecophytic plants is well supported [8, 9, 10], the defensive benefits of EFN attracted ants have been empirically demonstrated only relatively rarely [11, 12, 13, 14]. Indeed, several studies of EFN mediated ant-plant interactions have observed neutral or even negative effects on plant fitness [15, 16, 17]. In some cases the chemical composition of EFN appears to be tailored to attract defensive ants, and discourage exploiters [18]. Many facultative mutualisms between ants and EFN producing plants, however, offer low levels of species specificity and nectar is, therefore, available to be exploited by a host of arthropods which may confer no benefits to the plant (nectar thieves), and may even deter ants [19]. For example, 14 families of Diptera and 5 families of wasps have been observed at the EFNs of Lima beans alone [20]. The importance of EFN on the biology of non-ant consumers, however, has rarely been studied [21].

Ants, themselves, vary in their defensive qualities [9, 22, 23], and even the most effective ant bodyguards may not be exclusively beneficial for plants [24]. Mutualisms between plants and ants do not occur in isolation, but within a complex web of biotic interactions. In the cactus *Ferocactus wislizeni*, for example, plants defended by the most aggressive ants, *Solenopsis xyloni*, suffer reduced herbivory and produce more flowers. Those flowers, however, receive fewer and shorter visits from pollinators, deterred by the same ferocious ants [24]. Other studies have also observed that pollinators recognize the danger posed by ants [25, 26]. Assunção et al. [26] placed plastic ants on the petals of *Heteropterys pteropetala*. Flowers with plastic ants produced significantly less fruit than control flowers. Aggressive ants have also been observed to reduce the numbers of other beneficial insects, such as predators and parasitoids, on EFN bearing plants [6, 22]. In the EFN bearing tree, *Qualea multiflora*, both ants and spiders reduce herbivory rates, and an interaction effect has been observed whereby the best protected plants are those that harbor both ants and spiders. In many cases, however, ants outcompete spiders, with detrimental effects on plant defense [27].

Conflict between mutualistic guilds (bodyguards, pollinators, parasitoids) represents an important and understudied ecological cost of indirect plant defenses, and may be most prevalent in generalized systems where there is greater variation in partner quality and the relative importance of each mutualism. If we hope to understand the ecological role of EFN, along with the costs and benefits of ant-plant mutualisms, we must consider the whole network of interactions in which they exist. Ant-plant associations have been described as keystone interactions with the potential to dramatically alter the structure of arthropod communities [6]. The temporal dynamics of such mutualisms, however, and the balance of costs and benefits received by the plant, have rarely been studied in the context of the community [28, 29, 21].

Senna is a relatively large genus (300–350 species) of Caesalpinoid legumes, and one of the three richest genera in terms of the number of EFN bearing species, along with *Passiflora* and *Inga* [30]. The diversification of *Senna* has been attributed to the evolution of EFNs, facilitating interactions with opportunistic ants, and the exploitation of newly arising ecological niches [30]. Although the ecology of EFNs in *Senna* is not well understood, there have been a number of studies on EFN mediated interactions in *Senna* and closely related taxa.

In the present study we observed and recorded insect activity in *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii* (hereafter referred to as *Senna chapmanii*) over a period of six months, and compiled a large database of species occurring on our study plants. We examined the role of EFN in mediating ant-plant interactions in *S. chapmanii*, as well as the effects of ants on predator and herbivore numbers. Additionally, we investigated how the presence of ants affects the rate of parasitization in *S. chapmanii*'s key herbivores, the Sulphur butterflies. Ant protection of caterpillars against parasitoids has been observed several times through the experimental exclusion of ants [31, 32]. In one such exclusion experiment, parasitization by tachinid flies and braconid wasps, resulted in 78% mortality in *Hemiargus isola* (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) larvae, almost twice that observed in the presence of tending ants [32].

In this study, 60 seedlings of *S. chapmanii* were planted in semi-natural growing conditions. The presence of ants and the availability of EFN were manipulated to test three major hypotheses. First, we predicted that ants on *S. chapmanii* would provide defense against herbivores such as pierid butterflies. Secondly, we hypothesized that the presence of ants would be mediated by the availability of EFN. Finally, we predicted that, despite their defensive benefits, the presence of ants would come at some ecological cost to *S. chapmanii* plants, specifically, a reduction in the numbers of other predatory insects, or the rate of herbivore parasitization.

Methods

Seeds for plants cultivated for our experiment were collected from Camp Owaissa Bauer under Research Permit # 0021 to SK, Natural Areas Management Miami-Dade County Park and Recreation Department. The experiment was conducted on the grounds of the University of Florida's Tropical Research Experiment Center (UF-TREC: 25°30'27.52"N, 8°30'13.67"W; elevation 2.4 m) with permission as JEP was on the faculty and SK an official Research Associate of UF.

Study site

The experiment was carried out at UF-TREC in Homestead, Florida. The regional climate is classified as subtropical, with average annual temperatures fluctuating between 3.2–24.8°C in January and 22.7–32.4°C in July. The mean annual precipitation is 1496 mm. The site elevation is close to sea level, and consists of flat calcareous limestone rocklands that have been rock-plowed for agriculture. We utilized a 2 acre restoration area within the site. The restoration area was a rockland hammock, previously overgrown with exotic pest plants, that had been mostly cleared of all vegetation except for some large native trees in the center and on a few edges. Within 5 m of the western edge there is a stand of pine rockland habitat, a protected natural area.

Study species

Senna Miller (Fabaceae: Caesalpinoideae), formerly included in the genus *Cassia*, is a genus of 300–340 species, of which 80% occur in the New World [33]. *Senna* spp. are mostly woody perennials with parapinnate leaves, some bearing foliar nectaries between the lowest pair of opposite leaflets (varying among species) [34]. *Senna mexicana* (Jacq.) H.S. Irwin & Barneby

var. *chapmanii* (Isely) H.S.Irwin & Barneby is a native species of southern Florida, and is state-listed as threatened (Atlas of Florida Plants), occurring only in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, as well as in the Bahamas and Cuba. This species grows in pine rockland habitat and rockland hammock edges as an upright or sprawling subshrub, up to 1.2 m in height, spreading broader than tall. The bright, showy, yellow flowers (ca. 2 cm diameter) offer no nectar to floral visitors, and are usually visited by bees collecting pollen by 'buzzing' the anthers [35, 36]. Extrafloral nectaries, however, occur on the pedicels of flowers in the inflorescences, as well as throughout the foliage between basal leaflets.

Experimental design

Senna chapmanii plants were grown in a greenhouse at Florida International University, from seed collected from the pine rockland at Camp Owaissa Bauer in Homestead (under Research Permit # 0021 to SK, Natural Areas Management Miami-Dade County Park and Recreation Department). After 3 months, sixty plants were transplanted into the experimental site on the grounds of the University of Florida Tropical Research Experiment Station, in an area of approximately 8000m². Plants were installed in an evenly spaced array, over the open areas not occupied by dense vegetation. Each plant was at least 4m from its nearest neighbor. Treatments were assigned systematically to ensure even distribution of treatments across the site. Plants were mulched with wood chips, and watered for two months until they were established.

The experiment consisted of four treatments, in which the presence of ants and the availability of EFN were manipulated. The two independent variables were ants (present or excluded) and EFN (available or unavailable). The sixty plants were randomly assigned to one of four treatments as follows: 1) Ants removed, and a sticky resin (Tanglefoot™) applied to the base of branches to prevent the transit of ants and other crawling insects; this treatment is designated TF. 2) Ants present: ants removed manually to control for the effects of removal, such as shaking of branches, but no tanglefoot applied, so their return was not prevented; this is the control designated C. 3) Nail polish (Sally Hansen "Hard as Nails") applied to all nectaries on the plant to reduce nectar available to all visitors; this treatment is designated NP. 4) Nail polish dabbed on the back of each leaf, to test for its potential repellent effects; this treatment is designated NPC. Nylon nail polish effectively seals the nectaries and eliminates nectar production [37, 14] without damaging plant tissues on this species and others with fairly sturdy leaves. The assigned treatment was applied to three branches of each plant, and reapplied weekly throughout the course of the experiment. The arthropod censuses and collections were made from the selected branches. Though originally there were 15 plants in each treatment, final sample sizes of plants monitored were TF = 12, C = 15, NP = 12, and NPC = 11.

Plants were transplanted in March 2003, the cooler dry season in south Florida, so irrigation was needed to aid their establishment until the summer rains came in late May. Plants were all similar in size initially, but some grew taller and others broader, depending on their genotype. We chose branches that were held upright and did not touch the ground, and trimmed overlapping branches to eliminate pathways for crawling insects to access treatment branches. Observations began in the fall rainy season, September 2003, and exclusion experiments started in October 2003. The experiment continued through February 2004, a period of six months, spanning both the wet and dry season (from December onward). In nature, plants flower and fruit year round, though flowering is greater from November through May (personal observations).

Data collection

Throughout the field season a weekly census was conducted for each plant during the morning hours (dawn until mid-day), always with sunny or partly cloudy weather, during which insect

numbers were counted, and their behaviors monitored, on the three target branches. Predatory arthropods such as ants, spiders, wasps, bugs, ladybugs and flies, were noted along with whether they visited nectaries, removed herbivores, or fed on other insects. Vouchers were collected where species determination was necessary. Herbivores on the plants were also recorded (leaf-chewing weevils, and larvae of pierid butterflies and tortricid moths), but only the larvae of pierid butterflies were intensively sampled. Numbers of small larvae (1st and 2nd instars) were recorded, while mature (3rd, 4th and 5th instar) caterpillars were recorded, collected, and reared to glean information on rates of parasitization and disease. The larvae of tortricid moths were sporadically collected and reared for information on their species identity and parasitization. For each type of arthropod we counted the number of individuals at each census, except for ants, flies, and weevils, where only the presence or absence of each species was noted.

Caterpillars were maintained individually in the laboratory, in 1-gallon plastic bags, and fed on leaves until they died or pupated. Caterpillars/Pupae were kept in the bags until the emergence of adult butterflies or, in the case of dead or morbid individuals, until the emergence of parasitoids (such individuals were placed in plastic Falcon™ tubes with loosened caps). Emerging butterflies or parasitoids could then be identified.

For each pierid caterpillar collected, we recorded whether it survived to adulthood or died. For those caterpillars that died, it was determined if their death was a result of parasitization (where a parasitoid was seen to emerge) or from a virus. The most common parasitoid, a tachinid fly, usually emerged as a larva from the pierid butterfly chrysalis, and pupated in the container. We later found that some of these flies pupated within the chrysalis, and died while emerging from both pupae cases. Some fly larvae presumably died before emergence, and were not detected. By this stage specimens were often desiccated to such an extent as to prevent reliable analysis and, therefore, it was not always possible to determine the exact cause of death. In such cases we assigned the category “maybe parasitized”. Virus infected caterpillars exhibited discoloration and turned black shortly after death; virus infected pupae neither eclosed a butterfly nor a parasitoid, but turned either black or a mosaic of colors. Dead specimens (larvae and pupae, presumed to be killed by virus) collected over the study were later sent to L. Solter (Illinois Natural History Survey) for examination, to determine if there was evidence of virus or microsporidia. This turned out to be impossible to determine as our specimens, left in tubes at room temperature, had acquired fungi and other decomposers that interfered with her observations; no one common pathogenic agent could be identified from these specimens.

Data analysis

We summed the occurrences of all types of insects on each plant (actual counts for most types; only presence/absence for ants, flies, and weevils) over the course of the experiment. We used sums rather than averages as it was unlikely that individual insects would be on the same plant (except for caterpillars, which were removed at the third instar and later for rearing). Where actual numbers were recorded, counts were compared among treatments using Univariate Analysis of Variance. Where only presence/absence was recorded, insect occurrence was compared using Contingency Tables and the Kruskal-Wallis test (SPSS version 11).

Analyses were performed with both actual data of occurrences of the various arthropod groups and square-root transformed data, which always gave the same results, so we report the results with the actual data. Some plants died during the course of the experiment, succumbing to fungal blight; data from all plants that lived for at least two months were included. Post-hoc tests for between treatment comparisons were either Tukeys HSD (for equal variance) or Dunnet's C or Games-Howell (depending on the sample size). Caterpillar rearing data were analyzed using contingency tables.

Results

In all the analyses we sought to detect effects of the treatments on the abundance of the various arthropods associated with *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii*. We will consider each of the groups in turn, starting with the ants, continuing with other potential predators, and then the herbivores.

Ants

Eight species of ants were encountered on experimental plants (Table 1). Plants treated with Tanglefoot had the lowest numbers of ants of most species (lowest mean ranks in the Kruskal Wallis test), but only for one species of ant (*Brachymyrmex obscurior*; Kruskal Wallis $X^2_3 = 9.2$, $p = .026$) was the difference significant (Fig 1). Fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) did not differ significantly among treatments ($X^2_3 = 2.822$, $p = 0.42$) (Fig 1), and carpenter ants (*Camponotus*) were marginally significant when the three observed species were combined ($X^2_3 = 7.23$, $p = 0.065$). Overall, the desired effect of ant exclusion was obtained: all ant species combined were substantially less frequent on the Tanglefoot treated plants than on all the other treatments, which were not different from each other (Fig 1).

Of the 60 plants in the study, 18 were colonized by fire ant nests at their base during the course of the experiment: 9 of the NPC plants; 5 of the NP plants; and 2 each of the TF and C plants. During the course of the experiment, some of the plants died, succumbing to a type of blight, wilting one week, dead the next week. One or two of each group was lost in this way, reducing the sample size by the end of the study. Only one of the plants with a nest at its base died.

Other Predators

Predators of several orders (Hymenoptera, Hemiptera, Coleoptera) and many families were recorded on the *Senna chapmanii* plants in this experiment (Table 1; Fig 2). Several non-ant predators were substantially more abundant on plants with ants excluded: ladybugs (Coccinellidae) ($F_{3,47} = 3.4$, $p = 0.025$), spiders (Thomisidae) ($F_{3,47} = 2.998$, $p = 0.040$), and wasps (Vespidae) showed statistically significant differences ($F_{3,47} = 2.82$, $p = 0.049$) among treatments and were most abundant on Tanglefoot treated plants (Fig 2). Hemiptera predators ($F_{3,47} = 1.56$, $p = 0.212$) and sucking flies (Ceratopogonidae) ($F_{3,47} = 1.999$, $p = 0.127$) did not differ significantly among treatments.

Herbivores

Three pierid butterfly species occurred on *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii*: *Abaeis nicippe* (Cramer) (the sleepy orange), *Phoebis philea* (L.) (the orange-barred sulfur), and *Phoebis sennae* (L.) (the cloudless sulfur). *Abaeis nicippe* were the most numerous, followed by *P. sennae*, while *P. philea* were relatively rare (Fig 3). *Abaeis nicippe* larvae consumed only foliage, whereas the larvae of both *Phoebis* species consumed either leaves or flowers. *Phoebis* larvae had coloration reflecting the color of the plant organ consumed. Comparing the number of caterpillars collected at 3rd instar and larger for rearing, we can see that for both *Phoebis* species, more were found on plants with ants excluded (*P. philea* $X^2_3 = 141.24$; $p < 0.005$; *P. sennae* $X^2_3 = 78.25$; $p < 0.005$), and this difference was significant also for comparing only ant exclusion (TF treatment) with the control for both *Phoebis* species as well (*P. philea* $X^2 = 17.82$; $p < 0.005$; *P. sennae* $X^2_3 = 16.6$; $p < 0.005$). This difference between ant-excluded and control was not evident, however, for *Abaeis nicippe* ($X^2 = 0.08$; $p > 0.5$), though overall there was a significant effect of treatment ($X^2_3 = 107.22$; $p < 0.005$). When caterpillars of all species

Table 1. Arthropods associated with experimental *Senna* plants.

Order, Family	Genus, Species, author	Nest location, ecological info, etc
Hymenoptera, Formicidae	<i>Brachymyrmex obscurior</i> * Wilson & Taylor	Ground (Tschinkel & Hess 1999)
	<i>Camponotus floridanus</i> Buckley	Decaying wood
	<i>Camponotus rasilis</i> * Wheeler	Decaying wood
	<i>Camponotus sexguttatus</i> * Fabricius	twigs
	<i>Odontomachus brunneus</i> Deyrup et al.	subterranean
	<i>Paratrechina longicornis</i> Latreille	Tree bark, rotten wood, stones, debris
	<i>Pseudomyrmex elongatus</i> Mayr	Dead twigs
	<i>Pseudomyrmex gracilis</i> * Fabricius	Twigs, branches
	<i>Solenopsis invicta</i> * Buren	ground
Hymenoptera, Halictidae	<i>Augochlorella</i> spp.	Flower visitor
	<i>Augochloropsis anonyma</i> Cockerell	Flower visitor
Hymenoptera, Apidae	<i>Melissodes communis</i> Cresson	Flower visitor
Hymenoptera, Vespidae	<i>Polistes major</i> (Beauvois) det. Deyrup 2003	Predator, make caterpillar meatballs
	<i>Pachodynerus nasidens</i> Latreille det Wiley 2005	Predator
Hemiptera, Alydidae	<i>Hyalymenus longispinus</i> Stål, 1870; det. D. Zisk 2005	ant-mimic nymphs—plant/seed feeders
Hemiptera, Reduviidae	<i>Zelus longipes</i> L.–D. Zisk 2005	predator, Assassin bug
Hemiptera, Pentatominae	<i>Euschistus</i> sp. det. D. Zisk 2005	predator
	<i>Loxa virescens</i> Amyot & Serville	predator
Hemiptera, Pyrrhocoridae	<i>Dysdercus mimulus</i> Hussey; det. J. Brambila 2005	Plant feeder
Coleoptera, Cucurliionidae	<i>Diaprepes abbreviatus</i> Hussey; det. M.C. Thomas	Leaf feeder
	<i>Pachnaeus litus</i> Germar	Leaf feeder
Coleoptera, Coccinellidae	<i>Brachiacantha decora</i> Casey; det. MC Thomas	predator
	<i>Cycloneda sanguinea</i> Hussey	predator
	<i>Coelophora inaequalis</i> Fabricius det M.C. Thomas	predator
	<i>Diomus roseicollis</i> Mulsant	predator
	<i>Hippodamia convergens</i> Guérin-Ménéville	predator
Arachnida, Thomisidae	<i>Misumenoides formosipes</i> Walckenaer 1837	predator

Table 1—Arthropods on *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii* plants in experimental plantation, Homestead, FL. Taxonomic information includes order, family, genus, species, and authority. Ant (Formicidae) species considered exotic are indicated with *. Brief ecological information is also provided for each documented association.

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collected for rearing were combined, there was an even more dramatic difference among treatments ($X^2_3 = 195.6$, $p < 0.005$) with many more caterpillars discovered, collected, and reared from plants with ants excluded versus control plants ($X^2 = 14.0$; $p < 0.005$).

Although all caterpillars were somewhat more numerous on plants with ants excluded (especially *Phoebis sennae*), the overall number of Pieridae encountered in weekly censuses (all species combined, and all stages from early through late instars), did not differ significantly among plants in different treatments ($F_{3,47} = 1.288$, $p = 0.29$) (Fig 3). Numbers of caterpillars collected and reared in the lab (3rd instar and greater), however, differed significantly among treatments (Pearson $X^2_3 = 34.997$, $p < .0001$), with greater numbers found on plants from which ants were excluded (the TF treatment; Fig 4).

Several species of tortricid caterpillars (subfamily Phyticinae) were recorded, collected, and reared, and their numbers did not differ significantly among treatments ($F_{3,47} = 0.591$; $p = 0.624$; results not shown). Leaf-chewing weevils were also encountered on experimental plants, including *Diaprepes abbreviatus* and *Pachnaeus litus* (Coleoptera: Curculionidae). Their numbers did not differ significantly among treatments.

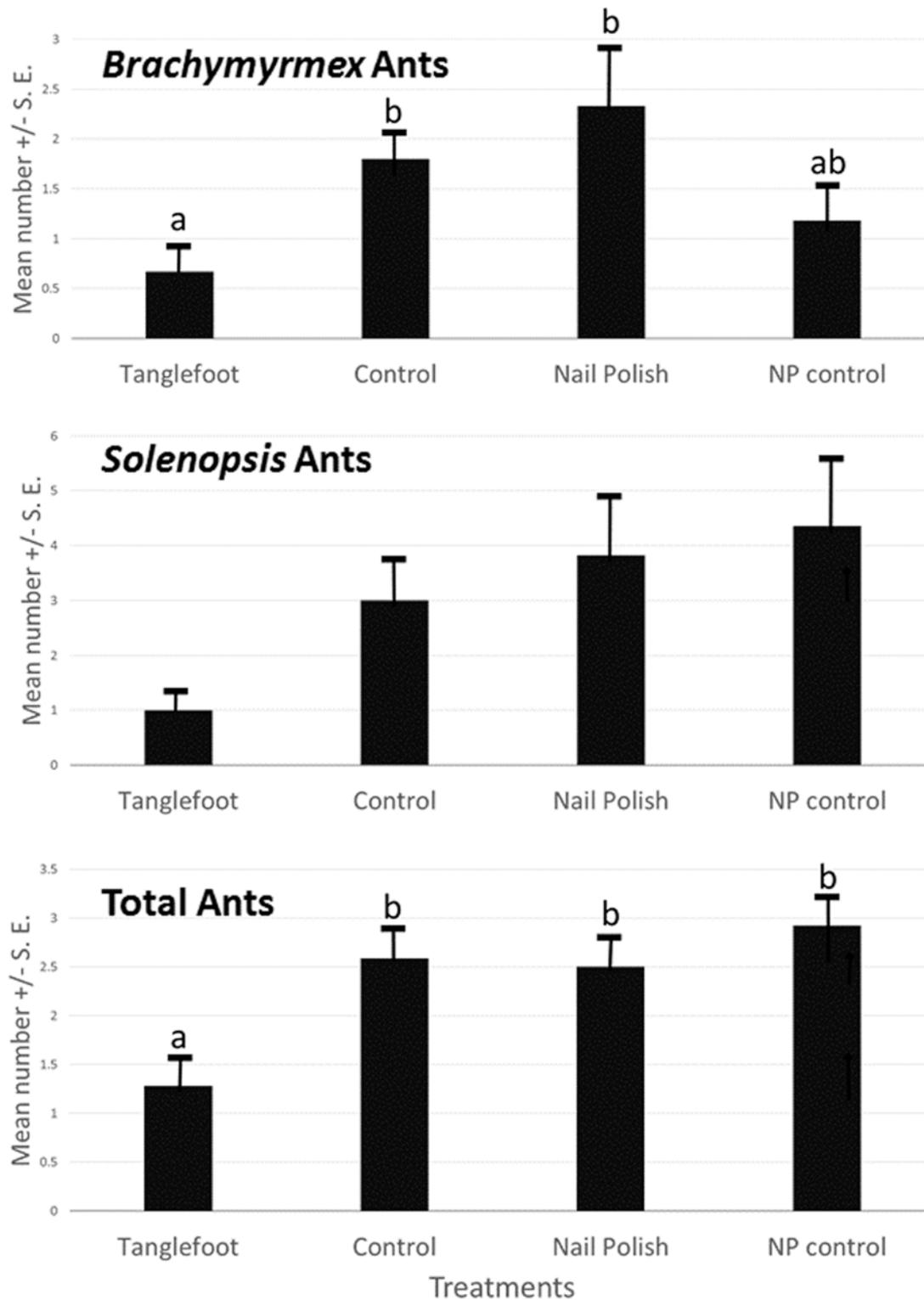


Fig 1. Ants on *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii* (experimental plantation) plants in Homestead, FL. Mean and standard error of numbers summed over the field season, over all plants, by treatment. Differences among treatments shown by Kruskal-Wallis for presence/absence data. Treatments abbreviated as C = control, TF = (tanglefoot) ant exclusion, NP = nail polish, NPC = nail polish control. Sample sizes of plants monitored were TF = 12, C = 15, NP = 12, and NPC = 11).

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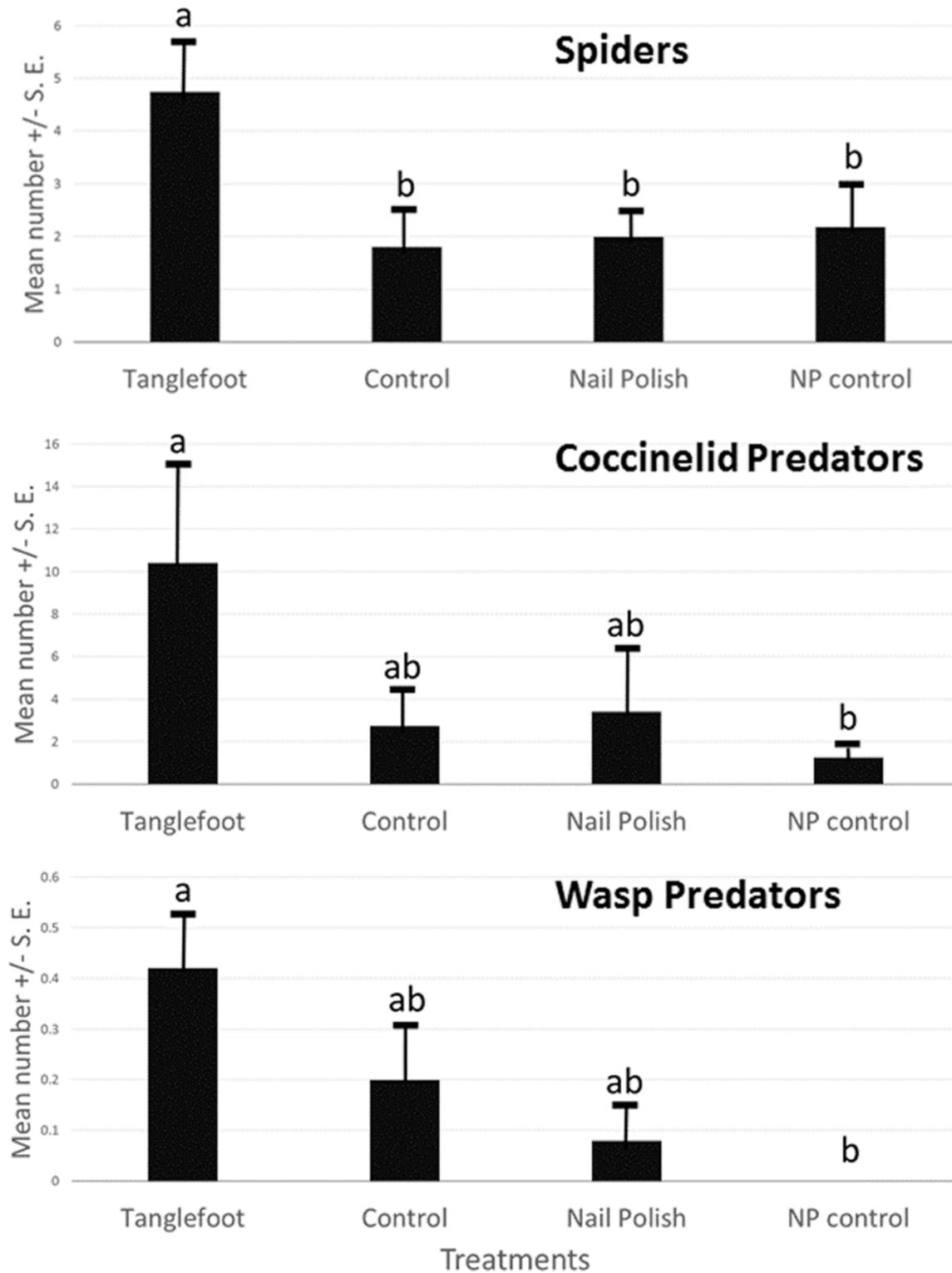


Fig 2. Other potential predators on *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii* (experimental plantation) plants in Homestead, FL. Mean and standard error of numbers summed over the field season, over all plants, by treatment. Differences among treatments shown by ANOVA for count data. Treatments and sample sizes the same as in Fig 1.

doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0138157.g002

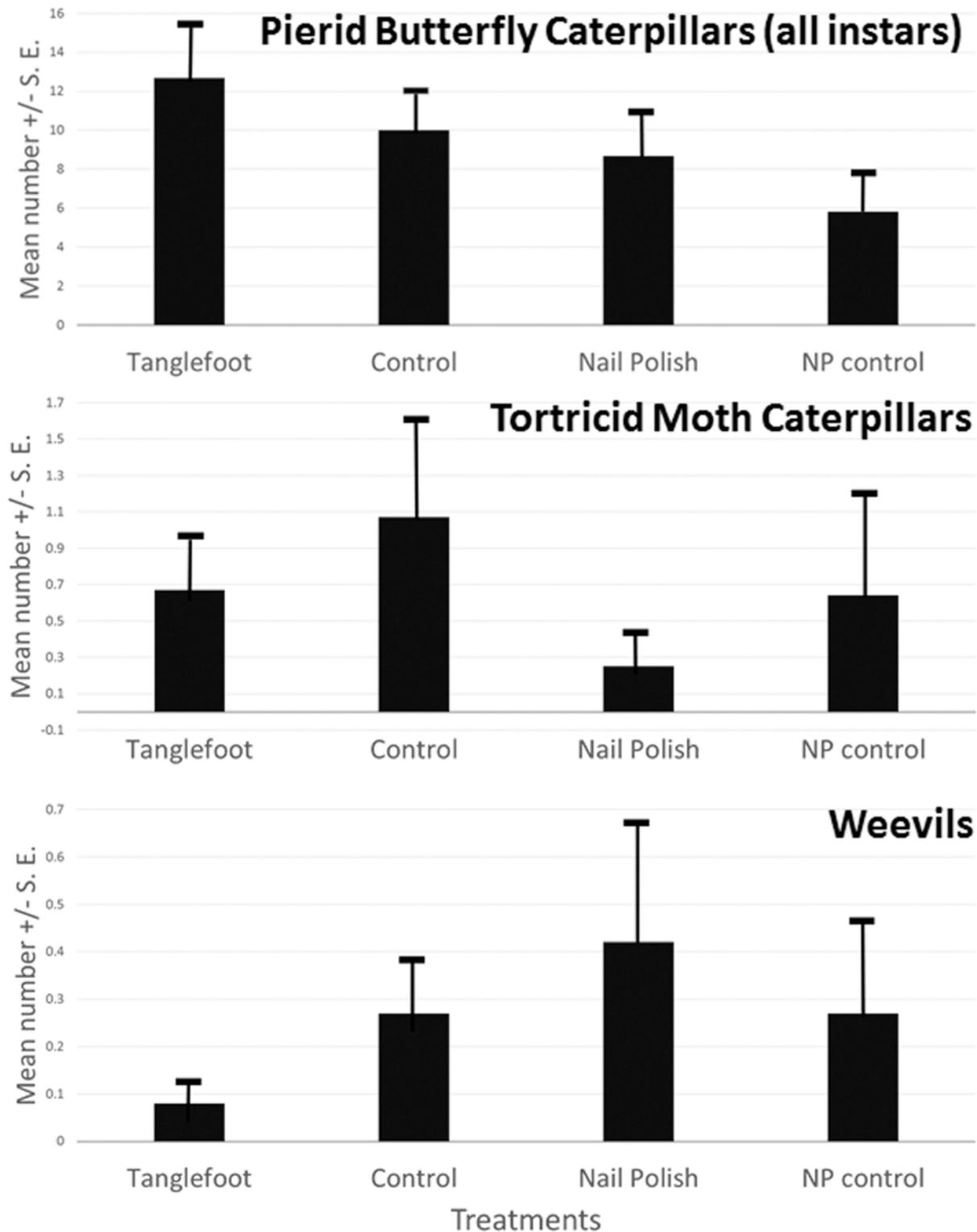


Fig 3. Herbivores on *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii* (experimental plantation) plants in Homestead, FL. Mean and standard error of numbers summed over the field season, over all plants, by treatment. Differences among treatments shown by ANOVA for count data. Treatments and sample sizes the same as in Figs 1 and 2.

doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0138157.g003

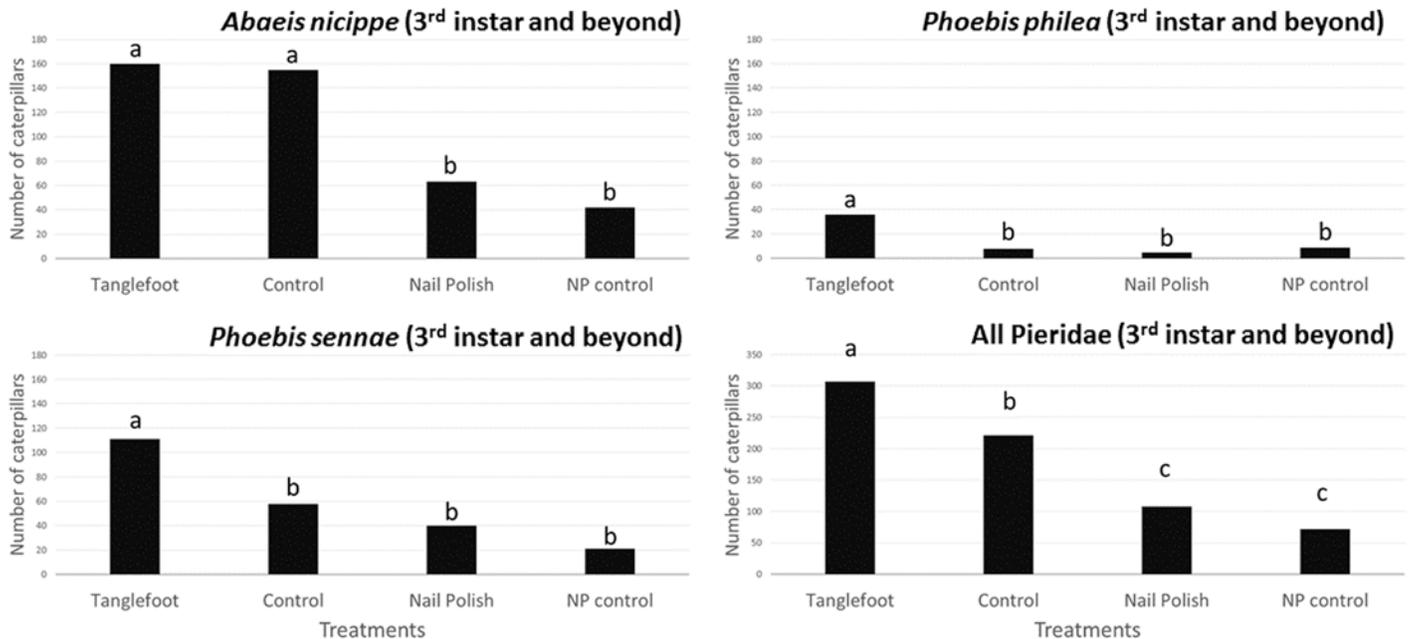


Fig 4. Pieridae (3rd instar or higher) collected from field-grown *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii*, and brought to lab for rearing. Individuals, summed over the field season over all plants, are separated by species and treatment. n = number of plants monitored. Treatments and sample sizes of plants monitored the same as in Figs 1, 2 and 3. Pearson $\chi^2_3 = 25.5$, $p < 0.0001$.

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Parasitoids

Two species of tachinid flies were reared as parasitoids from the two most common sulfur butterfly caterpillars, *A. nicippe* and *P. sennae*. One species was positively identified as *Lespesia parviteres* (Aldrich & Webber), while the other, a species of *Hyphantrophaga* (possibly *H. sellersi* (Sabrosky), could not be identified beyond the genus due to confusion in this taxon. Though the same flies reared as parasitoids were also observed several times in the field on plants and on researchers, their numbers were not great enough to warrant analysis. Small flies observed sucking the haemolymph of sulfur caterpillars were collected and determined by William Grogan to be *Forcipomyia* (*Microhelea*) *eriophora* (Williston) (Ceratopogonidae), a species recently observed in the Florida Keys feeding on the Florida leafwing butterfly [38]. Most of the caterpillars found with the sucking flies died before pupation [14], perhaps from a virus transmitted by the flies.

Only one wasp (Ichneumonidae) parasitoid individual was reared from the sulfur caterpillars, but this species was never observed in the field, though several other small wasps that might be parasitoids were observed on plants and at nectaries.

Parasitization and caterpillar success

Parasitization rate determined from caterpillars collected was 13% over all treatments. The rate did not differ significantly among treatments (Pearson $\chi^2_3 = 4.35$, $p = 0.226$; Fig 5).

Viruses were implicated in the death of many caterpillars, despite hygienic rearing protocol. Over all treatments, 13% of the individuals reared apparently succumbed to virus; this differed significantly among treatments, with caterpillars from Control plants faring substantially better than those from all the other treatments (Pearson $\chi^2_3 = 8.75$, $p = 0.033$; Fig 5).

Pierid Caterpillars Reared

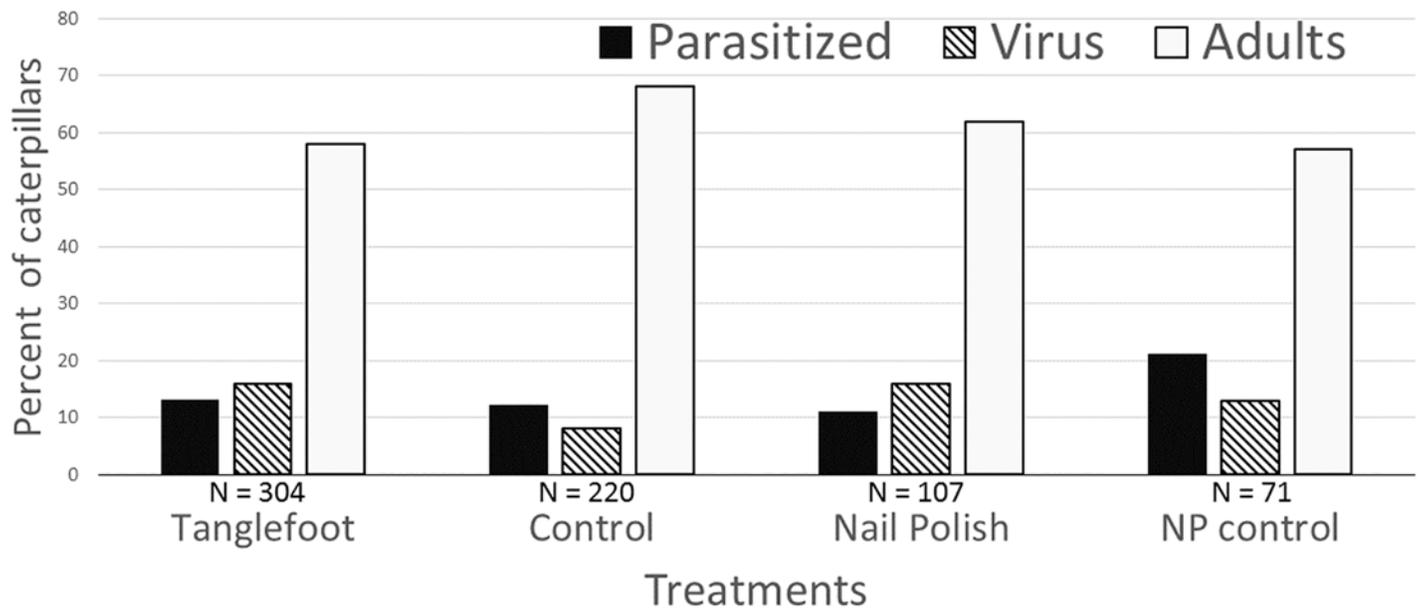


Fig 5. Rates of parasitization, virus death, and adulthood reached by caterpillars by treatment. Sample size is the number of caterpillars collected from plants (3rd instar and beyond) and reared from plants in each treatment group. Parasitized counts include both definitely and “maybe parasitized” individuals.

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Caterpillar success rate in becoming an adult butterfly was 61% over all treatments, and though not significant (Pearson $\chi^2_3 = 7.38, p = 0.06$; Fig 5), the best survival was seen in the caterpillars from Control plants (69% vs. 57–58% in all other groups).

Discussion

Extrafloral nectaries are a way of plants attracting “pugnacious bodyguards” [3] as they subsidize the diet of carnivorous insects [39], forming the basis for protective mutualisms. The outcome of food-for-protection mutualisms between ants and plants are difficult to predict, however, as they don’t occur in isolation, but within a complex web of biotic interactions. By manipulating the presence of ants, and the availability of EFN, we cast some light on the many interactions mediated by EFN, and the role of ants as a biotic defense in *S. chapmanii*.

Although the presence of ants has been shown to deter oviposition by lepidopteran herbivores in several studies [4, 11, 40], our results suggest this is not the case in *S. chapmanii*, as overall numbers of pierid caterpillars were similar among treatments. Late instar pierid caterpillars were significantly less abundant in the presence of ants, however, indicating that ants defend *S. chapmanii* plants by removing these key herbivores (Fig 6). A very similar relationship between ants and pierid herbivores has been observed in a closely related species, *Senna occidentalis*. Fleet and Young [41] observed that oviposition by two Sulphur butterflies was not deterred by defensive ants, but that the survival rates of eggs and larvae were reduced. Several other studies have reported reduced levels of caterpillar infestation in the presence of ants [42, 43]. Sendoya and Oliveira [43] studied these effects at the habitat level (the Brazilian cerrado),



Fig 6. Predators on *Senna chapmannii* plants—upper left, *Polistes major* wasp with *Phoebis philea* caterpillar; upper right, *Polistes* wasp damage to *Phoebis sennae* chrysalis; lower right, coccinelid *Brachiacantha decora* adult at extrafloral nectary; lower left, thomisid spider *Misumenoides formosipes* ready for prey.

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and found that rates of caterpillar infestation were influenced by local variations in ant numbers and species, as well as the preference of those ant species for plants producing EFN.

We observed no differences in the incidence of tortricid caterpillars among treatments, and this was to be expected, as these are concealed feeders and are less likely to be affected by surface patrolling ants. Indeed, the presence of ants may even benefit some concealed feeders by deterring their enemies [44, 45]. Unfortunately, too few Tortricidae were reared in this study to determine if that is the case in this system.

The role of ants as plant defenders is well supported, but mainly in myrmecophytic plants that provide both food and shelter to their ant partners, and engage in specialized obligate mutualisms (for example, [8]). *Senna* and relatives, however, represent a large group in which the ecology of EFN has been relatively well studied, and several species have been observed to benefit from facultative relationships with ants. *Senna occidentalis* in Texas receives protection from fire ants against two of the same sulfur butterflies as in this study, resulting in greater plant height, number of leaves, and reproductive fitness [41]. In the Brazilian cerrado,

Chamaecrista debilis nectaries are visited by ants that decrease herbivory and increase fruit set [46]. The nectaries of *Cassia fasciculata* have also been shown to support protective ants that reduce herbivore damage [47], and increase plant fecundity [48]. Boecklen [49], however, excluded ants from the same species using two methods (tanglefoot and excising nectaries, alone and in combination), concluding that the presence of ants was of no benefit to plants as treatment plants produced as many fruits as did control plants. It remains to be seen in our system if ants visiting nectaries enhance plant reproduction.

The application of Tanglefoot™ was effective in excluding ants from treatment branches over the course of the study. Reducing the availability of EFN using nail polish, however, did not significantly affect ant activity on the study branches. This was a surprising result, as many studies have linked ant activity with the availability of EFN [50, 20, 51]. Indeed, Baker-Meio and Marquis [52] studied several varieties of *Chamaecrista desvauxii* and found that those varieties with larger nectaries produced more nectar and attracted more ants. During our study, EFNs in the inflorescences of flowering individuals may have augmented ant activity on nail polish treated branches, as they were not always covered with nail polish. Additionally, on large study plants, only the experimental branches were treated, so the availability of EFN on non-test branches likely accounts for many of the ants attracted to these plants.

Our results demonstrate that when ants are excluded from nectaries in this study system, the numbers of other predators are significantly increased (Fig 7). The deterrence of other predators represents an important ecological cost of ant-plant interactions. Torres-Hernandez et al. [22] also found that predator numbers on *Turnera ulmifolia* were increased when ants were excluded, and that these predators provided better defense against herbivores than some ant species. Spiders have been shown to enhance seed set of *Chamaecrista nictitans* host plants with extrafloral nectaries [53], even when ants are ineffective at repelling some herbivores [45]. Vespid wasps visit extrafloral nectaries and are voracious predators (and we observed several making “caterpillar meatballs” during the course of the study). Wasps attracted to the extrafloral nectaries of *Turnera ulmifolia* have been shown to positively affect plant reproductive output [54]. Coccinellidae larvae and adults have been observed to visit extrafloral nectaries ([55], and the present study) and consume a variety of arthropods. Feeding on nectar and honeydew has even been shown to enhance development and survival these omnivorous “predators” [56].

In this study, neither the presence of ants, nor the availability of EFN, affected the rates of parasitization in pierid caterpillars. Although several studies have observed ants defending caterpillars from parasitoids [31, 32], these studies involved ant-tended lepidopteran species that are known to provide ants with sugary resources in return for defense. It has been observed [James Spencer, personal communication] that sulphur caterpillars at times produce tiny droplets on the tips of setae covering their bodies, but the potential role of this liquid as an ant reward, or ant-deterrent, has not yet been investigated. We have never observed caterpillar-tending behavior by ants, but the droplets may play a role in caterpillar protection (presently under investigation).

A surprising observation was that on control plants, where ant activity was high, fewer caterpillars died from viruses. We also observed that caterpillars collected from these plants had a higher rate of successful emergence as adults, although the result was not quite significant in this case. A variety of predators and parasitoids (Coccinellid larvae, tachinid flies, and parasitic wasps) have been shown to carry viable nuclear polyhedrosis virus [57]. It is possible; therefore, that the deterrence of predators by ants may explain the low rates of viral infection seen in caterpillars collected from control plants. An alternative explanation is that ants may disproportionately predate upon virus infected caterpillars, leading to lower rates of virus infection in reared caterpillars. While we view this explanation as unlikely, future work could determine if virus infected caterpillars are more or less vulnerable to predation.



Fig 7. Some players in the tritrophic system—upper left, caterpillar of the orange-barred sulfur butterfly, *Phoebis philea*, on *Senna chapmanii*; upper right, pupa (chrysalis) of *P. sennae*; lower left, adult *P. sennae*; lower right: caterpillar studded with sucking flies (virus transmitters?). When viruses are involved, the pupae do not hatch, but instead turn various colors.

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An unanticipated dimension of the study was the discovery of caterpillar-sucking midges that might have a role in spreading virus and thereby controlling caterpillars. Ceratopogonidae midges (*Forcipomyia* (*Microhelea*) *eriphora*) were first observed feeding on *P. sennae* during this study, and the phenomenon was later observed several times in natural settings. The parasitized larvae were collected, and died at higher rates in captivity than is expected in rearings of this species [14]. It might be that these Ceratopogonidae midges are not as likely to suck caterpillars in the presence of ants, but more work is needed to test this, as well as the virus transmission hypothesis [14].

Like many EFN producing plants, *S. chapmanii* appears to engage in non-specialist facultative interactions with ants. In this study alone, the EFNs of *S. chapmanii* were regularly visited by eight species of ants. In addition to attracting small numbers of workers to defend against herbivores, some EFN producing plants may also attract ants to nest beneath the plants, increasing the reliability of defense and potentially providing additional nutrients in the soil [58, 59]. In this experiment, of the thirty plants with available EFNs, eleven had fire ant nests at their base. Study plants were mulched to prevent the growth of weeds that might function as ‘ant-bridges’, and this mulch may have contributed to the attraction of nesting ants, however, this unexpectedly high occurrence of nests surely warrants further investigation. Indeed, the outcomes of ant-plant mutualisms must ultimately depend more on the dynamics of colonies,

than the behavior of individual workers, and we are not the first to suggest that future work might use colonies, rather than workers, as the unit of study [60].

We have previously shown that *S. chapmanii* plants produce more EFN in response to leaf damage, and that the same leaf damage elicits increased ant activity on the plants [51]. Although not comprehensive, the present study provides a record of many insects found on *S. chapmanii*, and represents a rare effort to describe EFN mediated ant-plant interactions in the context of the many other interactions around which they occur. We provide strong evidence that ants remove key herbivores from *S. chapmanii*, and future work should focus on how ants affect plant reproductive fitness in this system.

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Author Contributions

Conceived and designed the experiments: SK JEP. Performed the experiments: SK JEP. Analyzed the data: SK IMJ. Contributed reagents/materials/analysis tools: SK JEP. Wrote the paper: SK IMJ JEP.

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Floral Biology and Breeding System of the Crenulate Leadplant, *Amorpha herbacea* var. *crenulata*, an Endangered South Florida Pine Rockland Endemic

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ABSTRACT: The federally endangered crenulate leadplant, *Amorpha herbacea* Walter var. *crenulata* (Rydb.) Isely, is an endemic shrub of the globally imperiled pine rocklands of southern Florida. Crenulate leadplant is near extinction in the wild due to heavy habitat loss, fire suppression, altered hydrology, and invasion by non-native species. This study examined the floral biology and breeding system of the leadplant and factors that may help explain its decline and provide direction for conservation. Protogynous flowers and a high pollen/ovule ratio suggest a reproductive strategy of outcrossing, while a binucleate pollen grain indicates possible gametophytic self-incompatibility. Hand pollinations show that while the leadplant is capable of some self-fertilization, it is significantly more successful in setting fruit when cross-pollinated, and produces a greater percentage of seed when outcrossed. This predominantly self-incompatible species may, therefore, suffer decreased reproductive fitness in its few remnant localities.

Index terms: *Amorpha herbacea* var. *crenulata*, bees, breeding system, endangered plant, Fabaceae, pine rockland, protogyny, self-incompatibility

INTRODUCTION

Amorpha herbacea Walter var. *crenulata* (Rydb.) Isely, the crenulate leadplant, is a federally endangered shrub endemic to the globally imperiled pine rocklands of extreme southern Florida (USFWS 2006). The crenulate leadplant (Fabaceae: Papilionoideae) has dwindled to near extinction in the wild, where it exists solely as remnant adult populations in highly altered sites. Its primary threats are habitat destruction and fragmentation, fire suppression, drainage, and invasion by non-native species (FDACS 2000).

The pine rockland habitat of the crenulate leadplant has been largely destroyed throughout urban and suburban Miami-Dade County (USFWS 2006). With a tree canopy composed solely of slash pine (*Pinus elliotii*), the pinelands support a number of endemic shrubs and herbs now listed as threatened or endangered. Pine rocklands outside of Everglades National Park once covered nearly 65,000 hectares, but now have been reduced to small fragments. In Miami-Dade County, the pine rocklands occur along the Miami Rock Ridge, an exposed portion of the Pleistocene Miami Limestone formation approximately 80 kilometers long and 6 to 14 kilometers wide (DERM 1993).

Crenulate leadplant had a restricted range even before habitat destruction took its toll. The shrub was constrained to an area approximately 19 km long and 8 km wide in Miami-Dade County (DERM 1993). This range is within the northern Biscayne

region of the Miami Rock Ridge, much of which historically was close to the transverse glades and eastern edge of the Everglades (Snyder et al. 1990). Crenulate leadplant is associated with the seasonally hydrated, pineland-marl prairie ecotone, which essentially no longer exists in Miami-Dade County (FDACS 2000).

The study of plant breeding systems is vital to species and habitat conservation (Richards 1997). If a plant is self-incompatible, it must have access to the pollen of a different genetic individual for successful reproduction. If pollinators are necessary, conservation requires habitat to support the pollinators and to sustain plant populations large enough to enable cross-pollination. Thus, knowledge of breeding systems is important in formulating integrated management strategies (Koptur 2006). It also has important practical applications in managing endangered plants to conserve their genetic variability (Kearns and Inouye 1993), since breeding systems play a crucial role in shaping population genetic structure (Hamrick 1989).

This study examined the floral and reproductive biology of crenulate leadplant, factors that may help explain its decline in the wild and assist in achieving the immediate federal objectives of preventing extinction and increasing populations. Modern conservation is strongly oriented toward habitat protection, but this does not remove the need to understand the autecology and requirements of individual species (Noss et al. 1997), especially those that have become so rare that they require individual listing

and recovery planning to avert extinction (Atwood and Noss 1994).

METHODS

Study Plants and Sites

Crenulate leadplant is a multi-stemmed shrub, readily resprouting from its base after periods of dry weather, mowing, or fire (Figure 1a). Its white inflorescences are tinged with red and its small flowers have bright orange pollen, making an attractive display for flower visitors (Figure 1b,c). We studied the crenulate leadplant in the wild and in a greenhouse. Study sites included two Miami-Dade County parks with naturally occurring leadplant populations. A third, privately owned site was monitored initially, but later abandoned as a study area after it was cleared.

Greenhouse study plants were obtained as seedlings from Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Coral Gables, Florida. Seeds from two different sources produced the seedlings from which our study plants were grown. We potted seedlings individually in 4-inch containers in an alkaline potting mix consisting of equal parts fine-grain pumice, silica sand, peat moss, and pine bark soil conditioner. The plants were placed on two tables in the Florida International University greenhouse where they received regular watering and occasional treatment for ants (baits made of sugar, boric acid, and water) and scale insects (insecticidal soap spray). A half-strength mixture of liquid Miracle-Gro fertilizer (15-30-15, N-P-K) was applied every few months equally to all plants. The plants were stepped up to 1-gallon containers, and some to 3-gallon pots, over the course of several years. They were cut back when stems grew too long and in order to induce flowering.

Floral Biology and Phenology

Crenulate leadplant has unusual flowers for its legume subfamily, the Papilionoideae, comprised of species known for their five-petaled, zygomorphic flowers. Crenulate leadplant flower corollas are reduced to a single standard petal; hence the generic

name *Amorpha*, meaning “without shape,” or “deformed” (Linnaeus 1753; Rydberg 1919; Isely 1990; McMahon 2002).

We observed leadplant inflorescences and flowers on plants in the field for growth patterns and for timing of male and female reproductive functions. To determine the growth of the leadplant’s spike-like terminal racemes, we measured 24 racemes on six plants daily until first flower opening. Inflorescence expansion ceased once flowers started to open.

Three racemes on two plants were monitored hourly for 30 hours following first flowering activity to determine the number of the protogynous flowers in female-phase and male-phase. We looked at six maturing racemes on four plants, and counted the number of female-phase and male-phase flowers at mid-inflorescence. To record the time an inflorescence lasted, from first flower opening to pollen dispersal, we monitored 11 racemes on four plants daily. To determine the average number of flowers per centimeter of inflorescence, we measured five racemes with a millimeter ruler and counted the number of flowers on each raceme.

Individual reproductive components were measured with a millimeter ruler using 30 flowers from at least six leadplants for each component. We measured calyx length, petal length, style protrusion beyond the standard petal, longest stamen exertion beyond the standard, flower length from base of the calyx to the tip of the longest exerted stamen, fruit length, and seed length.

Stigma Receptivity

We tested for stigmatic esterase activity, an enzymatic indicator of receptivity which also identifies the location of the receptive stigmatic surface (Kearns and Inouye 1993). Five styles were removed from leadplant flowers in each of three stages: just before flower opening, immediately following flower opening, and after anther dehiscence. The test solution was 2.5 mg of the substrate alpha-naphthyl acetate dissolved in three drops of acetone in a

test tube. Five ml of phosphate buffer (0.1 M, pH 7.0) were added to the dissolved alpha-naphthyl acetate and shaken well. Then, 12.5 mg of tetrazotized o-dianisidine blue dye were added to the solution and shaken again. A control solution was prepared that contained everything but the alpha-naphthyl acetate (Kearns and Inouye 1993). Styles were immersed in small quantities of the test and control solutions, and observed 10 minutes later for a strong reddish coloration that indicates enzymatic activity.

Pollen Nuclei

Pollen grains of crenulate leadplant were observed using two different DNA probes: (1) DAPI (4', 6-diamidino-2-phenylindole), a double-stranded DNA-specific dye that fluoresces blue in proportion to the amount of DNA in a nucleus after excitation with UV light; and (2) Hoechst 33258 (bisbenzimidazole derivative). We used fresh pollen from one greenhouse plant. Preserved pollen from three other individuals was fixed in a 1:3 acetic acid: ethanol solution for several hours, followed by 30 minutes in 50% ethanol, then stored in 70% ethanol (Kearns and Inouye 1993). We placed the fresh pollen in a drop of DAPI solution on a microscope slide under a Leitz dialux 20 microscope. We placed preserved pollen from three plants in a drop or two of Hoechst 33258 on three microscope slides and added cover slips. The slides were then rinsed with a phosphate buffer, observed under the microscope, and photographed.

Pollen Count

We estimated the number of pollen grains per leadplant flower by placing 10 dehiscing anthers from one flower in a micro-centrifuge tube and adding 0.1 ml of lactophenol-aniline blue (Kearns and Inouye 1993). We placed the tube in a vortex mixer for approximately 30 seconds to evenly suspend grains in the solution, and piped the solution into the wells of a hemacytometer. We observed the hemacytometer under a compound microscope and counted pollen grains within its grid. Pollen production per flower was estimated

Habit (a)



Branch (b)



Inflorescence (c)



Figure 1. Crenulate leadplant habit (a), branch (b), and inflorescence (c).

using the following formula:

$$0.1 \text{ ml} \times \frac{\text{mean \# pollen per sample}}{0.0009 \text{ ml}} \times \frac{1}{\# \text{ flowers}}$$

We used a total of three flowers from each of three plants, and had six replicate samples per flower.

Hand Pollinations

To determine the relative success of self versus outcross pollen, we conducted hand-pollination treatments over two flowering seasons on leadplants in the greenhouse. The greenhouse environment provided consistent light, temperature, and humidity for all plants, and prevented pollinators from visiting flowers. The success of different pollen sources in fertilizing ovules was measured by fruit and seed set (Kearns and Inouye 1993) (see below).

We performed hand pollinations using pollen from different inflorescences on the same plant to test for selfing (geitonogamy) and using pollen from flowers on different genetic individuals (genets) to test for outcrossing (xenogamy). Same-flower self-pollinations were not performed due to the separation in time of stigma receptivity and anther dehiscence. Many self-compatible species undergo no within-flower, or even within-ramet, self-pollination as a result of dichogamy (Richards 1997). Controls (no manipulation) were conducted to see if automatic self-pollination occurred. No pollination bags were used initially, since even the finest mesh bags can alter the environment of the flowers inside, and temperatures and humidity inside the greenhouse often were high. We bagged developing fruit to insure none of the fruit came off the plants before it was collected and counted. We did not test for seed production without sexual reproduction (agamospermy), as this test involves emasculating flowers by removing anthers before they dehisce (Kearns and Inouye 1993). It was not possible to remove the leadplant flower's 10 stamens without mutilating its tiny gynoecium.

Greenhouse plants that produced at least three inflorescences were used as experi-

mental plants. All treatments (self-pollination, cross-pollination, and no-pollination control) were done on each individual, and replicated if there were enough racemes available. Inflorescences were pollinated only once. All male-phase (earlier-opened) flowers were removed prior to hand pollinations. Removing flowers with exerted stamens prevented their pollen from coming into contact with hand-pollinated flowers. All receptive flowers on a single raceme received the same hand-pollination treatment. We used an OptiVISOR to magnify the flowers for precision pollen application.

Pollen for hand pollinations was obtained from field and greenhouse plants. It was taken in the form of whole or partial inflorescences broken off the paternal plants by forceps, placed in glassine envelopes, and used within several hours of harvesting the flowers. The pollen-donor raceme was held at its base by forceps and rubbed, brush-like, over all protruding styles on the maternal inflorescence until pollen was generously distributed and visible on the stigmatic surfaces. The bright, yellow-orange leadplant pollen is easily seen on stigmas. We used ample pollen supply since, in some plants, more than one pollen grain per ovule is required to initiate seed production (Kearns and Inouye 1993).

Racemes were marked with jewelers' tags to indicate self- or hand-pollination treatments, or control. Fruits were collected when brown (mature) or when they easily came off inflorescences. Fruits were stored in paper envelopes and air-dried. Fruits and seeds were later weighed to 0.1 mg on an American Scientific Products electronic analytical balance.

Pollination and Insect Visitors

Formal insect pollination studies of crenulate leadplant were not conducted; however, some observations of insect visitors were made in the field. We photographed and / or collected specimens whenever possible for identification. We reared one caterpillar successfully to eclosion on a diet of crenulate leadplant. The adult butterfly was determined by an entomological taxonomist, and then released.

Statistical Analysis

Data are presented as means \pm 1 S.D. As the data were not normally distributed, we applied square root transformations for 2001 and 2002 fruit count data. We used a one-way repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the number of fruit produced by hand pollinations and controls, and a Bonferroni test at a 5% level for post hoc comparisons. Between-year differences were tested using a two-way, repeated-measures ANOVA. For 2002 percent fruit set data, we used a one-way ANOVA with arcsine square root transformations and Fisher's LSD at a 5% level for post hoc comparisons. Two-way, repeated measures ANOVA of treatment and year was carried out on raw percent seed set. We used a paired-sample t-test to compare fruit and seed weights for cross- and self-pollination treatments.

RESULTS

Floral Biology and Phenology

The flower of crenulate leadplant is dichogamous, with a difference in timing between stigma and pollen presentation. The protogynous flower presents a single receptive style before 10 monadelphous stamens are exerted and dehisce. Stamens eventually extend past the style, but are adjacent to it at one point during their exertion (Figure 2). The anthers we observed did not dehisce until after stamens were exerted beyond still-receptive stigmas. The inflorescence is a spike-like raceme that ranges from only a few centimeters in length to more than 30 cm (Figure 3). Flowers mature from the bottom of the raceme toward the apex in an orderly succession, although some buds open out of sequence. Flowers are arranged in a spiral around the inflorescence axis, becoming more crowded toward the tip. We observed plants to bloom in the field as early as March and as late as mid-November. Individual plants may flower off and on throughout the season, with flowering usually accompanying flushes of new growth.

Inflorescence Characteristics

Inflorescences grew an average of 1.2 ± 0.8 cm per day while expanding ($n = 57$ daily measurements) with a range of 0.0 to 3.3 cm per day. Growth stopped just before or when the first flower(s) opened. By the middle of the second day after flowers began to open, inflorescences had an average of 16 ± 4.6 flowers in either female or male phase. The number of flowers becoming active within that initial period ranged from 11 to 20 ($n = 3$ racemes), with the

females outnumbering the males. By the time inflorescences were midway through their bloom, male-phase flowers predominated. Leadplant racemes expanded over an average of one week ($n = 11$ racemes, mean = 7.0 ± 3.0 days), from time of first flower opening until pollen dispersal. The shortest inflorescence (3.1 cm) expanded over three days, and the longest inflorescence (22.5 cm) opened flowers over 11 days. There were approximately 10 flowers per centimeter of leadplant inflorescence ($n = 77.5$ cm, mean = 9.8 ± 1.2 flowers).

Total flower counts ranged from 107 on the shortest raceme (10.5 cm) to 208 on the longest (20.5 cm) ($n = 5$ racemes, mean = 150.6 ± 37.2 total flowers).

Flower Opening and Floral Characters

Leadplant flowers opened during day and nighttime hours. The flower style first uncurls from a tightly closed bud. As the style straightens, the bud widens to reveal a portion of the single white banner petal enclosing bright yellow-orange anthers. Within hours of style emergence, the stamens begin to exert. They are of varying lengths during this process, in which the banner petal either extends and fans open slightly or extends and remains slightly folded around the style. Stamens do not exert simultaneously; nor do anthers dehisce simultaneously. The style begins to wilt or retract as stamens reach full length, and the style eventually is entirely enclosed by the banner petal. The male flower phase generally last two to three times as long as the female phase. In nature, flowers usually are spent, with all pollen dispersed, within 48 hours.

The leadplant's five-lobed, persistent flower calyx averaged 3.2 ± 0.3 mm in length, and the obcordate standard petal (banner) averaged 5.6 ± 0.9 mm in length from base to tip. The base of the banner begins within the calyx. On average, leadplant styles protruded 1.7 ± 0.3 mm beyond the standard. There was much greater variability in the longest stamen's exertion beyond the banner, with an average length of 5.1 ± 1.5 mm. Overall, the leadplant flower, including the longest exerted stamen, averaged 9.7 ± 1.6 mm in length. Like all legumes, the ovary of the leadplant is superior and unicarpellate, and placentation is marginal. The ovary is approximately 1 mm long, compressed, and contains two ovules.

Fruit and Seed Characteristics

The leadplant fruit is a glandular-dotted, indehiscent legume, maturing from green to brown. Fruit measured approximately 5.6 ± 0.4 mm in length. Seeds were compressed,

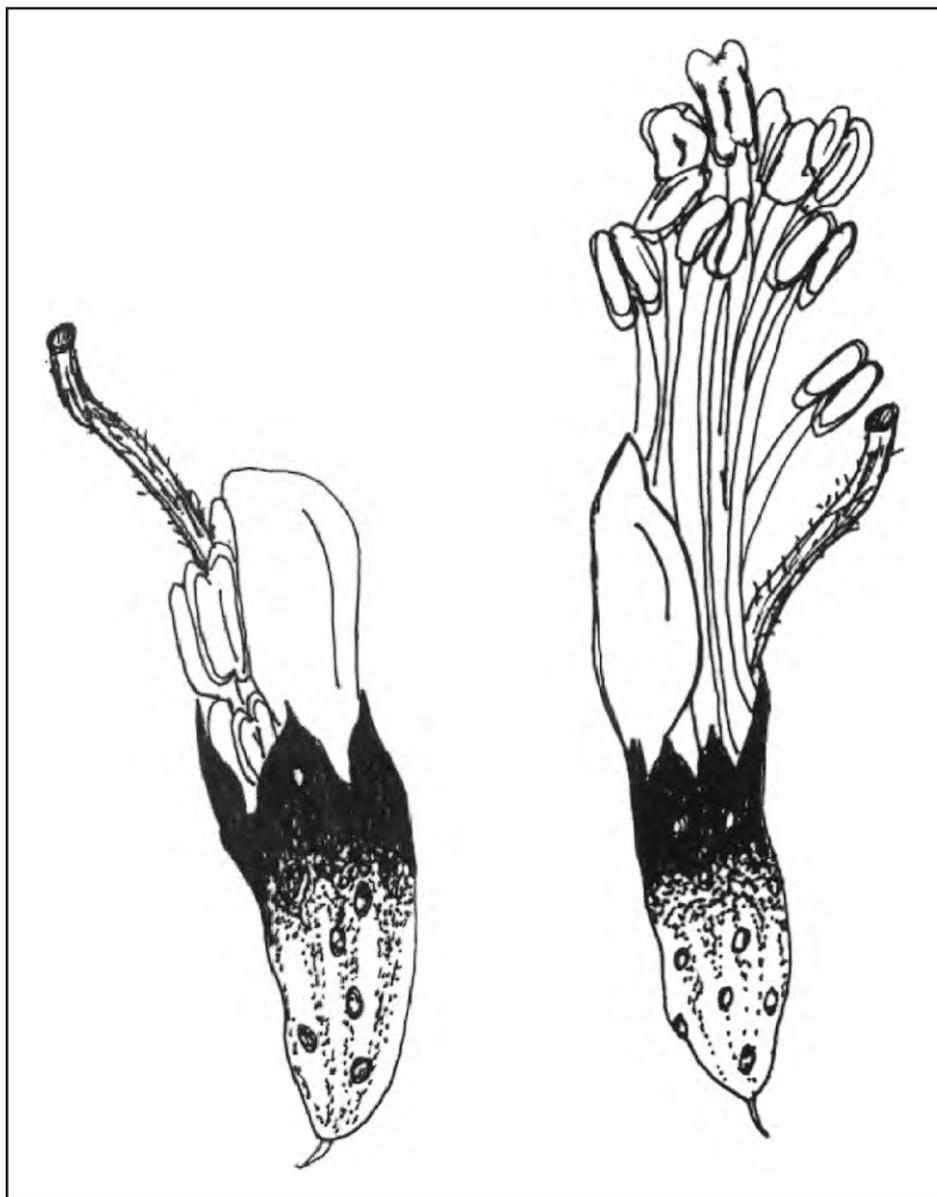


Figure 2 . Line drawing of flowers of crenulate leadplant. Female phase (left) – style exerted and receptive; anthers beginning to show. Male phase (right) – all ten stamens exerted, full display with all anthers dehisced.

varying in color from olive green to milk chocolate brown, curved at one end, and pitted. The average seed length was 3.1 ± 0.3 mm. Generally only one of two seeds matures per fruit (Long and Lakela 1971), with single healthy seeds filling the entire seed compartment. Two-seeded fruit have been found on some robust, *ex situ* field and container specimens (Fellows 2002).

Stigma Receptivity

The leadplant stigma, a tiny area at the tip of the style, first becomes receptive while in the bud. Flowers in two early stages had stigmas staining dark purple-brown when tested for esterase, indicating enzymatic activity. Stigmas lose receptivity some time after stamens exert. We observed stigmas that still appeared receptive after stamens began to extend. When the style wilted or retracted within the banner petal, it was impossible to observe the stigma for receptivity, and further pollination appeared unlikely.

Pollen Characteristics and Pollen/Ovule Ratio

The leadplant has a binucleate pollen grain (Figure 4). Pollen from four leadplant individuals clearly showed the binucleate nature of the grain, meaning it is shed while containing two cells: a vegetative cell and a generative cell.

The leadplant flower's 10 stamens together produced an estimated mean pollen production of 4654 ± 2350 grains. Dividing pollen number by uniform ovule number of two gave a ratio of $2327 \pm 1175:1$. Individual plants varied in their pollen / ovule ratio: of three leadplant flowers sampled, the lowest estimated ratio was 1370:1, and the highest was 3639:1.

Hand Pollinations

Cross-pollinations of crenulate leadplant in 2001 and 2002 produced significantly more fruit than self-pollinations and controls ($F = 76.67$, $df = 2, 18$, $P < 0.0001$, combined years). In 2001, greenhouse cross-pollinations of five individuals (six

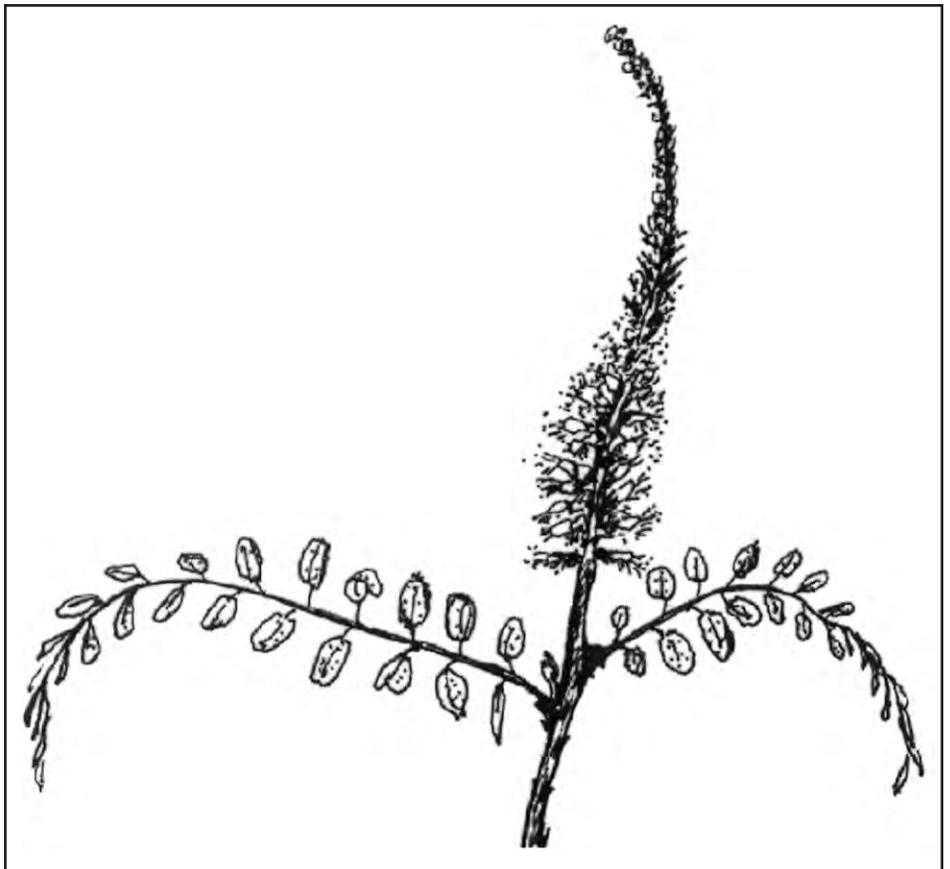


Figure 3. Line drawing of crenulate leadplant inflorescence with oldest flowers at the bottom, buds at the top.

racemes, including one replicate) produced 239 fruit, a mean fruit set of 41.6 ± 16.3 per raceme. Self-pollinations of the same five plants (five racemes) produced 50 fruit, a mean fruit set of 10 ± 8.5 per raceme (Figure 5). Controls produced a mean fruit set of 5.2 ± 5.5 per raceme. One-way repeated measures ANOVA and post-hoc comparisons showed a significant difference between cross-pollinated fruit set and that of self-pollinated racemes and controls ($F = 41.33$, $df = 2, 8$, $P < 0.001$).

In 2002, greenhouse cross-pollinations of five individuals (six racemes, including one replicate) produced 165 fruit, a mean fruit set of 27.0 ± 16.2 per raceme (Figure 5). Self-pollinations of the same five plants (six racemes, including one replicate) produced 22 fruit, a mean fruit set of 2.8 ± 3.8 per raceme. Controls produced a mean fruit set of 1.1 ± 1.2 per raceme. Again, the difference between cross-pollinations and the other two treatments was highly

significant ($F = 31.04$, $df = 2, 8$, $P < 0.001$). There was no significant difference in treatments between years ($F = 4.53$, $df = 1, 8$, $P < 0.66$) and no interaction between year and treatment ($F = 0.40$, $df = 2, 16$, $P < 0.614$).

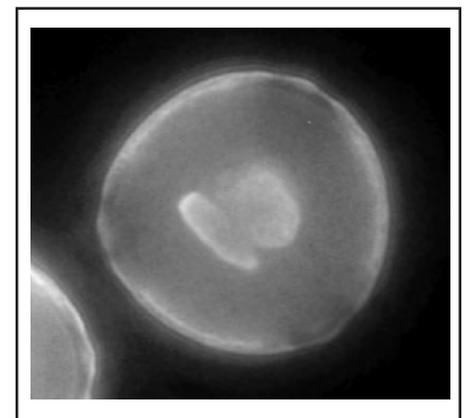


Figure 4. Pollen grain of *Amorpha crenulata* showing its two-nucleate status upon release.

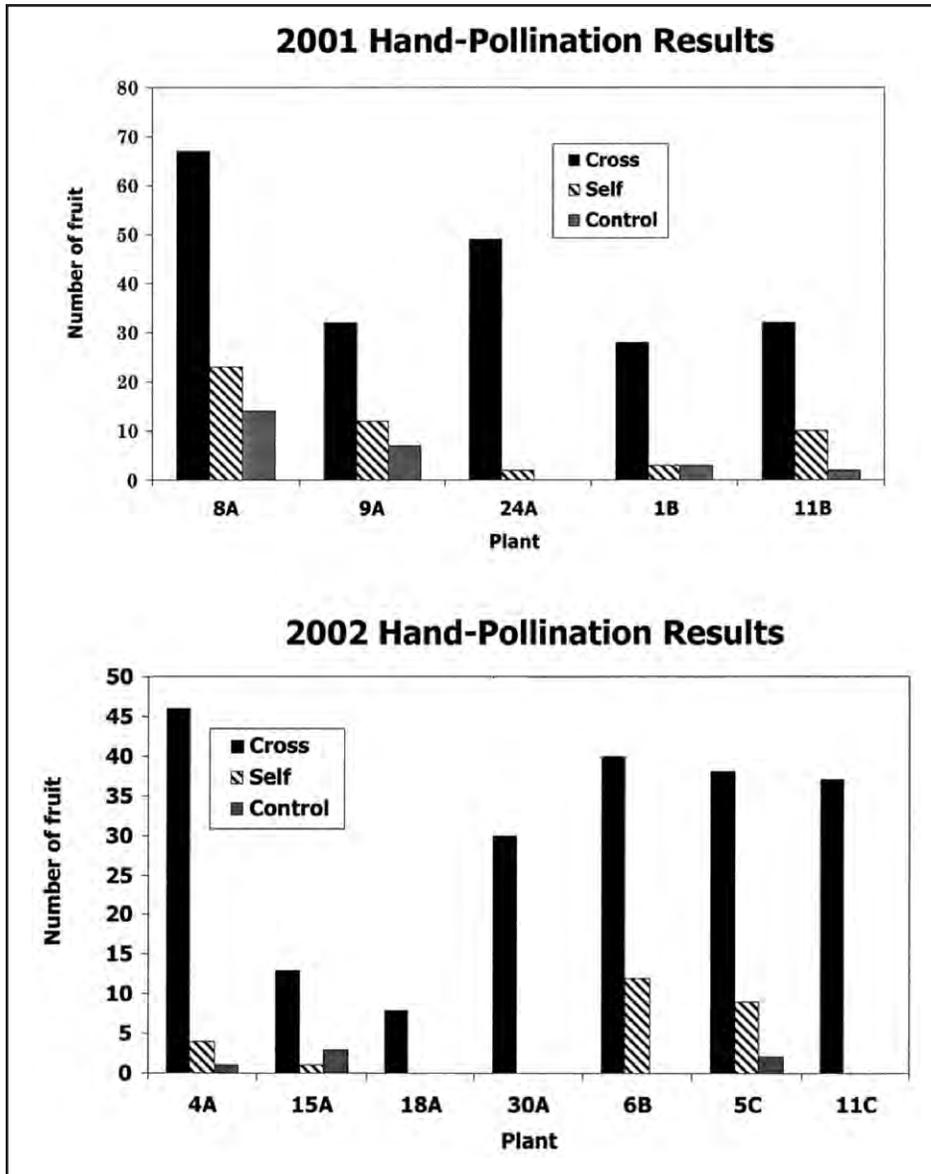


Figure 5. Fruit set from *Amorpha crenulata* hand-pollination treatments for 2001 (above) and 2002 (below). The number of fruit set with cross-pollination was greater than all other treatments on all plants.

In 2002, we also estimated the number of receptive female flowers for hand pollinations and controls to obtain the percent of fruit by each treatment. There was a significant difference among the three treatments ($F = 14.36$, $df = 2, 8$, $P < 0.11$), and post-hoc tests showed cross-pollinations yielded a significantly higher mean percent fruit set than did self-pollinations and controls. Fruit weights in 2002 were not significantly different for cross- and self-pollination treatments ($t = 0.62$, $P < 0.29$).

The leadplant ovary contains two ovules,

but usually only one seed matures (Long and Lakela 1971). No fruit with two seeds was produced during greenhouse pollinations in 2001 and 2002, and a number of fruit in both self- and cross-pollinations produced no seeds. Undeveloped seeds appeared black and dust-like. Cross-pollinated fruit produced a significantly higher percentage of seed per mature fruit than self-pollinated fruit ($F = 12.67$, $df = 1, 8$, $P < 0.007$, based on one seed per fruit), as well as a higher overall mean number of seed. There was no significant difference in treatments between years ($F = 3.91$, $df = 1, 8$, $P < 0.083$) or in interaction between

year and treatment ($F = 1.57$, $df = 1, 8$, $P < 0.245$).

In 2001, 87 percent of the cross-pollinated fruit produced seed ($n = 215$ fruits). The mean number of seed was 37.4 ± 9.4 per outcross treatment inflorescence. Fifty-eight percent of the self-pollinated fruit produced seed ($n = 50$ fruits). The mean number of seed was 5.8 ± 6.1 per self-pollinated inflorescence.

In 2002, 88.5 percent of the cross-pollinated fruit produced seed ($n = 165$ fruits). The mean number of seed was 24.3 ± 21.8 per outcross treatment inflorescence. Fifty-four percent of the self-pollinated fruit produced seed ($n = 34$ fruits). The mean number of seed was 2 ± 2.4 per self-pollinated inflorescence. Though the numbers of fruit with seed clearly differed, there was no significant difference in the weights of seed produced by cross-pollination compared to seeds produced by self-pollination ($t = 1.61$, $P < 0.103$).

Pollination and Insect Visitors

The crenulate leadplant is a larval food source for the Cassius Blue butterfly, *Leptotes cassius* (Cramer) (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae). The Cassius Blue lays its eggs singly on host plant buds, and caterpillars eat flowers and seedpods (Opler et al. 2006). We found several of the green, slug-like larvae on leadplant flower racemes feeding at nighttime. We observed potential pollinators on the leadplant including *Apis mellifera* L., a non-native honeybee from the Mediterranean (Apidae); *Agapostemon splendens* Lepeletier, a conspicuous, metallic green sweat bee (Halictidae); and *Dianthidium floridiense* Schwarz, a native, leaf-cutting solitary bee (Megachilidae).

Several species of ants were observed on crenulate leadplants, including the non-native crazy ant, *Paratrechina longicornis* (Latreille) (Hymenoptera: Formicidae). Other insect visitors included two weevils, *Artipus floridanus* Horn and *Pachnaeus litus* (Germar) (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) that were probable herbivores. An unidentified hairstreak butterfly (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) was observed with its proboscis

inserted into a crenulate leadplant calyx, perhaps looking for nectar, and probably pollinating the flowers.

DISCUSSION

The crenulate leadplant has several characteristics suggesting a system of facultative outbreeding and gametophytic self-incompatibility. Dichogamy in the leadplant is recognized as an outcrossing mechanism, and is intrafloral and incomplete. A leadplant flower presents its receptive stigma before stamens are exerted, but there is a point when one or more of its 10 stamens are adjacent to the stigma, and self-mating conceivably could occur. The flowers we observed resolved this positional interference by delaying pollen release until stamens were exerted past still-receptive stigmas.

Incomplete protogyny provides an opportunity for cross-pollination before self-fertilization is possible (Lloyd and Webb 1986). If the selective force for a plant's dichogamy is avoidance of self-mating, incomplete protogyny is expected to evolve (Lloyd and Webb 1986). However, if a plant is strongly self-incompatible and dichogamous, it is unlikely that dichogamy was selected to reduce selfing (Lloyd and Webb 1986).

In addition to possible within-flower pollination (autogamy), the leadplant has an opportunity to self-mate via different flowers on the same plant (geitonogamy). A leadplant raceme can bear female- and male-phase flower blossoms at the same time (asynchronous), and usually there is more than one same-phase flower on the raceme (synchronous). Because not all female flower phase are completed before males release their pollen, there is a chance for a pollinator to carry pollen from one flower to another flower with a receptive stigma on the same raceme. In addition, there may be two or more inflorescences on a plant bearing flowers in and out of synchrony with other flowers, enabling geitonogamy.

Our observations suggest that dichogamy in the crenulate leadplant serves as more than a backup for outcrossing. It allows

prolonged pollen presentation: the male-phase leadplant flower can last three times longer than the female phase. The stamens fan out and anthers disperse pollen over an extended period, while the banner petal folds over the wilting style, protecting it from further exposure to its own pollen. Dichogamy is associated with longer-lived flowers relative to homogamy (Schoen and Ashman 1995). In addition, in accordance with Lloyd and Webb's predictions (1986), leadplant stamens and anthers offer signals and rewards to floral visitors. While a single crenulate leadplant flower is tiny and unremarkable, a number of synchronous male-phase flowers on a raceme are eye-catching, with bright yellow-orange pollen and white banner petals contrasting with dark purple flower calyxes and raceme rachis. The stamens present a generous reward of pollen.

The results of controlled greenhouse pollinations strongly indicate that the crenulate leadplant is mostly self-incompatible. Data for cross-pollinations, self-pollinations, and controls for individual plants showed a highly significant difference in fruit set. All greenhouse cross-pollinations resulted in fruit set, while only a fraction of self-pollinations set fruit. The difference in seed set percentages of mature fruit for cross- and self-pollinations also was substantial.

Historically, partial self-incompatibility and consequent outcrossing may have facilitated the greatest possible levels of genetic diversity in crenulate leadplant populations, given the species' limited range. Outcrossing also could have mitigated problems of limited seed dispersal. Seed dispersal affects the overall distribution of genes within a population (Proctor et al. 1996). We observed naturally occurring leadplant seedlings that appeared to germinate directly under maternal plants, placing relatives in close proximity. In the past, water most likely played a role as a seed dispersal agent, since the leadplant historically occurred in transverse glades and seasonally inundated habitats (G. Gann, Director, Institute for Regional Conservation, pers. comm.). Water no longer appears to be a factor in seed dispersal due to habitat drainage, and seed

dispersal is likely to be more restricted in the last century.

Characteristics suggesting a system of outbreeding include a high pollen/ovule ratio (Cruden 1977). Our data show a ratio for crenulate leadplant within Cruden's described range for xenogamy. A high pollen/ovule ratio is associated with plants bearing highly localized stigmatic areas, such as the tiny receptive "wet" stigma at the tip of the crenulate leadplant style (Cruden and Miller-Ward 1981). The wet stigma and crenulate leadplant's binucleate pollen grain are strongly correlated with gametophytic self-incompatibility (GSI) (Richards 1997). GSI is a chemical form of self-recognition, differing from dichogamy in that it occurs after pollen is deposited on a stigma. The incompatibility reaction is mediated by the binucleate pollen grain, and involves inhibition of the pollen tube within the style. The reaction is expressed after the second pollen grain mitosis in the pollen tube (Richards 1997), although Lewis (1949) and Pandey (1959, 1970) report other times of inhibition.

Reproductive Strategy

Results of hand pollinations of crenulate leadplant indicate a system in which self-fertilization is possible, but outcrossing is probably the common mode of fruit and seed production. Such a combined reproductive strategy is not unusual in plants (Richards 1997), since self-mating as well as cross-mating can confer fitness benefits onto offspring (Holsinger 1992). Self-fertilization may serve as a backup in case outcrossing fails (Proctor et al. 1996). The balance between the two systems varies widely, depending on the life history and ecology of the species (Proctor et al. 1996). Even if selfing is possible, most plants favor cross-fertilization (Proctor et al. 1996) because outcrossing confers more genetic diversity (Richards 1997). Genetic diversity refers to the amount of genetic variability among individuals of the same species, and is directly related to a species' ability to survive environmental change (Mazzotti 1990). Reduced genetic variation may increase a species' risk in the face of long-term biotic or abiotic environmental

change (Frankel and Soulé 1980; Soulé 1980). In the case of crenulate leadplant, such a decrease may have made it difficult for populations to adjust to habitat changes in hydrology and light.

CONCLUSIONS

Not only is crenulate leadplant extremely rare due to the limited number of individuals in the wild, its pine rockland habitat is classified as globally imperiled (FNAI 2004). This leaves the crenulate leadplant vulnerable to problems inherent in small populations, such as inbreeding depression and genetic drift, as well as those correlated with habitat fragmentation. The leadplant's need for outcrossing further compounds the dangers of small populations by reducing the availability of suitable mates (Kearns et al. 1998). Additional drawbacks are invasion by non-native species, suppression of natural fire regimes, and altered hydrology (Koptur 2006).

Optimum management and species restoration plans include consideration of breeding systems and a familiarity with the plant's natural history. Given the right combination of soil, light, water, and open habitat for pollinators to find the plant, crenulate leadplant thrives and sets fruit, and its seeds germinate easily, although seedling survival appears spotty (L. Linares, pers. observation; Koptur 2006).

Fairchild Tropical Garden biologists introduced leadplants at a Restored Translocation Site (RTS), an endemic pine rockland community owned by Florida Department of Transportation about 42 km south of Miami (Miami-Dade County, Florida) (Maschinski et al. 2006; Wendelberger et al. 2008). Four types of propagules were used in the introduction: seedlings, rescued whole plants, cuttings, and one to seven-year-old nursery plants. Larger plants had the best survival regardless of their origin. Biologists concluded that with more than 100 native species establishing at the RTS, it was likely that the leadplant would also, forming a self-sustaining population (Wendelberger et al. 2008). The array of threatened plants endemic to pine rocklands, and the increasing knowledge and restoration

work associated with this habitat, hold promise for further protection and benefits (Koptur 2006). As described above, successful reintroductions and outplantings also may assist the crenulate leadplant and its imperiled pineland cohorts.

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Lauren J. Linares received her M.S. from Florida International University while working as a consulting senior biologist. Her primary interests are threatened and endangered flora and fauna, ecosystem restoration, and natural areas enhancement and management. She has overseen work on several pine rocklands, including those on properties owned by Florida's Turnpike and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Most recently she conducted surveys of T&E species for the Army Corps of Engineers at the Lake Okeechobee dike.

Suzanne Koptur is Professor of Biological Sciences at Florida International University. A plant ecologist with interests in plant/animal interactions, she and her students focus on species interactions in natural and disturbed habitats. A charter member of the Pine Rockland Working Group, she recently spent a sabbatical in cloud forests of Veracruz, Mexico, courtesy of a Fulbright-Garcia Robles grant (2008-2009).

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Effects of Fire Intensity on Vital Rates of an Endemic Herb of the Florida Keys, USA

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ABSTRACT: Fire intensity is one of the important components of a fire regime. However, relatively few studies have linked fire intensity with post-fire population vital rates. In this study, we explored the effects of fire intensity on population vital rates of *Chamaecrista keyensis* Pennell (Fabaceae) up to two years post-fire. *C. keyensis* is an endemic understory plant of pine rockland, a fire-dependent ecosystem of the Lower Florida Keys. We measured one fire intensity indicator, fire temperature reached by steel plates on the ground, during three prescribed fires at different sites. We followed marked individuals up to two years post-fire to derive annual survival, annual growth rate, percentage of fruiting plants, mean number of fruits per reproductive plant, and number of seedlings per census plot (1 m²) of *C. keyensis*. We found fire intensity had significant effects on reproduction in the first year post-fire only. More specifically, mean number of fruits and percentage of fruiting plants increased as fire intensity increased. Results from this study suggest that extremely low fire intensity caused by very short fire return intervals (e.g., less than three years) may not provide sufficient stimulation to reproduction to achieve the best post-fire recovery for *C. keyensis*.

Index terms: *Chamaecrista keyensis*, fire intensity, fire temperature, pine rockland, rare plant demography

INTRODUCTION

Fire intensity, defined as the heat release per unit time (Rothermel 1972, Pyne et al. 1996), differs not only among fires of different ecosystems, but within the same ecosystem, and is also heterogeneous within a single fire. Several studies have shown that fire intensity is an important factor shaping fire-dependent community composition and structure, and population dynamics (Moreno and Oechel 1991, Tyler 1995, Ansley et al. 1998, Odion and Davis 2000, Menges and Deyrup 2001, Brooks 2002). Most fire intensity studies have focused on only one or two demographic parameters (e.g., mortality or seedling recruitment) immediately after fire. Studies of effects of fire intensity on multiple population vital rates over a longer time period are truly rare.

The Florida pine rockland is a globally endangered fire dependent ecosystem (Snyder et al. 1990). Fire return interval is a major factor influencing pine rockland community structure and composition (Snyder et al. 1990, Slocum et al. 2003). The seasonal timing of fire is also thought to be important in this ecosystem, and has been shown to influence demography of pine rockland plant populations (Spier and Snyder 1998, Negrón-Ortiz and Gorcho 2000). The role of fire intensity in determining post-fire population dynamics, however, is largely unknown in pine rockland.

Fire intensity, in the strict sense, is difficult

to measure in the field. As a result, it is commonly estimated via several surrogate variables that are relatively easy to obtain in the field, including maximum surface temperature (e.g., Negrón-Ortiz and Gorcho 2000), minimum diameter of remaining branches (e.g., Moreno and Oechel 1991), water evaporative loss (e.g., Moreno and Oechel 1991), char height (Menges and Deyrup 2001), and fuel consumption (Pyne et al. 1996). In this study, we used fire temperature reached by steel plates on the ground as the fire intensity indicator. We studied the effects of fire intensity on mortality, growth, reproduction, and seedling recruitment of *Chamaecrista keyensis* Pennell (Fabaceae), a narrowly endemic understory herb of pine rockland of the Lower Florida Keys.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study species

Chamaecrista keyensis, commonly known as Big Pine partridge pea, was formerly found on several of the Lower Keys (No Name, Big Pine, and Ramrod Keys [Irwin and Barneby 1982]). More recently, Ross and Ruiz (1996) found it only on Big Pine Key, indicating its probable extirpation from parts of its former range. The most prominent threats to this species include habitat loss and degradation, especially long-term fire exclusion (Snyder et al. 1990). *C. keyensis* has been recommended for federal listing and is currently listed

as an endangered species by the State of Florida (Florida Natural Areas Inventory, 2002). *C. keyensis* individuals suffer relatively high mortality rates during fires. Post-fire recovery relies on vegetative resprouting from surviving individuals and seedling recruitment from the seed bank and seeds produced post-fire (Liu et al., in press).

Study site

Pine rockland on Big Pine Key, the only island currently supporting *C. keyensis*, is also an important habitat for the federally endangered key deer (*Odocoileus virginianus clavium* Barbour and Allen). The canopy of pine rocklands is monotypic, composed of South Florida slash pine (*Pinus elliotii* var. *densa*). The relatively open canopy allows the growth of a diverse shrub and herb layer with many rare and endemic species (Snyder et al. 1990).

Pinelands on Big Pine Key are a mosaic of open and shrubby pinelands, created by a sporadic regime of prescribed burns (Bergh and Wisby 1996). Fire history and site factors both contribute to the distinction between these cover types; in the absence of fire for extended periods, open forests on Big Pine Key become shrub-dominated. The open pinelands have a relatively sparse shrub layer and a well-developed herb layer. In contrast, shrubby pinelands have a dense shrub layer and poorly developed herb layer.

Chamaecrista keyensis census and fire intensity measurements

This study was part of a larger effort investigating effects of different fire regimes, including fire season, on pine rockland vegetation. We generated seven prescribed burns during the summer or winter seasons on experimental blocks of open or shrubby pinelands (Liu 2003). Here we used data from three experimental burns that had good fire intensity measurements (Table 1). Among the three burned sites, two (IS and IW) were on open pineland, while one (DS) was on shrubby pineland. One macro-plot (1 ha) was embedded in each experimental burn site of 2-10 ha. Within

each macro-plot, 20 shrub plots (4 m in diameter) were located stratified-randomly, with four herb plots (1 m²) nested within each shrub plot. *C. keyensis* censuses were carried out in the herb plots. Additional non-random census plots were established to include more individuals of *C. keyensis* for sampling (Table 1). We mapped all *C. keyensis* in each census plot, and measured the stem length and the number of stems, flowers, and fruits of each individual once before and annually for up to two years after each fire.

Fire temperatures were recorded during the three fires using 10 temperature-sensitive paints, each of which melted at a particular temperature from 93°C to 343°C at 28°C intervals. Steel plates (75 mm x 75 mm x 3 mm, 128 g) painted with small dots of the temperature-sensitive paints were placed vertically just aboveground at the center of each census plot before each fire. The plates were recovered immediately after the fire, and maximum fire temperature at each census plot was assigned to the highest temperature reached as indicated by melting. Plates where no melting was observed were arbitrarily assigned a value of 38°C.

Chamaecrista keyensis demographic vital rates derived from individual plants were averaged for each census plot to match the scale of maximum fire temperature measurements. Variables included annual percent survival, mean annual growth (current total stem length / previous year total stem length), percent reproductive plants, mean number of fruits per reproductive plant, and presence/absence and number

of seedlings. Annual survival and growth included the period from the summer before to the summer after fire (one year post-burn), as well as annual survival and growth for the subsequent year (two-year post-burn). Percentage of reproductive plants, mean fruit production, and seedling recruitment were summarized for the first and second year post-fire. Only one year post-burn data were available for macro-plot IW (Table 1).

Statistical analyses

Differences in maximum fire temperatures among sites was analyzed with one-way ANOVA followed by Tukey post hoc tests. Effects of maximum fire temperature on vital rates were performed separately for each vital rate and each year. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the effects of site and fire temperature (covariate) on all vital rates of *C. keyensis* except for presence/absence of seedlings. Presence/absence of seedlings was analyzed with binary logistic regression using maximum fire temperature as a covariate and site and previous fruit production as factors. Some variables were transformed to satisfy the parametric assumptions of normality and equal variance.

In addition, the ANCOVA assumption of parallel slopes of the covariate among sites was satisfied, as indicated by the non-significant interactions between fire temperature and site or previous year fruit production (for seedling-related variables only). Since there were census plots with no melted paint, an indication that those plots were lightly burned or not burned, we

Table 1. Summary of *Chamaecrista keyensis* census regime for fire intensity research. *Chamaecrista keyensis* density is based on stratified random plots only.

Site	Density /m ²	# of census plots ¹	Census period	Burn Date
IS	1.03	95	1999-2001	July 14, 1999
IW	0.27	105	2000-2001	December 12, 2000
DS	0.47	105	1999-2001	June 22, 1999

¹80 of these plots were stratified random plots, others were non-random census plots.

also repeated our analysis excluding these census plots to see if the results changed qualitatively. Differences in vital rates in burned vs. unburned plots were analyzed elsewhere.

RESULTS

The highest and lowest fire temperatures reached by all three burns were 343°C and 38°C, respectively. The mean fire temperature was different significantly among the three sites ($F_{2, 292} = 20.09$, $P < 0.001$; Figure 1) and between each pair of sites (Figure 1).

Survival differed significantly among sites, but was not affected by fire temperature during the first or second year post-fire (Table 2). Similarly, fire temperature had no significant effects on growth during those years (Table 2). Site had a significant effect on growth one-year post-fire, but not the second year post-fire (Table 2).

In contrast, fire temperature had a significant effect on percentage of fruiting

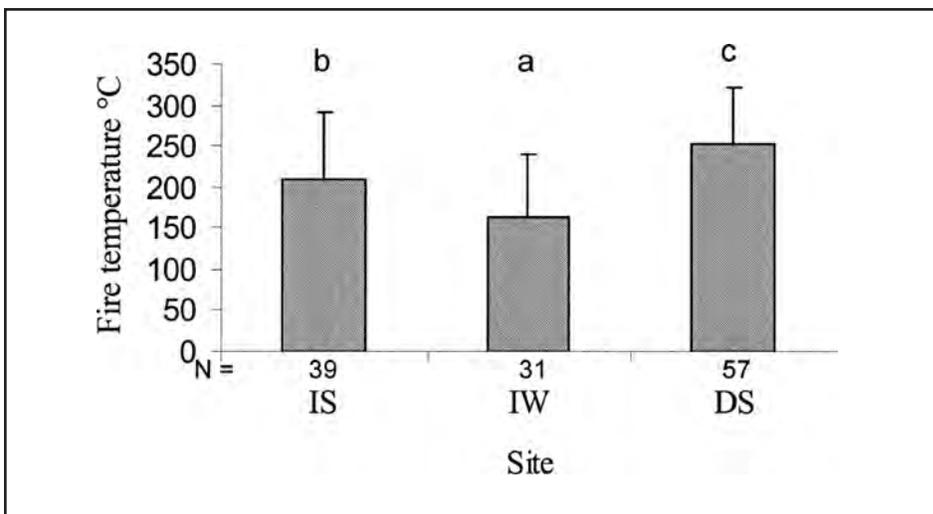


Figure 1. Mean and standard deviation of maximum fire temperature at three sites. Different letters indicate significant differences among sites (Tukey post hoc) at $P < 0.05$.

individuals during the first year post-fire (Figure 2), but not the second year post-fire (Table 2). Site effects were significant both one- and two-years post-burn (Table 2). Similarly, fire temperature had significant effects on the mean number of fruits one-year post-fire (Table 2, Figure 3), but

not during the subsequent year (Table 2). Site effects were significant both one- and two-years post-fire (Table 2).

Fire temperature, site, and/or the interaction between site and fruit production the previous year had no significant effects on presence or absence of seedlings (Table 3). Previous year's fruit production, however, had a marginally positive effect on seedling presence (Table 3).

Fire temperature had no significant effect on the number of seedlings either one or two years post-fire (Table 2). In addition, previous fruit production, as well as the interaction of site and fruit production the previous year, was not significant in either year (Tables 2). In contrast, site effects were significant the first year post-fire but not the second year post-fire (Table 2).

DISCUSSION

Effects of fire intensity

Effects of fire intensity were found only on the reproduction of *Chamaecrista keyensis* the first year post-fire, but not on its survival, growth, or seedling recruitment. While numerous studies have documented increased flowering in response to fire (e.g., Spier and Snyder 1998, Carrington 1999), few, if any, have linked increased reproduction to fire intensity. However,

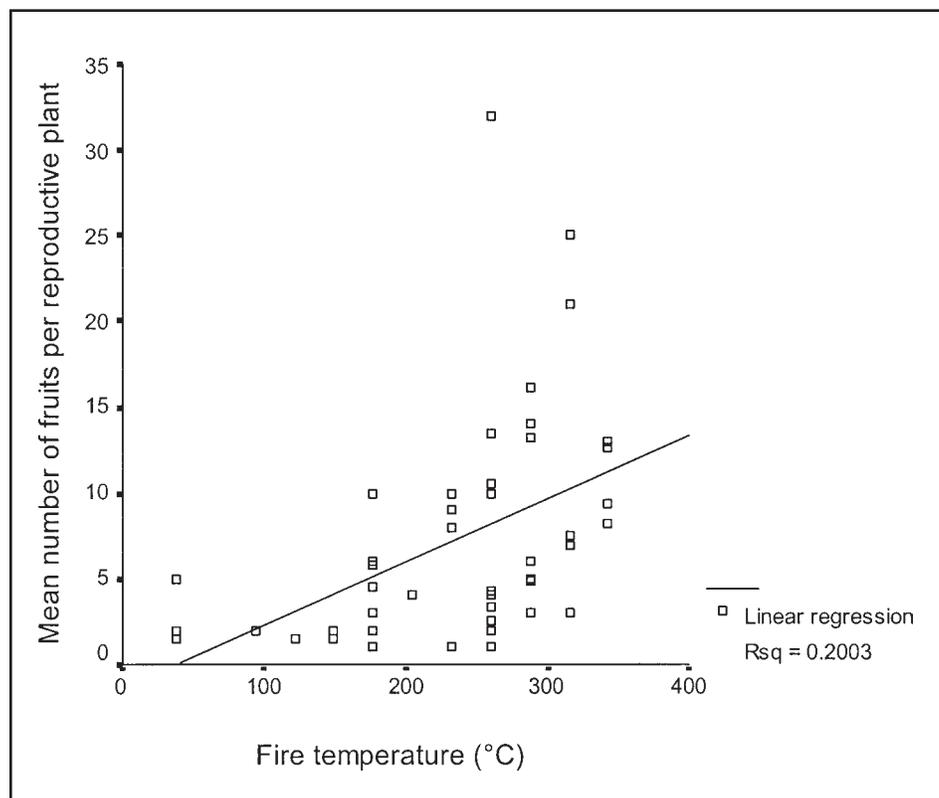


Figure 2. Scatterplot of percentage of fruiting plants (non-seedlings only) of *Chamaecrista keyensis* on Big Pine Key the first year post-fire vs. maximum fire intensity.

Table 2. Effects of maximum fire temperature on *Chamaecrista keyensis* vital rates: summary of ANCOVA including all plots including those with no melted paint. Bold indicates $P < 0.05$ level. Italic indicates $P < 0.1$ level. Shaded area indicates non-applicable tests. Fire temp = fire temperature; Pyf = previous year fruit production.

Year post fire	Factor	Vital rate								
		Annual survival			Annual growth			Percent of fruiting plant		
		MS	<i>F</i> _{df1,df2}	<i>P</i>	MS	<i>F</i> _{df1,df2}	<i>P</i>	MS	<i>F</i> _{df1,df2}	<i>P</i>
Year 1	Fire temp	1450	1.38 _{1,106}	0.243	0.06	0.12 _{1,81}	0.725	4047	5.84 _{1,87}	0.018
	site	17040	8.12 _{2,106}	0.001	17.8	35.9 _{2,81}	0	31953	46.1 _{2,87}	0
	Pyf									
	Site* Pyf									
Year 2	Fire temp	0.17	0.75 _{1,74}	0.388	1.32	2.14 _{1,65}	0.148	0.52	2.17 _{1,70}	0.145
	site	2.51	11.17 _{1,74}	0.001	0.03	0.04 _{1,65}	0.84	2.99	12.5 _{1,70}	0.001
	Pyf									
	Site* Pyf									

Spier and Snyder (1998) did observe that the number of flowers and fruits of *Jacquemontia curtisii* were significantly greater after cooler fires. They attributed such differences in reproduction to the difference in season of burning, rather

than fire intensity effects. The significant effects of fire intensity on *C. keyensis* reproduction (both percentage of fruiting plants and mean number of fruits) were in part due to inclusion of census plots that were either lightly burned or not burned,

as such effects became non-significant or marginally significant when these plots were excluded (Liu 2003). Plants in census plots lightly burned or unburned (but in the burned area) did not reproduce as much as plants in census plots more thoroughly burned. Nevertheless, the trends of positive effects of fire intensity on *C. keyensis* reproduction were similar with or without these plots. Perhaps nutrient availability was greater or aboveground competitions were less in more intensely burned sites, thereby stimulating reproduction. The mechanism of fire intensity's effect on reproduction is unclear and needs further investigation.

Several studies have shown decreased seedling density with increased fire intensity due to higher seed mortality (Moreno and Oechel 1991, Odion and Davis 2000, Brooks 2002). Others have found the opposite trend, i.e., increased seedling density with increased fire intensity (Moreno and Oechel 1991, Spier and Snyder 1998). For example, *Jacquemontia curtisii*, another endemic herb of pine rockland, had greater seedling recruitment with higher fire intensity due to heat-stimulated seed germination (Spier and Snyder 1998). High fire intensity may also create safe sites for seed germination (e.g., with less duff and litter and better soil contact). Neither of these patterns was observed in

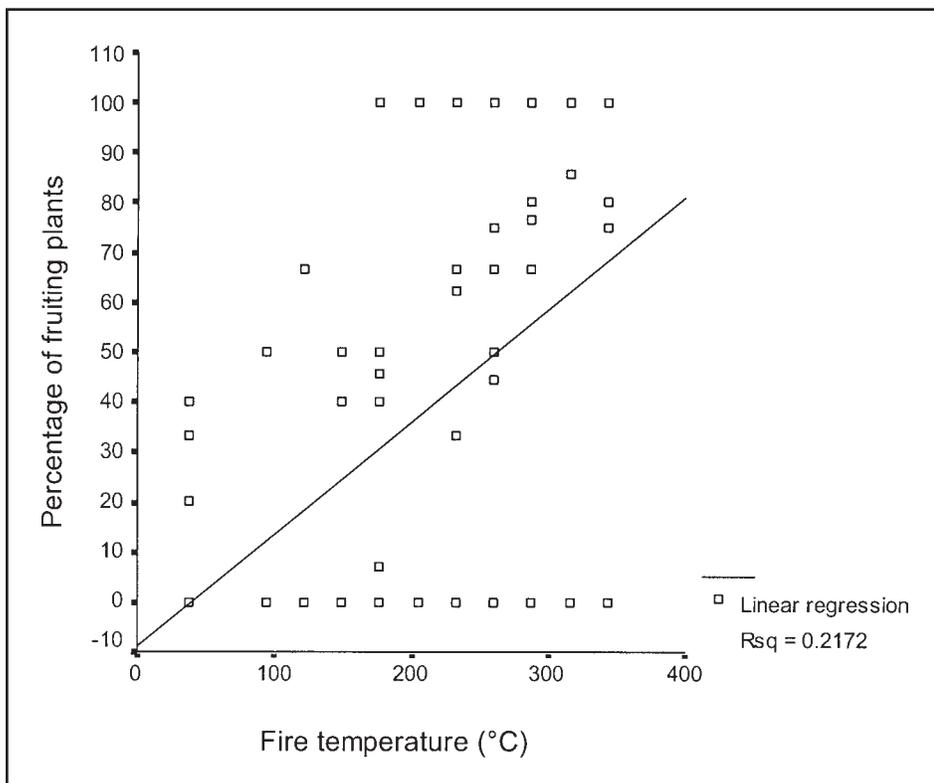


Figure 3. Scatterplot of mean number of fruits per reproductive plant of *Chamaecrista keyensis* the first year post-fire vs. maximum fire intensity.

Table 2. Continued.

Factor	Vital rate					
	Mean number of fruits			Number of seedlings		
	MS	<i>F</i> _{df1,df2}	<i>P</i>	MS	<i>F</i> _{df1,df2}	<i>P</i>
Fire temp	5.04	6.20 _{1,42}	0.017	0.07	0.33 _{1,50}	0.566
site	3.79	4.66 _{2,42}	0.015	1.17	5.37 _{2,50}	0.008
Pyf				0.09	0.43 _{1,50}	0.514
Site* Pyf				0.26	1.21 _{2,50}	0.307
Fire temp	2.28	2.16 _{1,39}	0.15	0.08	0.85 _{1,27}	0.364
site	6.12	5.81 _{1,39}	0.021	0.1	1.10 _{1,27}	0.303
Pyf				0.15	1.65 _{1,27}	0.21
Site* Pyf						

C. keyensis.

Similarly, *C. keyensis* mortality was not significantly affected by fire intensity, but was simply related to the presence/absence of fire. Mortality of *C. keyensis* was much higher in the presence of fire (Liu 2003). Yet for other species (e.g. *Jacquemontia curtisii*, *Pinus elliottii* var. *elliottii*), mortality was positively correlated with fire intensity (Tyler 1995, Ansley et al. 1998, Spier and Snyder 1998, Menges and Deyrup 2001). Vegetative growth of *C. keyensis* was also not significantly affected by fire intensity. In contrast, leaf production in *Zamia pumila* in Everglades National Park was greater after intense fires than after less intense ones (Negrón-Ortiz and Gorchoy 2000).

It is difficult to compare fire intensity recorded in this study to others in the same ecosystem (e.g., Spier and Snyder 1998, Negrón-Ortiz and Gorchoy 2000) due to differences in temperature recording methodology. The temperatures recorded here were those reached by the steel plates with substantial mass (128 g). Temperature-sensitive pellets on the ground as used in Spier and Snyder (1998) or in aluminum envelopes as used by Negrón-Ortiz and Gorchoy (2000) will not necessarily record the same fire temperature as measured by our methodology. Since the temperature plates have substantial mass, our measure-

ments integrated the heat released over time, whereas thermocouples measure more or less instantaneous temperature. Temperature plates may provide a better indication of how surface soils or the bases of plants heat up than thermocouples.

Implications for *Chamaecrista keyensis* fire management

In this study we showed that fire intensity had positive effects on fruit production. While high fire intensity is usually associ-

ated with heavy vegetation (Snyder et al. unpubl. data) resulting from long-term fire exclusion, these data do not suggest that long fire return intervals would benefit the long-term health of *C. keyensis* population for two important reasons: (1) *C. keyensis* density declines in long unburned patches, and (2) the response of increased fruit production to fire intensity is short term (only one-year post-fire). Short-term effects on one or two components among *C. keyensis*'s vital rates are not enough to compensate for the density decline that results from long fire return intervals. In addition, fire intensity is difficult to control, as it varies not only with weather and ignition patterns, but also within the burn unit. Therefore, considerations of fire management for *C. keyensis* should not rely solely on its response to fire intensity. Nonetheless, results from this study suggest that extremely low fire intensity, which may result from low fuel loads caused by very short fire return intervals (such as < 3 years), may not provide sufficient stimulation to reproduction for the best post-fire recovery of *C. keyensis*.

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Table 3. Effects of maximum fire temperature on presence or absence of seedlings of *Chamaecrista keyensis*: logistic regression analyses summary. Census plots with no melted paint were included. *Italic indicates P < 0.1 level.*

Year post-fire	Factor or covariate	Statistics		
		χ^2	df	<i>P</i>
Year 1	Fire temperature	0.23	1	0.629
	Site	4.13	2	0.127
	Previous year fruit	1.42	1	0.234
	Site * previous year fruit	0.65	2	0.722
Year 2	Fire temperature	1.84	1	0.175
	Site	0.11	1	0.738
	Previous year fruit	3.05	1	<i>0.081</i>
	Site * previous year fruit	0.11	1	0.743

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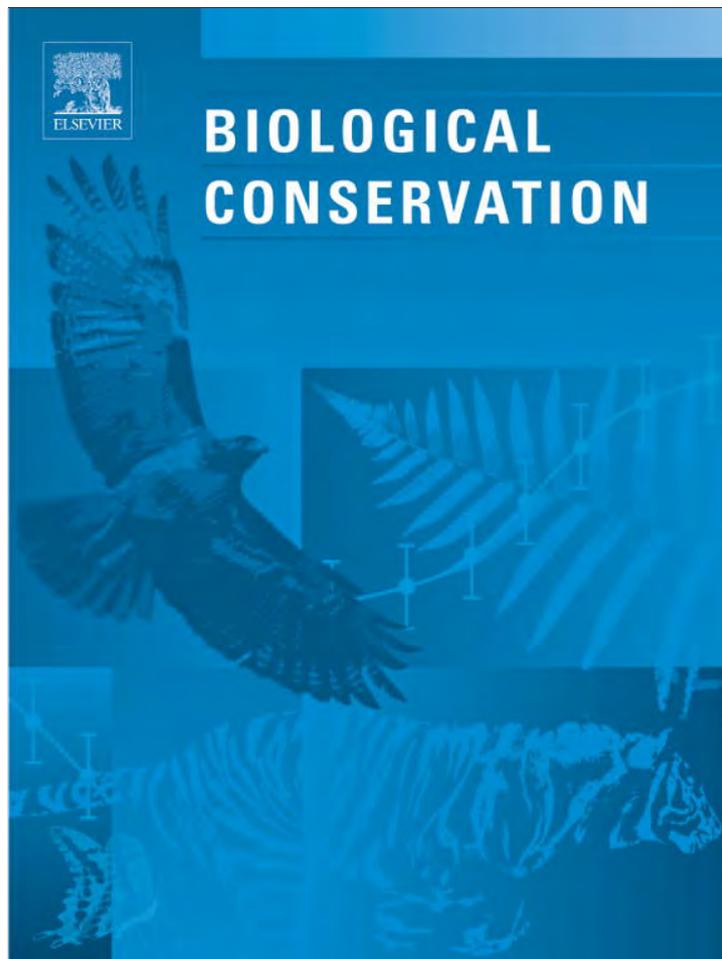


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When is local the best paradigm? Breeding history influences conservation reintroduction survival and population trajectories in times of extreme climate events



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ABSTRACT

Creating self-sustaining populations resilient to stochastic events is the goal of conservation reintroductions. Concern about disrupting locally co-adapted gene complexes, outbreeding depression, and hybridization has led to a “local is best paradigm” for source selection, yet this policy constrains rare plant reintroduction efforts and may not always best conserve rare species. Using progeny from controlled crosses (control, selfed, near neighbor, far neighbor and between sites) with maternal plants from two sites, we tested survival and population trajectories of US endangered *Jacquemontia reclinata* reintroduced in 2004 and 2005 to three sites. By 2011, survival and recruitment was greatest for mixed-population progeny, was consistent across years, and became most apparent after extreme climate events (hurricanes, drought, and exceptional cold). Populations founded from mixed sources exhibited greater resilience to stochastic disturbances than those from a single source and had positive projected population growth at two of three sites. Recipient sites most proximal to maternal origin were not those with best survival. Maximizing reintroduced population persistence calls for re-examining paradigms, using decision trees and reintroduction guidelines to guide source selection choices. The local is best paradigm may be dooming many reintroductions to failure.

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1. Introduction

Concern about maintaining genetic integrity of wild populations has led many in the conservation community to recommend using local seed sources for restoration purposes so that local gene pools and adaptations to local conditions will be preserved and hybridization can be prevented (Vallee et al., 2004; McKay et al., 2005). Selection of appropriate source material for restorations is essential to achieve the goal of creating a sustainable population capable of evolving in the wild (Neale, 2012). Many rare species have small fragmented populations; individuals within may develop inbreeding depression, a condition that leads to reduced fitness (Frankham, 1995) and high risk of population extinction (Keller and Waller, 2002; Angeloni et al., 2011). Inbreeding depression is common across many populations (Angeloni et al., 2011) and spatial scales (Linhart and Grant, 1996). While mixing populations to increase gene flow would reverse the problem of inbreeding depression, concern that mixing may lead to disruption of locally co-adapted gene complexes and outbreeding depression has pre-

vented broad use of this practice (Hufford and Mazer, 2003; Frankham et al., 2011).

Determining whether it would be safe to mix populations for a restoration requires knowledge of population genetic structure and diversity (Hamrick et al., 1991; Keller and Waller, 2002). Using a decision tree can help predict the probability of outbreeding depression if similarities or differences in population taxonomy, chromosome ecology, and the length of time populations have been separated are known (Frankham et al., 2011). Estimates suggest the probability of outbreeding depression in populations separated in the last 500 years growing in similar environments would be small, but with few reintroduction projects examining genetic diversity directly, empirical evidence supporting or refuting theory regarding the impacts of mixing populations in restoration is sparse (Broadhurst et al., 2008; Frankham et al., 2011; Neale, 2012).

Increasing uncertainty of climate change is heightening the urgency of restoring rare species populations in a manner that will ensure the greatest success (Maschinski and Haskins, 2012). Common garden or reciprocal transplant experiments allow for in situ performance comparisons of populations (Hufford and Mazer, 2003) and these will become increasingly important tests of adaptation to changing climate (e.g., Marsico and Hellmann, 2009). As

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part of a landscape scale recovery effort for the US endangered *Jacquemontia reclinata* (Maschinski and Wright, 2006), we examined the influence of single-source versus mixed-population breeding history on plant survival and fitness in three locations along the southeastern coast of Florida, USA. We also tested whether distance of reintroduction site from maternal source influenced transplant survival. Further, we compared population growth during transition periods with and without extreme climate events and determined population viability of reintroduced populations with single-source versus mixed-population breeding histories.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Background

J. reclinata (beach clustervine) is a perennial vine endemic to the South Florida coastal dune ecosystem. Mature plants produce multiple trailing stems from a central root. Plants may live 15 years or more in the wild and can achieve reproductive maturity within 1 year (S. Wright, personal observation). Its white flowers are visited by a wide array of generalist insects gathering nectar and pollen, including flies, wasps, bees, and butterflies, with greatest pollinator diversity in the largest plant populations (Pinto-Torres and Koptur, 2009). The capsular fruits produce one to four seeds; most seeds are dropped below the plants when the capsules open. Although many populations fruit prolifically, few seedlings establish in the wild (Maschinski et al., 2003). Large-scale natural disturbances (e.g., hurricanes), habitat fragmentation and alteration have restricted the species' range and contributed to its listing as federally endangered (USFWS, 1996; Lane et al., 2008). In 2011, approximately 730 wild individuals grew in ten sites in coastal strand and open maritime hammock, habitats that were once contiguous along the eastern coast of Florida USA (USFWS, 1996).

Prior to any reintroduction or augmentation, guidelines advise testing genetic structure of species with populations that have fewer than 50 individuals flowering and setting fruit, are highly fragmented and isolated, where no pollinators are present, or no viable seed is being set (Maschinski et al., 2012a). As *J. reclinata* has six of ten populations with fewer than 50 individuals and low recruitment growing in fragmented, isolated patches (Maschinski et al., 2003, 2011), we conducted genetic analysis on eight of the known wild populations to test population structure prior to initiating any reintroductions (Thornton et al., 2008). Random amplified polymorphic DNA markers indicated that the two largest populations used for maternal sources for this study, Crandon Park (2001 $n = 144$ plants in 700 m²) and South Beach (2001 $n = 245$ plants in 340 m²), were genetically similar (Nei's genetic distance = 0.05), and had greater genetic diversity ($I = 0.282$ and 0.360, respectively) than the small populations with <50 individuals ($I = 0.136$ –0.243). Because Crandon Park and South Beach were not significantly genetically differentiated, mixing sources was allowed by current guidelines (Maschinski et al., 2012a).

The source propagules for our reintroduction experiments were the F1 progeny of a controlled hand pollination experiment conducted by Pinto-Torres and Koptur (2009). Briefly, they collected seed from wild *J. reclinata* plants with known spatial location at Crandon Park (CR) and South Beach (SB) and germinated seeds at the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden nursery producing 65 reproductive maternal plants for crosses. Following protocols of Kearns and Inouye (1993), for each maternal source they produced six pollination treatments: control (bagged and unmanipulated), selfed, sibling (crossed with offspring from same parent), near neighbor (crossed with offspring of a wild parent from a patch <20 m away), far neighbor (crossed with offspring of a wild parent from a patch >20 m away), and between-site crosses with two maternal plant

origins (CR and SB separated by 71.4 km; Fig. 1). Measurements on seeds and seedlings resulting from the hand pollination trials determined that *J. reclinata* has a mixed mating system: flowers are able to set fruit with viable seeds with self pollen, but outcross pollen produces significantly greater fruit and seed set than self pollen (Pinto-Torres and Koptur, 2009). We maintained seedlings that resulted from the crosses in our nursery for 1 and 2 years until transplanting them to reintroduction sites. Not all hand pollination treatments from each maternal source lived to maturity, thus our experiments included eight maternal source X hand pollination treatments: CR-control, CR-self, CR-sibling, CR-far neighbor, SB-sibling, SB-far neighbor, and two between site crosses, CR × SB and SB × CR. We report results of pollination attempts, seeds set in 2002, and seedling survival in our nursery in 2003–2006 (Table 1). Full replication of treatments across the three reintroductions was limited by plant availability and space at recipient sites.

2.2. Experimental reintroductions

To increase the number of populations and to test how breeding history affected plant survival and recruitment, we reintroduced *J. reclinata* to three sites within its historical range along the eastern coast of south Florida (Fig. 1). We selected the reintroduction sites based upon a recipient site assessment and ranking system (Wright and Thornton, 2003; Maschinski et al., 2012b). Generally, the recipient sites featured good quality habitat with high native plant diversity similar to home sites, low invasive species cover, good land manager support, and ample spatial extent for population expansion. We use the term reintroduction to describe these experimental populations, which assumes that the species occurred historically at the sites, however at the time of reintroduction *J. reclinata* had been absent from all sites for at least 20 years. The timing of installation of plants into reintroduction sites varied due to logistics of site preparation by land managers. All plants were reproductive adults at the time of outplanting.

On July 24, 2004, at Haulover Beach, we planted 143 *J. reclinata* plants. Into twenty-four east to west oriented transects (15 m in length) we randomly placed at 3 m spacing one plant representing each of six hand pollination treatments (Table 2). Note one transect had only five plants. Spacing allowed for adequate plant growth and minimized intraspecific competition. The reintroduction area featured expansive restored dunes replenished with offshore substrate and planted with native coastal strand species.

Prior to the outplanting at Virginia Key, land managers removed invasive exotics *Casuarina equisetifolia* (Australian pine) and *Schinus terebinthifolius* (Brazilian pepper) to restore the open coastal strand area. Located 2.7 km from CR, Virginia Key is one of the last South Florida barrier islands remaining in a near natural state. It contains high plant diversity within beach dune, coastal strand, maritime hammock, and mangrove tidal swamp habitats. On April 7, 2005, we randomly planted 171 *J. reclinata* of four hand pollination treatments (Table 2) throughout suitable planting area. Planting areas were small patches that did not allow the transect design used at Haulover Beach.

Substrate re-nourished from offshore dredged sand characterizes the most northern reintroduction site, Delray Beach, a site restored from domination by the invasive exotic *Scaevola sericea* (beach naupaka) to a diverse planted native coastal strand community. Human-constructed dunes and walking paths shape the topography of the site and buffer the reintroduction from direct salty sea breeze. On February 16, 2005, along with native coastal dune plants, we randomly distributed 132 *J. reclinata* from six hand pollination treatments (Table 2) throughout suitable planting area. This reintroduction was integrated into a formal landscape that precluded use of transects.

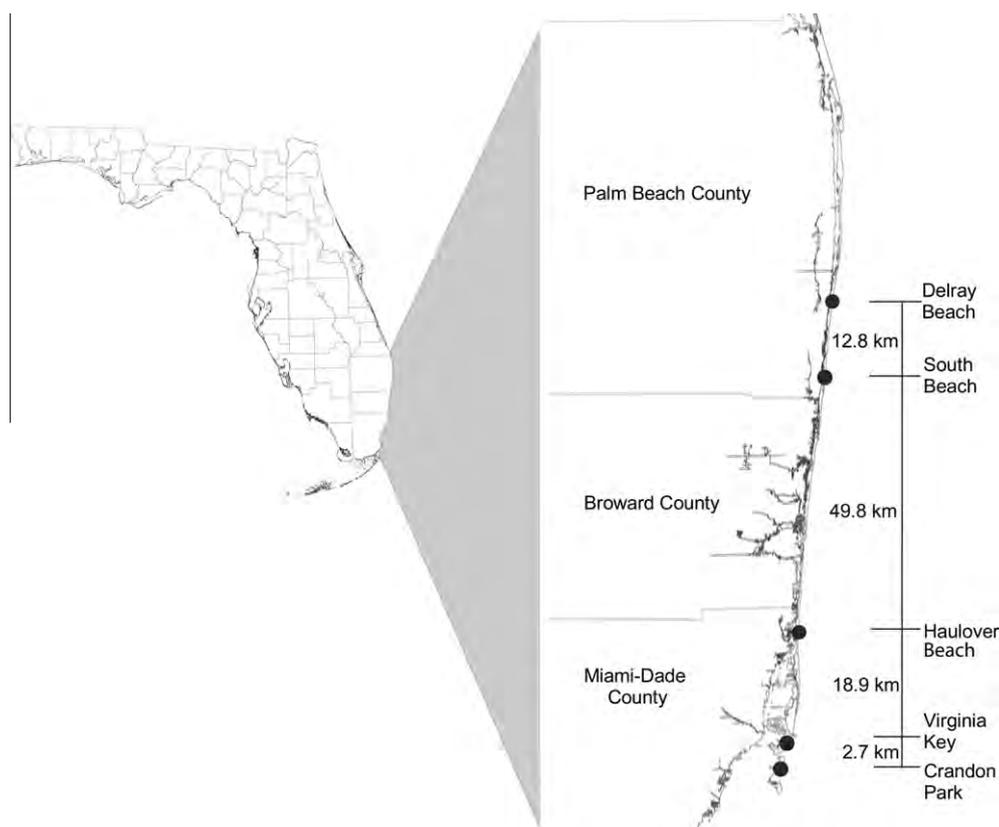


Fig. 1. Map of *Jacquemontia reclinata* populations indicating maternal source populations (Crandon and South Beach) for the experiment and the three reintroduction sites (Delray Beach, Haulover Beach, and Virginia Key). Map shows distances (km) between the sites.

At all sites we recorded GPS locations and watered each plant with 1 quart of water at the time of the planting. The timing of the introduction at Haulover Beach during the rainy season reduced the need for supplemental watering, however at Virginia Key and Delray Beach land managers watered plants when needed until the rainy season started. We monitored plant survival and noted seedling establishment. We assumed the maternal parent of any seedling was its closest outplanted neighbor.

2.3. Analysis

We analyzed differences in survival (days alive since installation) using a general linear model, where hand pollination treatment (control, self, sibling, far neighbor or between site crosses) and maternal origin (CR or SB) were the fixed main effects and site was a random effect (SYSTAT, 2007). To determine whether there was an advantage to plants installed at sites closest to maternal origin, we analyzed maternal source and the distance from maternal source to recipient reintroduction sites and their interactions using general linear model (SYSTAT, 2007).

To help explain significant demographic trends, we gathered regional temperature and precipitation data from online sources. We report mean minimum soil temperature measured at a depth of –10 cm for January through April in 2005–2011 at Homestead, Florida using data from University of Florida Automated Weather Network (<http://fawn.ifas.ufl.edu/data/reports/>). In addition we report quarterly precipitation in Miami from 2004–2010 using data from Florida Climate Center, Florida State University, Center for Ocean-Atmospheric Prediction Studies (http://coaps.fsu.edu/climate_center/data/precip_miami.shtml).

We examined whether breeding history influenced survival in years with extreme climate events using a Kruskal–Wallis test on

population change during transitions with extreme events versus transitions where no extreme event occurred for mixed vs. single source crosses in all sites combined.

2.4. Population viability analysis

To understand the effect of breeding history on *J. reclinata* population viability, we developed three-stage composite models for each hand pollination treatment planted at the three sites based upon greenhouse and field measurements of experimental plants. Stages were seeds, non-reproductive seedlings, and reproductive adults. Using mean seed survival of Crandon sourced seeds collected from the wild population and buried to 5 cm in controlled experiments measured in 2003, 2006 and 2007 at Crandon Park (Pascarella et al., 2011), we estimated seed survival in the seed bank as 0.404. For each maternal origin X hand pollination treatment, we used mean percent germination and mean percentage seedlings surviving to adult stage measured in the greenhouse. To account for decreased germination rates in the field in comparison to the greenhouse, we multiplied each greenhouse seed germination value by 0.114, the field germination rate (Pascarella et al. (2011) measured from seed bank trials at Crandon Park. Field measurements of average percent adult survival over the monitoring period at each site supplied the adult–adult vital rate. We determined reproductive value as number of seedlings observed at the reintroduction site in 2011 (where maternal plant was assumed to be the closest adult) per live adult observed in the previous monitoring period. For those treatments that had no recruitment, we used a conservative 0.001 estimate for the reproductive value.

For each breeding treatment we calculated population growth trajectories, extinction risk, and elasticities using the stochastic

Table 1
Comparison of total attempts, total seeds produced, and survival of seedlings in nursery 1, 3, and 4 years post-germination for six hand pollination treatments conducted on maternal plants from the two largest *Jacquemontia reclinata* populations. For further details see Pinto-Torres and Koptur (2009).

Maternal origin	Hand pollination treatment	Attempts	Failed attempts	% Fruit set/attempt	Total seeds 2002	Live seedlings May 2003	Total reintroduced by April 2005	Live seedlings in nursery July 2006	Total mortality	% Mortality
CR	Control	97	84	13	32	28	24	0	4	14
CR	Self	75	52	31	53	26	24	2	0	0
CR	Sib	81	43	47	109	93	70	22	1	1
CR	NN	15	9	40	14	9	0	0	9	100
CR	FN	117	44	62	205	145	98	45	2	1
CR	CR × SB	79	25	68	174	154	111	39	4	3
Total		464	257		587	455	327	108	20	
SB	Control	32	30	6	2	1	0	0	1	100
SB	Self	21	19	10	8	4	0	0	4	100
SB	Sib	18	9	50	29	20	15	0	5	25
SB	NN	17	10	41	20	11	0	0	11	100
SB	FN	16	5	69	42	26	22	0	4	15
SB	SB × CR	66	12	82	180	135	82	48	5	4
Total		170	85		281	197	119	48	30	

simulation program RAMAS GIS (Akçakaya and Root, 2005). We generated models with 1000 simulations over 50 years assuming exponential-type density dependence that would affect all vital rates. We generated standard deviation matrices assuming 4% of vital rates. Initial vectors had zero values for seed and seedling stages, but had the number of transplanted adults for the adult stage.

3. Results

Total seed set and seedling survival generally increased with crossing distance (Table 1). No SB-control, SB-self, SB- or CR-near neighbor progeny survived to be included in the reintroductions.

Mean plant survival was significantly lower at Virginia Key (789 ± 144 days alive) than at Delray Beach (1448 ± 322 days) or Haulover Beach (1639 ± 103 days; $F_{1,430} = 10.7, p = 0.001$). However, by 2011, the greatest recruitment occurred at Virginia Key, while the least occurred at Delray Beach (Table 2). Seedlings established at all reintroduction sites, but not adjacent to all hand pollination X maternal source treatment plants (Table 2).

Mean survival significantly depended upon distance between maternal and recipient sites ($F_{3,430} = 17.41, p = 0.0001$), but there was not a significant local advantage (Fig. 2). There were no significant interactions between hand pollination treatment and distance ($F_{2,430} = 0.827, p = 0.44$) nor treatment and maternal origin ($F_{3,430} = 1.292, p = 0.277$).

Plant survival (mean days alive since installation) was significantly greater with increased crossing distance. The between site crosses had significantly greater longevity than treatment groups of crosses between more proximate neighbors ($F_{1,430} = 7.96, p = 0.001$; Fig. 3) and no interactions were significant. This pattern of greatest longevity with greater outcrossing distance was consistent across maternal origins in all years of the study and became most apparent after extreme climate events (Table 2).

Significant mortality periods occurred between 2005–2006 and 2008–2011. Events occurring before 2006 that contributed to mortality were desiccation, competition, maintenance personnel excavating plants at Haulover Beach, burial by animals, and hurricane-related events. Four category two hurricanes created storm surge, heavy rains, and winds that impacted reintroduction sites. For example, in October 2005, Hurricane Wilma severely impacted Delray Beach burying 44 *J. reclinata* plants. We considered buried plants as dead in 2006 and 2007, but two of these resurfaced by 2011 (Table 2). Between 2008 and 2011 exceptional cold and drought occurred (Table 3).

Considering all sites combined, extreme climate events increased mortality. The mean proportion of adult transplants surviving was significantly greater during transition years in which there were no extreme climate events than in transition years with extreme events (Table 2). Mixed source populations had significantly less mortality than plants from single sources in transition years with extreme climate events, but did not significantly vary in transition years without an extreme event (Median percent mortality Single No Event = 0%, 95%CI = 0, 19; Mixed No Event = 4%, 95%CI = 1, 7; Single Yes Event = 33%, 95%CI = 25, 48; Mixed Yes Event = 27%, 95%CI = 17, 33; Kruskal–Wallis = 27.62, $p < 0.0001$).

Population trajectories greatly varied according to breeding history, maternal plant origin, and reintroduction site. Models predicted that populations founded with mixed-population transplants had positive population growth at two sites. At Haulover Beach, PVA models predicted population growth only for the CR × SB population ($\lambda = 1.030$; Table 4), while at Virginia Key, PVA models predicted positive population growth only for the SB × CR population ($\lambda = 1.036$). All other hand pollination treatment models predicted population declines within 50 years or less at any of the sites (Table 4).

Table 2

Planting date, hand pollination treatment and maternal source and number of plants installed for experimental reintroductions of *Jacquemontia reclinata* at three sites. Number of surviving plants from 2005 to 2011 is indicated. Years when monitoring was not conducted are indicated by – The number of seedling recruits observed in 2011 is specified. *Indicates that plants previously believed dead at Delray Beach were found alive in 2011. These plants had been buried in deep sand by storm surge deposition. Downward arrows indicate years of extreme climatic events. Note that we could not verify extreme cold temperatures at Delray Beach in 2010 from online sources.

Site	Date planted	Treatment	# Planted	Year monitored							Total recruits 2011
				2004	↓ 2005	2006	2007	2008	↓ 2009	↓ 2011	
Haulover Beach	23-July-04	Control	24	24	24	16	16	16	–	6	7
		CR-Self	24	24	24	11	11	11	–	8	7
		CR-Sib	24	24	24	17	17	17	–	9	8
		CR-FN	24	24	22	16	16	15	–	12	5
		CR × SB	24	24	23	22	22	20	–	14	20
		SB × CR	23	23	22	18	18	17	–	13	8
Virginia Key	7-April-05	CR-Sib	22	–	22	11	9	1	0	0	0
		CR-FN	52	–	52	25	21	17	15	10	31
		CR × SB	63	–	63	44	43	38	27	21	35
		SB × CR	34	–	34	21	21	19	18	16	30
Delray Beach	16-February-05	CR-Sib	24	–	24	10	10	–	–	11*	0
		CR-FN	22	–	22	11	11	–	–	11	1
		CR × SB-BS	24	–	24	16	14	–	–	13	0
		SB-Sib	15	–	15	10	7	–	–	5	0
		SB-FN	22	–	22	16	16	–	–	15	1
		SB × CR-BS	25	–	25	16	16	–	–	17*	1

Elasticity values indicated that the most important vital rate influencing the models was adult stasis followed with equal importance by reproductive value, seed–seedling, and seedling–adult vital rates. Treatment groups with the greatest recruitment coupled with high values in all these cells had highest population growth. At Delray Beach, the low recruitment observed in 2011 resulted in negative population growth models for all treatments despite the relatively high survival rates of adults in recent years (Tables 2 and 4).

4. Discussion

As rare species populations become increasingly fragmented, habitat restoration and reintroduction will become more important components of biodiversity preservation. Building new populations that are functional, self-sustaining, and resilient to stochastic events will require knowing whether to reinstate gene flow between fragmented populations or preserve local adaptation. And this is especially critical with more extreme and variable climatic events. The ability to persist through extreme climatic events will be critical to a species ability to shift range in response to a changing climate (Early and Sax, 2011). In our study, mixed-population *J. reclinata* progeny proved to have higher survival than control, selfed or far neighbor progeny, despite site-specific circumstances such as hurricane impacts. It is noteworthy that the mixed population advantage became more apparent after periods of extreme environmental stress from hurricanes, drought, and cold temperatures. Mixed-population founders had greatest numbers of next generation recruits, they showed greater resilience to climatic events, and had greater recovery by 2011 than the single source founders. Extreme drought and temperatures have been documented to be correlated with decreased production, survival, and germination of seeds (Torang et al., 2010), changes in community composition, diversity, and ecotone boundaries (Jimenez et al., 2011), but to our knowledge ours is the first study documenting that mixing rare populations aids persistence in the face of extreme climatic events. Thus mixing populations is warranted to restore *J. reclinata*, while using single population sources or “local is best paradigm” for reintroductions will decrease the likelihood of population persistence.

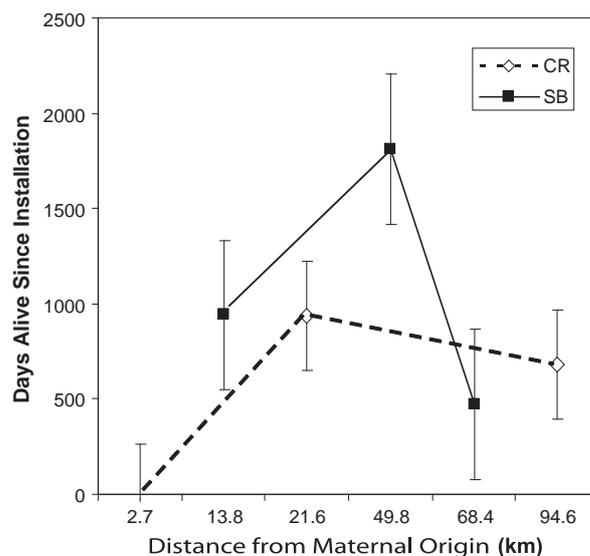


Fig. 2. Influence of distance from maternal origin to recipient site on survival of *Jacquemontia reclinata*. Patterns for offspring from Crandon Park (CR) and South Beach (SB) maternal plants are indicated.

Evidence that only mixed source populations showed positive population growth at two sites suggests that hybrid vigor overcame negative effects of inbreeding depression. While there is no evidence of outbreeding depression detected within the study period, some data are consistent with inbreeding depression in the two source populations: no SB-self, SB-control, or CR or SB near neighbor individuals reached adult stage in the nursery and no CR-sib individuals survived more than 3 years at VK. There is stronger evidence of inbreeding depression in the SB source population, which is larger and occupies less than half the area of CR.

Others have reported that mixing populations, particularly if they are closely related and have inbreeding depression, resulted in heterosis (Rogers and Montalvo, 2004). Short-term studies have provided evidence that rare plant reintroductions have had greater success from mixed sources than from single sources (Vergeer

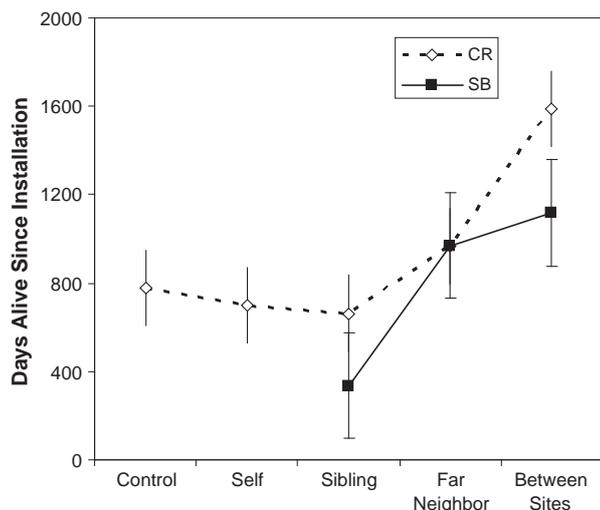


Fig. 3. Mean survival of offspring from Crandon Park (CR) and South Beach (SB) maternal plants generated from five hand pollination treatments and reintroduced to three sites. Mean days alive since installation ± 1 SE are indicated.

Table 3

(A) Mean minimum soil temperature ($^{\circ}\text{C}$) measured at a depth of 10 cm below the soil surface from 2004 through 2011. Freezing temperatures occurred in January through April at Homestead, Florida indicating that 2010 was an exceptionally cold winter (University of Florida Automated Weather Network: <http://fawn.ifas.ufl.edu/data/reports/>). (B) Monthly precipitation in Miami during from 2004 to 2010, the years the reintroduced plants have been in the wild, indicate that the winter of 2008–2009 was an exceptionally dry winter (Florida Climate Center, Florida State University, Center for Ocean-Atmospheric Prediction Studies: http://coaps.fsu.edu/climate_center/data/precip_miami.shtml). na = indicates data were unavailable. Bold values indicate extreme climate events.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
A. Minimum Temperature of Soil at –10 cm								
January	12.7	12.7	10.3	12.4	10.2	8.2	0.0	11.8
February	15.7	13.3	9.8	8.0	11.5	7.7	0.0	14.4
March	18.6	14.6	13.8	16.2	13.1	11.6	0.0	15.2
April	17.9	na	18.7	14.5	14.7	15.3	0.0	21.6
B. Total Precipitation (cm)								
January	2.52	1.92	0.32	0.54	1.25	0.34	0.89	6.48
February	3.08	0.62	3.47	2.13	4.11	0.12	4.69	0.58
March	1.5	3.97	1.1	2.7	5.24	1.78	2.81	2.87
April	4	3.27	0.23	5.33	3.78	1.17	8.95	6.73
May	2.45	7.47	8.62	5.28	1.71	7.53	3.42	0.13
June	6.79	17.6	7.05	15.22	9.63	11.64	7.2	16.94
July	6.74	5	7.32	9.03	8.93	6.17	7.36	14.50
August	10.09	9.27	12.95	4.44	9.99	7.91	8.75	28.14
September	10.88	9.91	16.73	8.22	7.87	6.83	15.89	11.40
October	5.54	5.48	1.64	9.63	6.51	2.62	1.58	39.45
November	0.34	2.7	1.63	0.66	0.97	2.97	2.35	3.96
December	0.51	1	3.11	0.79	0.28	3.01	1.21	na

et al., 2005; Godefroid et al., 2011). Heterosis may improve fitness and provide an opportunity for range expansion (Rogers and Montalvo, 2004). In contrast, inbred individuals often show reduced fitness and less resilience to stress than outcrossed individuals (Keller and Waller, 2002).

Local germplasm did not always yield the greatest reintroduction survival. Broadhurst et al. (2008) admonish that the “local is best paradigm” may lead to significant restoration failure in many taxa precisely because of inbreeding depression and these failures may erode confidence in restoration programs in general. Our findings support this argument especially because our two mixed populations were not genetically differentiated and showed signs of inbreeding depression. Maintaining small inbred populations of endangered species in isolation is not only ill-advised, it may doom

restoration efforts to failure. Using single source material will increase the probability of inbreeding in small introduced populations (Vergeer et al., 2004). However, genetics are not the only consideration. In our study, proximity to maternal origin was less important than site identity. Optimal recipient site distance from maternal source may be geographic, but it is also likely to be related to ecologic similarity (Maschinski et al., 2012b). This finding has implications for managed relocation or assisted colonization practice. We suggest that when selecting recipient sites for reintroductions, whether they be within current range or outside of range, pollination syndrome, maternal distance from recipient site, and similarity to maternal site ecology should be considered.

Reintroductions are opportunities to improve the evolutionary potential of degraded wild populations that may suffer from inbreeding or outbreeding depression (Neale, 2012). Any decision to mix populations for restoration will require first knowing some ecological, demographic and genetic information, as all interact to ensure the persistence of a species (Keller and Waller, 2002). It is noteworthy that gathering uncontested information takes time and resources that are not always available to conservationists. Our ecological and genetic studies of *J. reclinata* began in 2000 (Thornton et al., 2008; Pinto-Torres and Koptur, 2009) and the reintroduced populations only reached the demographic benchmark of next generation recruitment 5 years after installation. Indeed decades may be required before a population viability analysis would be possible to demonstrate that the populations were sustainable if conditions remained constant (Maschinski, 2006). The consequences of mixing populations may influence different life stages and generations differently (Fenster and Gallo-way, 2000), therefore long-term monitoring is essential to test theory.

Few reintroduction studies have been established long enough to satisfy the data requirements needed to build PVA models (Albrecht et al., 2011; Knight, 2012; Monks et al., 2012) and few may have had the benefit of agency support for the foundational research we enjoyed. This is not a shortcoming of reintroduction practice; it is a reality of the time required to research fundamental biology and establish populations with next generation recruitment. Time lags for population establishment will vary across sites. We have observed good recruitment at two sites, but not at the third. Our PVA models predicted negative population growth for the Delray Beach population, the site with low recruitment, regardless of transplant breeding history. Because this site has vigorous, healthy, fecund plants, we expect the population will likely recruit next generation offspring if and when conditions become optimal for seed germination and establishment (e.g., Venable, 2007) however, sufficient recruitment has not yet occurred to provide data for the models. The population growth metric (λ) allowed us to compare growth rates across breeding treatments during the time-frame included in the models (Crone et al., 2011), however more time will be needed to assess whether future generations of these mixed populations are as sustainable as the PVA models predict. Future population sizes will greatly depend upon environmental stochasticity and whether hybrid advantage breaks down.

With climate change models predicting more variable and more extreme events (Allan and Soden, 2008; Bender et al., 2010; Durack et al., 2012), initiating reintroductions with the highest probability of survival will best ensure conservation of biodiversity. We call for a re-examination of the “local is best paradigm” as the default policy for reintroductions. In the absence of the luxury of ample time and finances to decide which source material is appropriate for a reintroduction we advise using decision trees (Frankham et al., 2011) and reintroduction guidelines (Maschinski et al., 2012a) and paying close attention to ecology, life history, habitat specialization, and dispersal mechanisms of target species. For example, selfing, gravity-dispersed, herbaceous annuals with habitat spe-

Table 4

Matrices generated for each hand pollination X maternal origin treatment at three reintroduction sites. Lambda values for each are indicated. NA indicates hand pollination X maternal origin treatment was not installed at the reintroduction site.

	Haulover Beach					Virginia Key					Delray Beach			
	Seeds	Seedlings	Adults	Lambda		Seeds	Seedlings	Adults	Lambda		Seeds	Seedlings	Adults	Lambda
Control				0.896	Control				NA	Control				NA
Seeds	0.404	0	0.437		Seeds	NA		NA		Seeds	NA		NA	
Seedlings	0.103	0	0		Seedlings	NA				Seedlings	NA			
Adults	0	0.857	0.808		Adults		NA	NA		Adults		NA	NA	
CR-Self				0.941	CR-Self				NA	CR-Self				NA
Seeds	0.404	0	0.637		Seeds	NA		NA		Seeds	NA		NA	
Seedlings	0.086	0	0		Seedlings	NA				Seedlings	NA			
Adults	0	0.96	0.837		Adults		NA	NA		Adults		NA	NA	
CR-Sib				0.926	CR-Sib				0.453	CR-Sib				0.806
Seeds	0.404	0	0.471		Seeds	0.404	0	0.001		Seeds	0.404	0	0.001	
Seedlings	0.098	0	0		Seedlings	0.098	0	0		Seedlings	0.098	0		
Adults	0	0.813	0.848		Adults	0	0.813	0.286		Adults	0	0.813	0.806	
CR-FN				0.924	CR-FN				0.961	CR-FN				0.850
Seeds	0.404	0	0.333		Seeds	0.404	0	1.824		Seeds	0.404	0	0.091	
Seedlings	0.08	0	0		Seedlings	0.08	0	0		Seedlings	0.08	0		
Adults	0	0.86	0.876		Adults	0	0.860	0.727		Adults	0	0.860	0.833	
CR × SB				1.030	CR × SB				0.991	CR × SB				0.823
Seeds	0.404	0	1.0004		Seeds	0.404	0	0.921		Seeds	0.404	0	0.001	
Seedlings	0.09	0	0		Seedlings	0.09	0	0		Seedlings	0.09	0		
Adults	0	0.895	0.905		Adults	0	0.895	0.863		Adults	0	0.895	0.823	
SB × CR				0.923	SB × CR				1.036	SB × CR				0.889
Seeds	0.404	0	0.471		Seeds	0.404	0	1.578		Seeds	0.404	0	0.063	
Seedlings	0.08	0	0		Seedlings	0.08	0	0		Seedlings	0.08	0		
Adults	0	0.795	0.86		Adults	0	0.795	0.882		Adults	0	0.795	0.880	
SB-Sib				NA	SB-Sib				NA	SB-Sib				0.694
Seeds	NA		NA		Seeds	NA		NA		Seeds	0.404	0	0.001	
Seedlings	NA				Seedlings	NA				Seedlings	0.086	0		
Adults		NA	NA		Adults		NA	NA		Adults	0	0.85	0.694	
SB-FN				NA	SB-FN				NA	SB-FN				0.897
Seeds	NA		NA		Seeds	NA		NA		Seeds	0.404	0	0.063	
Seedlings	NA				Seedlings	NA				Seedlings	0.084	0		
Adults		NA	NA		Adults		NA	NA		Adults	0	0.731	0.888	

cialization have been shown to be more prone to maladaptation when populations are mixed, whereas wind-pollinated and seed-dispersed species would be more suitable for population mixing (Broadhurst et al., 2008). For rare species with few remaining individuals, great care is warranted and our ultimate goal is creating populations with the greatest genetic potential possible, but we concur with Frankham et al. (2011) that conservationists are being overly concerned about outbreeding depression, assuming local adaptation, when the central focus should be maximizing genetic diversity and trusting in natural selection.

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Patterns of Plant Composition in Fragments of Globally Imperiled Pine Rockland Forest: Effects of Soil Type, Recent Fire Frequency, and Fragment Size

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ABSTRACT: Maintaining native plant diversity through fire management is challenging in the wildland-urban interface. In subtropical South Florida, fragments of fire-dependent, globally imperiled pine rockland forest are scattered throughout urban areas. To determine the effects of recent fire frequency, major soil type, and fragment size on species composition, we measured understory vascular plant presence and cover in 162 plots distributed among 16 publicly-owned pine rockland preserves in 1995 and 2003. Fragments received either 0, 1, or > 1 burn(s) between sampling periods. Native plant richness was very high overall. Major soil type, which varies regionally and is associated with latitude and elevation, strongly influenced the assemblage of species present at a given site. Native species cover was significantly different across different burn categories. Fragment size was positively associated with plant species richness, but small fragments had high variance in the total number of native plant species they supported, with some having nearly as many plant species as the largest fragment. Examining trends over time for rare native and invasive non-native plant species revealed the spread of the invasive grass *Rhynchelytrum repens* (Willd.) C.E. Hubb. and showed no major decreases in rare plant species. In general, this study provided encouraging results for managers of small urban forest fragments, showing that they can maintain high levels of native plant diversity, even when fire occurs infrequently.

Index terms: fire, forest fragments, pine rockland, species richness, wildland-urban interface

INTRODUCTION

As the world's forests continue to disappear, natural area managers must increasingly become experts in the "art and science" of maintaining urban forest fragments (Janzen 1988). Although the composition of such remnants differs from that of intact forests (Laurence and Bierregaard 1997), many of these scattered pieces play a vital role in conserving regional native plant richness. In fact, small fragments (< 40 ha) have been shown to contain species richness rivaling or even exceeding that of large preserves (Simberloff and Gotelli 1984; Shafer 1995; Gann et al. 2002; Pither and Kellman 2002).

Managing for native species richness in urban fragments is difficult, with a suite of unique issues spanning from social to ecological. Aside from direct destruction, societal impacts on urban forest fragments include increased influx of non-native plants (Noss and Csuti 1997) and animals (Castillo and Clarke 2003; Meshaka et al. 2004), as well as dumping of household trash (Chavez and Tynon 2000) and construction debris. Ecological issues include isolation and edge effects, which lead to an over-abundance of disturbance-adapted species and lower rates of pollination and propagule dispersal (Noss and Csuti 1997).

In pyrogenic forests, an additional effect of fragmentation is loss of the natural fire regime that is vital to maintain the system

(Noss and Csuti 1997). As fire suppression becomes the norm, re-introducing fire to urban fragments poses a whole new suite of social issues (Davis 1990), while the major ecological issue becomes succession to a non-pyric community, threatening biodiversity in that system (Leach and Givnish 1996; Heuberger and Putz 2003; Varner et al. 2005). In fire-suppressed urban forest fragments, populations of rare species become extremely difficult to maintain. The "art and science" of management enters when managers must combine both species-based and process-based management (Hobbs 2007). Land managers face the conflicting goals of re-introducing fire to the landscape for the good of overall biodiversity while trying not to extirpate rare species that may be vulnerable to fire. Further complicating the issue, land management budgets are usually so woefully inadequate that money must be carefully allocated to only the most effective techniques (Laurence and Bierregaard 1997). It is, therefore, crucial that land managers adapt their restoration techniques to be as effective as possible. To this end, we present a management case study in remnants of fire-suppressed, globally critically imperiled pine rockland forest in Miami-Dade County (Florida).

It is the primary goal of Miami-Dade County land managers to "maximize native biotic diversity" (Miami-Dade County Natural Areas Management Working Group 2004). Restoration strategies employed in the County's pine rockland preserves

include controlling invasive plant species infestations and conducting regular burns. But given that prescribed fires are often unfeasible, the County's Natural Areas Management Division conducts manual hardwood reduction treatments as a surrogate for capturing some of the ecological benefits of frequent fires. This process also prepares a fragment for possible future prescribed fires by removing vegetation that is less likely to burn. Whether it is achieved through fire or through manual treatment, the target structure for pine rockland forests managed by Miami-Dade County is one in which hardwoods are reduced in stature and cover, palms occupy approximately 25% of the midstory cover, and shrub gaps contain a diverse mosaic of understory grasses and forbs (Maguire 1995). Reasons for this target vegetation structure include promoting diverse understory flora, increasing fine fuels (thereby reducing smoke output), and preventing hot burning fires that kill young pine trees (Maguire 1995).

In order to provide feedback to local land managers on the effectiveness of their restoration practices, we examined patterns in pine rockland plant diversity over an eight-year period. We looked at the effects of three environmental factors that we believed would influence plant species composition, and we examined changes in abundance and cover of both rare native plant species and non-native invasive plant species between sampling periods. Our goals in this endeavor were to: (1) elucidate some of the underlying factors that affect plant species composition, (2) determine whether fire management affects plant species richness and floristic composition within this time period, and (3) reveal any possible rare plant species losses or invasive plant species increases.

Environmental criteria we examined included major geographic region (based on edaphic factors), recent fire frequency, and fragment size. For major geographic region, we referred to the work of O'Brien (1998). In that study, he spatially defined three distinct geographic regions of Miami-Dade pine rockland forest that were previously suggested by Robertson (1955) and Snyder et al. (1990). For classification,

he used major soil type, though he noted a north to south environmental gradient whereby elevation and soil characteristics were correlated with latitude. O'Brien (1998), as well as Robertson (1955) and Snyder et al. (1990) all suggested that plant community composition changes along this gradient (although this has never, to our knowledge, been quantified). We, therefore, predicted that floristic composition in this study would differ by geographic region, *sensu* O'Brien (1998). Second, because pine rocklands have been well-documented as a fire-dependent ecosystem (Robertson 1953; Wade et al. 1980; Snyder et al. 1990), we hypothesized that fragments receiving multiple fires from 1995 to 2003 would have greater native plant species richness and significantly different floristic composition than unburned or less frequently burned fragments. Third, we predicted that fragment size would be positively associated with plant species richness, per the theory of island biogeography (MacArthur and Wilson 1967). Though fragment size has been shown to be a reliable predictor of plant species richness in many different systems (e.g., Honnay et al. 1999; Gillespie 2005), it has not been supported in other studies (Robinson et al. 1992; Holt et al. 1995), and its over-use has been criticized as irrelevant for planning and managing preserves (Saunders et al. 1991).

In addition to the predictions described above, we also wanted to utilize this dataset to examine the changes in abundance and cover of both rare native plant species and non-native invasive plant species between sampling periods 1995 and 2003—something of great interest to local land managers. It has been shown that richness of native pineland understory plant species can be increased through fire management (Brockway and Lewis 1997; Sparks et al. 1998) and thinning of overstory vegetation (Maschinski et al. 2005). Additionally, it is generally accepted that biological invasions can reduce native biodiversity (Elton 2000; Simberloff 2005). Thus, if managing to maximize native biotic diversity on Miami-Dade County preserves has been successful, we expected to see decreased abundance and cover of non-native plant species, coupled with unchanged or increased abundance and cover of rare native

plant species.

STUDY AREA

Pine rocklands were historically shaped by fires every two to 10 years that culled fire-intolerant trees and shrubs (Robertson 1953; Wade et al. 1980; Snyder et al. 1990). In the United States, pine rocklands are primarily located in subtropical southeast Florida, where they are distributed atop the Miami Rock Ridge. This limestone formation extends southwest from downtown Miami for approximately 60 km and then bends due West, extending 20 km into the Long Pine Key area of Everglades National Park (Figure 1). The ridge rarely exceeds 7 m in elevation. While most Florida pine rocklands are in Miami-Dade County, smaller parcels exist on geologically distinct limestone outcroppings in adjacent Collier and Monroe counties (Snyder et al. 1990). Pinelands sharing many of the same species, but dominated by *Pinus caribaea* Morelet, are found on the four northernmost islands of the Bahamas (Correll and Correll 1982; TNC 2003) and the Turks and Caicos Islands (TNC 2003). All Florida pine rocklands are characterized by an overstory of *Pinus elliotii* Engelm. var. *densa* Little & Dorman, a midstory dominated by palms and shrubs, and a diverse understory comprised of perennial grasses and herbs. The substrate is limestone with occasional shallow sand. Mean annual rainfall is 1400-1530 mm (Snyder et al. 1990). Outside Everglades National Park, Miami-Dade County pine rocklands occupy only about 920 ha, which is less than 2% of the original range (Bradley 2005). This substantial habitat loss has contributed to pine rocklands being listed as a globally critically imperiled natural community (FNAI 2006). Remaining pine rockland fragments of Miami-Dade County are extremely important for conserving the unique plant richness in South Florida. Florida pine rocklands contain 98 state listed and 16 federal listed vascular plant species (Gann et al. 2006). Furthermore, this plant community has a high degree of endemism, with 41 vascular plant taxa endemic to Florida and 25 species found only in pine rocklands of Florida (Gann et al. 2006). Most of these endemic plant

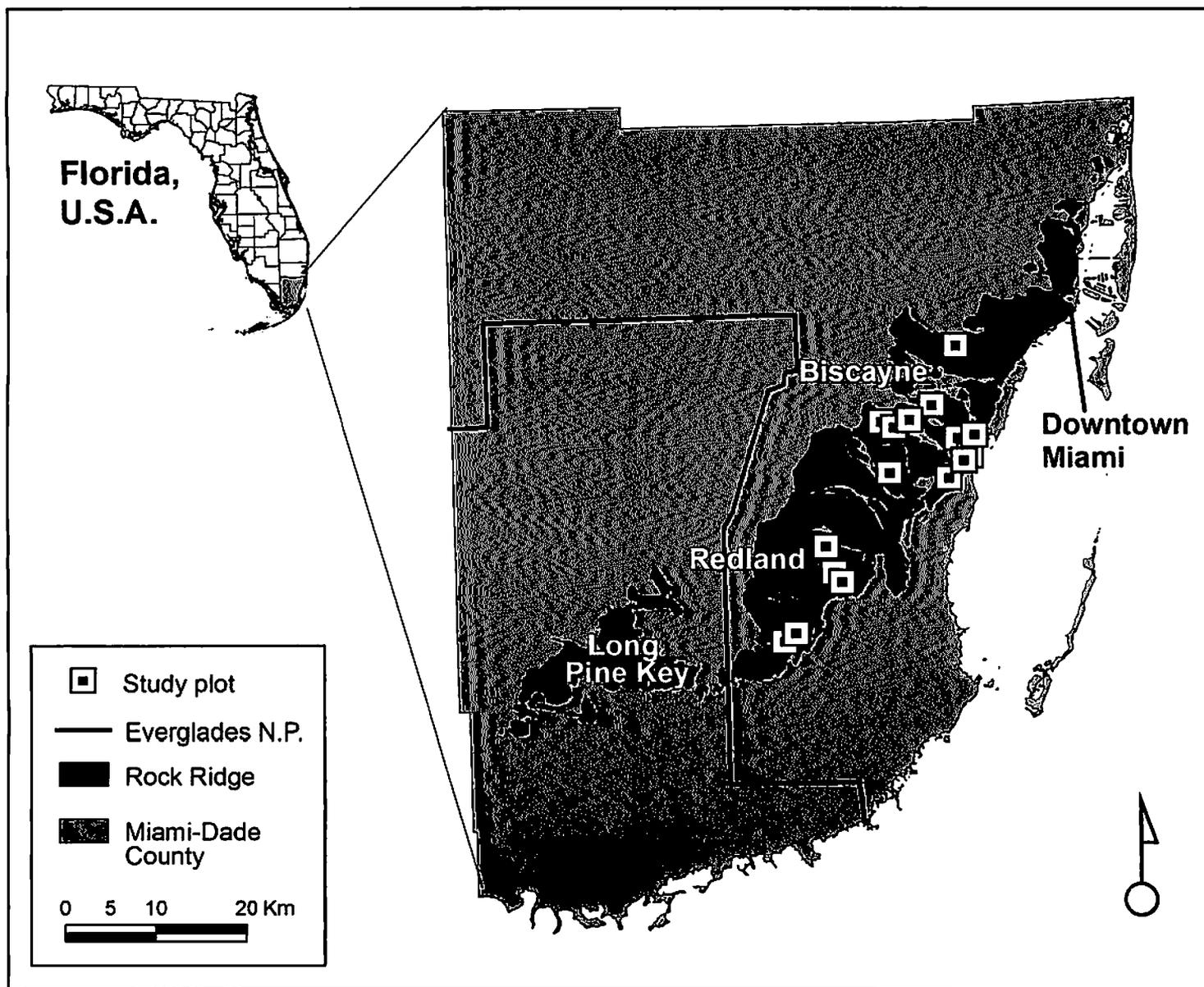


Figure 1. Location of 18 study plots in 16 of Miami-Dade County's managed pine rockland preserves. Geographic regions are labeled in white.

species require a fire return interval of less than five years to maintain their habitat (Robertson 1954).

Miami-Dade County is a matrix of roads, buildings, and agricultural fields with a human population of more than 2.4 million (U.S. Census Bureau 2004). Since its 1991 inception, the County's Natural Areas Management Division has maintained a prescribed fire program in its pine rocklands, yet weak public support has been a persistent barrier to its success. Residents of the Greater Miami area are the least educated in the state about the need for and benefits of prescribed fire

(Anonymous 2004). Further management challenges are presented by the small size of pine rockland fragments, which poses acquisition, protection, and management issues. Of the 51 Miami-Dade pine rockland preserves, 45 are < 40 ha in size and 32 of those are < 10 ha.

METHODS

Sampling methods

We revisited historic plots and examined vegetation data held at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden to determine how major

pine rockland region (*sensu* O'Brien 1998), recent fire frequency, and fragment size influence understory plant diversity. In 1994-1995, Fairchild staff installed 20-m x 40-m macroplots in each of the major pine rockland fragments of Miami-Dade County (Kernan 1994). Within each macroplot, they randomly selected three 5-m x 5-m subplots, and within each of these plots, they randomly selected three 1-m x 1-m subplots (Figure 2). They permanently marked all plots with subterranean rebar and mapped each rebar with a submeter accurate Trimble ProXR GPS unit. From March through October of 1995, Fairchild staff recorded all vascular vegetation

< 0.5 m tall in each 1-m x 1-m subplot, including trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, and herbs. They listed each species, estimating percent cover for each using an eight-class system: 0%, < 1%, 1-5%, 5-15%, 15-30%, 30-50%, 50-80%, and > 80%. They did not measure cover of non-photosynthetic vegetation, such as trunks of *Serenoa repens* (W.Bartram) Small.

From May through September 2003, we

re-sampled 162 of the 1-m x 1-m subplots nested within 18 macroplots installed by Kernan (1994). While this sampling period was slightly truncated from that of 1995, it encompassed the growing season, ensuring that we were capturing all species present. Plots were distributed throughout 16 pine rockland fragments in a 42 km x 12 km area of the Miami Rock Ridge. All fragments are preserves owned and managed by Miami-Dade County. During the study

period, the county thinned hardwoods and removed invasive plants from fragments regardless of plot placement.

To examine how environmental factors influenced assembly of native plant species in the pine rockland plant community, we subjected all presence/absence data for native species in 2003 to Principal Components Analysis (PCA) in PC-ORD (McCune and Mefford 2006). We assigned each study site to either the Biscayne or Redland pine rockland region, as circumscribed in O'Brien (1998). We did not collect data from the Long Pine Key region, which is located inside Everglades National Park (Figure 1). Using fire frequency data from Miami-Dade County records, we assigned macroplots to one of three categories depending on whether they received no fires, a single fire, or multiple fires between 1995 and 2003. Because all unburned plots occurred in the Biscayne region, we examined fire frequency in each region separately. In the Biscayne region, we assigned macroplots to three categories: five sites had no fires, three sites had a single fire, and five sites had multiple fires. In the Redland region, we compared three macroplots that received one fire to two macroplots that had multiple fires (Table 1). We sampled from two macroplots at Pineshore Pineland and Larry & Penny Thompson Park (in both cases, one unburned plot and one single-burn plot), because each represented a recent fire history that was underrepresented in the total dataset (Table 1). Burns included both controlled burns and wildfires.

We defined species richness as the number of species per sampling unit (McCune and Grace 2002). Taxonomy generally followed Wunderlin (1998). We conducted analyses of variance (ANOVA; SYSTAT Software 2002) to determine whether species richness was significantly different between sampling periods and whether major pine rockland region and recent fire history influenced species richness.

To determine whether community assemblage within the two regions predictably changed with fire frequency, we used both presence/absence and coverage data. First, we performed a factor analysis to reduce

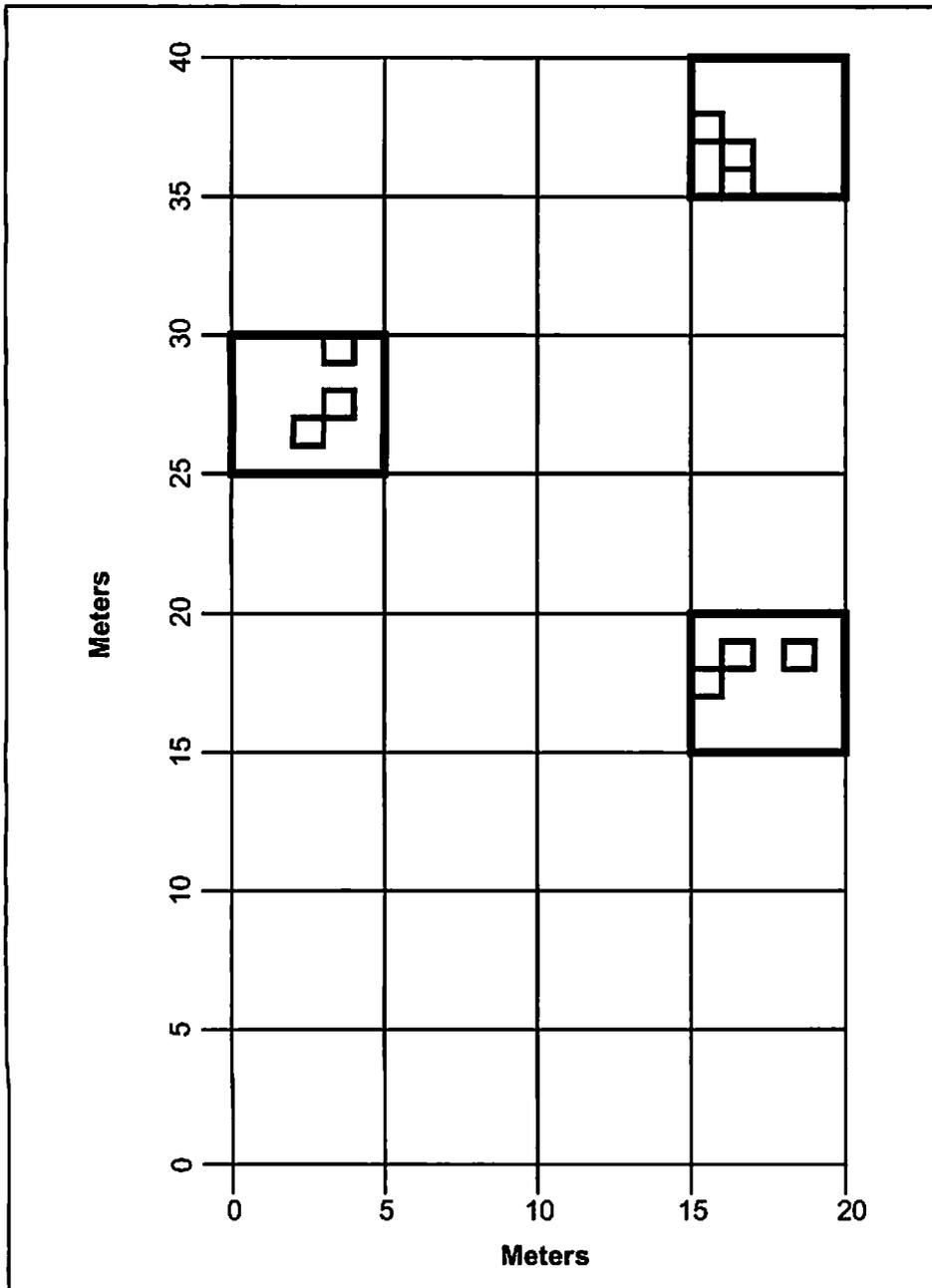


Figure 2. Schematic of original sampling design by Kernan (1994). Study plots (1 x 1 m) were nested within 5 x 5 meter plots, which were in turn nested within 20 x 40 m macroplots. This study only considered data from the 1 x 1 meter subplots.

Table 1. Eighteen sampling plots in Miami-Dade County preserves. Means are followed by standard errors.

Site Name	Fragment size (ha)	# burns 1995-2003	Months since last burn	Mean native plant richness 1995	Mean native plant richness 2003
Biscayne Region					
Larry & Penny ThompsonA	93	1	53	13.1 ± 0.7	18.9 ± 1.0
Larry & Penny ThompsonB	93	0	> 96	14.9 ± 0.8	19.7 ± 0.8
Nixon Smiley	48.5	> 1	52	8.8 ± 0.6	13.9 ± 1.1
Deering Estate South Addition	13.5	1	21	6.7 ± 0.9	9.2 ± 0.9
Tamiami Complex Addition	10.5	0	> 96	14.0 ± 0.9	18.8 ± 1.7
Bill Sadowski	8.5	0	> 96	13.2 ± 1.2	16.6 ± 1.1
Ludlam	4	> 1	8	13.3 ± 0.6	19.2 ± 0.9
Ned Glenn	4	> 1	40	15.6 ± 0.9	22.0 ± 0.7
Ron Ehman	3	0	> 96	12.3 ± 2.1	15.3 ± 1.5
Pineshore PinelandA	2.5	0	> 96	12.6 ± 0.9	10.7 ± 1.4
Pineshore PinelandB	2.5	1	27	15.8 ± 1.9	15.7 ± 0.8
Coral Reef	2	> 1	64	15.8 ± 0.8	17.8 ± 0.9
Tropical	2	> 1	70	5.0 ± 0.4	9.8 ± 0.7
Redland Region					
Navy Wells	143	1	27	18.1 ± 2.0	26.9 ± 1.9
Camp Owaissa Bauer	40	1	26	12.3 ± 0.7	14.8 ± 0.5
Sunny Palms	16.5	> 1	13	5.8 ± 0.3	13.4 ± 0.6
Seminole Wayside	6	> 1	1.5	16.6 ± 0.7	17.9 ± 1.1
Ingram	4	1	90 (est.)	8.8 ± 1.2	14.2 ± 1.3

the number of species present in the study plots and improve precision of classification analyses. Using species' coverages represented by medians calculated from percent cover class of each species present in a study plot, we selected variables within each region with component loadings > 0.3 in the first two axes to enter into the Stepwise Discriminant Analysis (SDA). We report the final reduced model that best defined the classification of plots by fire frequency for each region.

We used linear regression to examine the relationship between fragment size and native understory richness in 2003 (SYSTAT Software 2002). As suggested by Cook et al. (2002), we omitted non-native species from this analysis in favor of species native to South Florida pine rockland, so that species from the matrix would not obscure patterns in native species richness.

To examine trends over time in the presence of rare plant species and non-native, invasive plant species, we first needed to define the terms "rare" and "non-native invasive." In cases where we discuss rare species, we define these as native plant species listed as endangered by the state of Florida (Coile and Garland 2003). For non-native invasive plant species, we used those classified as "Category I" by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council. This classification indicates that the species is altering native plant communities (FLEPPC 2007). Significance tests for changes in most important non-native invasive plant species and rare plant species were generated using the paired t-test function in SYSTAT. All means we report include notation of standard error.

RESULTS

Native plant species

Study plots had a total of 182 native vascular plant species in 1995, with average species richness per 1-m x 1-m plot ranging from 5.0 ± 0.4 to 18.1 ± 2.0 . In 2003, we recorded 187 native species, with average species richness ranging from 9.2 ± 0.1 to 26.9 ± 1.9 (Table 1). Comparing plant species lists from 1995 and 2003, there was a 68% overlap, as indicated in the Appendix. Per plot native plant richness changed significantly between sampling years, increasing by an average of 4.5 species in each plot (ANOVA, $F_{(1, 177)} = 100.10, p < 0.001$).

Major pine rockland region, which was primarily differentiated by soil type, had

a strong influence on the assemblage of native plant species present in study plots (PCA, Figure 3). The seven species that most distinguished major region along the first axis were all found primarily or exclusively in the Redland region: *Koanophyllon villosum* (Sw.) King & H. Rob., *Guettarda scabra* (L.) Vent., *Galium hispidulum* Michx., *Pteridium aquilinum* (L.) Kuhn var. *caudatum* (L.) Sadebeck, *Ardisia escallonioides* Schiede & Deppe ex Schldl. & Cham., *Toxicodendron radicans* (L.) Kuntze, and *Forestiera segregata* (Jacq.) Krug & Urb. In the Biscayne region, *Euphorbia polyphylla* Engelm. ex Chapm. and *Dyschoriste angusta* (A. Gray) Small were most important for distinguishing region, but they were less important than

the seven Redland species. Although region affected native plant species assemblage, it did not significantly influence overall native plant species richness (ANOVA, $F_{(1, 160)} = 2.56, p = 0.111$).

Recent fire frequency had less influence than region on the assemblage of native plant species present in study plots. Plots receiving zero, one, or multiple burn(s) did not form distinct clusters in plant species space when only presence/absence was considered (PCA, data not shown). In the Redland region, native plant species richness was not significantly different among recent fire frequencies (ANOVA, $F_{(1,43)} = 1.273, p = 0.266$). However, recent fire frequency significantly influenced native

plant species richness in Biscayne plots (ANOVA, $F_{(2,114)} = 7.444, p = 0.001$). Contrary to expectations, a post-hoc analysis using Tukey's HSD multiple comparison test showed that plots experiencing a single burn over the study period had significantly lower native plant species richness than unburned ($p = 0.001$) and multi-burn ($p = 0.006$) plots.

While presence/absence data showed little effect of recent burn history, Stepwise Discriminant Analysis using coverage data revealed that native plant species cover was significantly different in study plots across different burn categories. For plots in the Biscayne region, native plant species presence and coverage in single burn

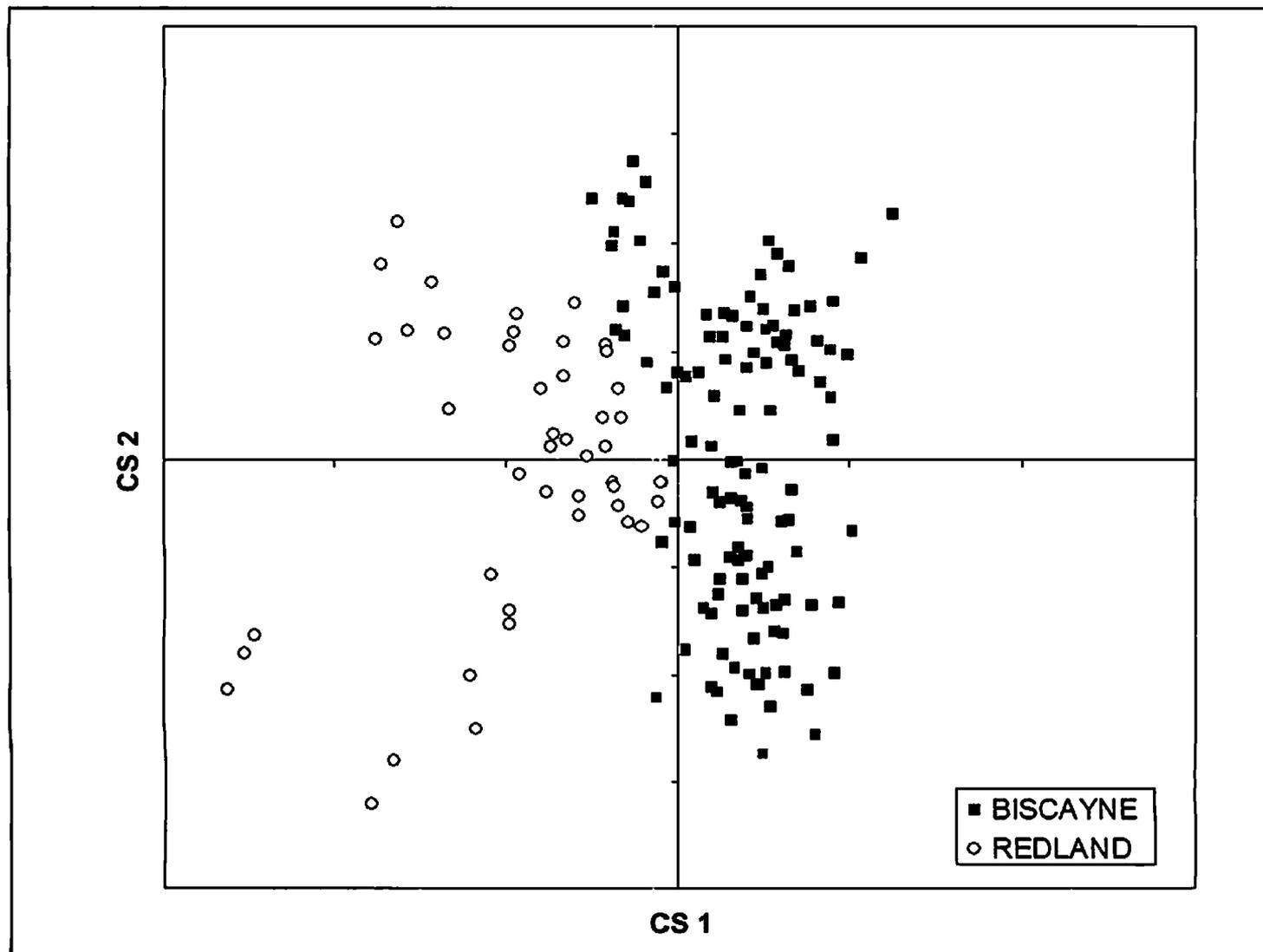


Figure 3. Principal Components Analysis of study plots in plant species space. Study plots (1 x 1 m) are separated by major pine rockland region as described in O'Brien (1998).

plots overlapped with that of the other two burn categories. Yet, differences were much more apparent when comparing unburned plots with those receiving multiple burns (SDA, $F_{(36, 194)} = 3.80$, $P < 0.001$, Figure 4). A total of 72% of Biscayne region plots were correctly grouped by the jackknife classification. Breaking this down by burn class, 60% of unburned plots were classified correctly, as were 78% of single burn plots and 80% of multiple burn plots. Plots in the Redland region also showed

significantly different floristic composition between burn categories (SDA, $F_{(20, 24)} = 7.15$, $P < 0.001$). We could not generate a scatter plot of canonical scores for these plots because discriminant analysis yielded a single discriminant function axis. Overall, 82% of Redland plots were correctly grouped by the jackknife classification, with 78% of single burn plots and 89% of multiple burn plots correctly classified. In total, SDA used 36 species to classify plots by recent fire frequency, with 18 species

used in the Biscayne region (of 30 total) and 20 in the Redland region (of 47 total) (Table 2). All species considered for inclusion in the models are indicated in the Appendix at the end of this manuscript.

Fragment size had a positive influence on native plant species richness in understory plots, explaining 32% of the variation ($r^2 = 0.32$, $p = 0.014$, Figure 5). However, there was a wide range in native plant species richness among the smallest preserves.

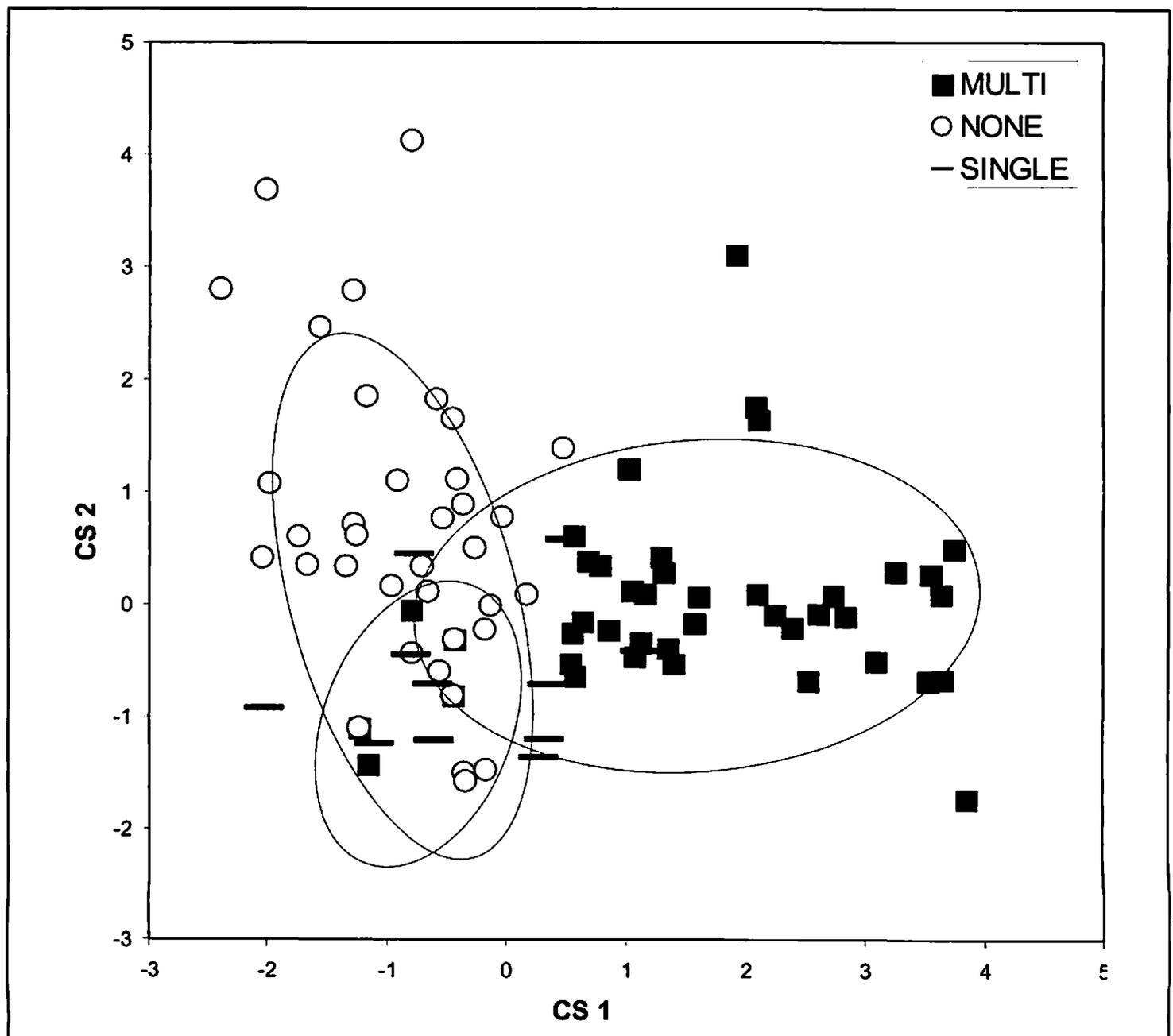


Figure 4. Canonical scores from Stepwise Discriminant Analysis of plant species' coverage in the Biscayne region, classified by recent fire frequency (zero, single or multiple burn(s) within the past eight years). Ellipses are centroids plus confidence intervals.

Table 2. Species used in model to classify study plots into one of three categories for recent fire frequency: no burns, one burn, or multiple burns. Species are sorted according to the burn category in which they were most prevalent. In the Biscayne region, there were no species with greatest mean coverage in single burn plots. Asterisks indicate non-native taxa.

Biscayne Region	Redland Region
Greatest mean coverage in unburned plots	Greatest mean coverage in single burn plots
<i>Aeschynomene viscidula</i>	<i>Ardisia escallanioides</i>
<i>Angadenia berteroi</i>	<i>Aster adnatus</i>
<i>Croton glandulosus</i>	<i>Aster concolor</i>
<i>Paspalum monostachyum</i>	<i>Ayenia euphrasiifolia</i>
<i>Polygala grandiflora</i>	<i>Chamaecrista deeringiana</i>
<i>Spermacoce verticillata*</i>	<i>Chiococca parvifolia</i>
Greatest mean coverage in multiple burn plots	<i>Cnidioscolus stimulosus</i>
<i>Chiococca parvifolia</i>	<i>Galactia volubilis</i>
<i>Cynanchum blodgettii</i>	<i>Guettarda scabra</i>
<i>Desmodium incanum</i>	<i>Schizachyrium sanguineum</i>
<i>Dyschoriste angusta</i>	Greatest mean coverage in multiple burn plots
<i>Elionurus tripsacoides</i>	<i>Abildgaardia ovata</i>
<i>Evolvulus sericeus</i>	<i>Angadenia berteroi</i>
<i>Nephrolepis biserrata</i>	<i>Galactia smallii</i>
<i>Parthenocissus quinquenervia</i>	<i>Galium hispidulum</i>
<i>Piriqueta caroliniana</i>	<i>Koanophyllon villosum</i>
<i>Ruellia succulenta</i>	<i>Macroptilium lathyroides*</i>
<i>Schizachyrium rhizomatum</i>	<i>Pityopsis graminifolia</i>
Equal coverage in both plot types	<i>Poinsettia pinetorum</i>
<i>Acalypha chamaedrifolia</i>	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> var. <i>caudatum</i>
	<i>Pteris bahamensis</i>

Presence and cover of rare native plant species in managed plots increased over the sampling period in many cases, but this change was significant for only one species, federally endangered *Galactia smallii* H.J. Rogers ex Herndon (Table 3). Study plots contained 14 Florida endangered plant species. From 1995 to 2003, only three of these 14 rare species decreased in number of plot occurrences. No plant species were lost from the study plots over this period; in fact, four previously undocumented rare species were recorded. Unfortunately, the dataset was not large enough to support analyses on the effects of fire frequency

or fragment size on rare plant species abundance or cover.

Non-native invasive plant species

Non-native plant species were not a major component of vegetative cover in this study. Plots at Navy Wells had the highest mean non-native plant species cover at 3.1%. The majority of non-native cover at Navy Wells was comprised of *Schinus terebinthifolius* Raddi. For both sampling periods combined, all study plots contained a total of just 24 non-native plant species, many

of which were not widely distributed. In fact, 70% (in 2003) to 72% (in 1995) of all plots did not contain any non-native plant species. In examining only those plots containing non-native plant species, average cover fell from 4.7% in 1995 to 1.8% in 2003, but this trend was not statistically significant (ANOVA, $F_{(1,93)} = 3.76$, $p = 0.06$). Of all non-native plant species, the most prevalent were *Schinus terebinthifolius*, *Neyraudia reynaudiana* (Kunth) Keng ex A.S. Hitchc., and *Rhynchelytrum repens* (Willd.) C.E. Hubb. (Table 4).

In comparing occurrences of most invasive non-native plant species between sampling periods, we found a general trend in which *Ardisia elliptica* Thunb., *Neyraudia reynaudiana*, and *Schinus terebinthifolius* were less abundant over time. This effect was not statistically significant for any of these species using paired t-tests (Table 4). The opposite was the case for *Rhynchelytrum repens*. This species was absent from all plots in 1995, but was present in 23 plots in 2003, with a significant increase in mean cover in those plots by 1.2% ($p = 0.01$). All but one of the 23 plots containing *R. repens* had at least one burn during the study period.

DISCUSSION

Native plant species

Native plant species richness is very high in Miami-Dade County's fragmented pine rockland preserves. The documentation of 182 and 187 native taxa in our 162 study plots (totaling 0.016 ha) is high compared to one study in Everglades pine rocklands, where DeCoster et al. (1999) found a maximum of 128 species in a 0.1-ha plot. While overall native plant richness in our plots did not change greatly between sampling periods, native plant richness on a per-plot basis significantly increased. Several factors may account for this. Natural Areas Management practices that commenced in 1991, such as removal of non-native invasive plant species and native hardwoods as well as prescribed burning, were likely to have favored the biologically rich pine rockland understory. In addition, observer influence could explain part or

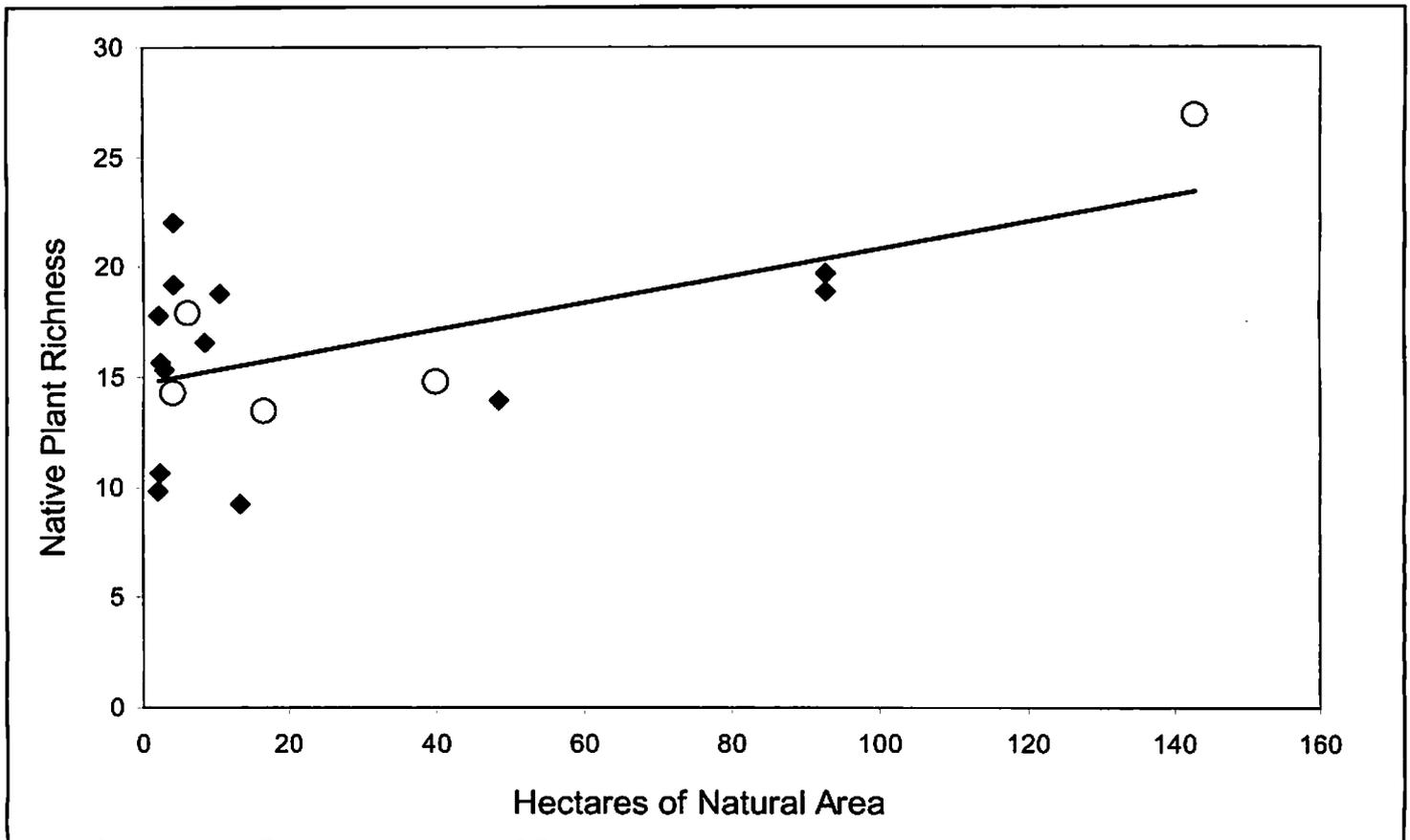


Figure 5. Regression of fragment size compared to native plant richness within 1 x 1 m study plots ($r^2 = 0.32$, $P = 0.014$). Mean native plant richness for each fragment ($N = 18$) is presented here. Solid diamonds represent sites in the Biscayne region and hollow circles represent sites in the Redland region.

all of the increase in native plant species richness. Assistant data collectors changed over time, and while the lead observer (Woodmansee) remained the same in both 1995 and 2003, he continued to build on his knowledge of plant taxonomy in the eight-year interim.

This work lends quantitative support to previous suggestions (Robertson 1955; Snyder et al. 1990; O'Brien 1998) that species composition is distinctly different between the Biscayne and Redland regions of the Miami Rock Ridge. In showing these differences, we underscore both the importance of considering edaphic factors in regional studies of species composition as well as the need to preserve fragments of different edaphic types in order to maximize native biodiversity.

Although our results suggest that a single burn will reduce native pine rockland plant richness on Biscayne soils, we assert that these results are most likely an artifact

of the unusually low number of species at the Deering South Addition (Table 1), the limited time span of our study, and the low number of single burn plots we were able to sample from the Biscayne region (just 27, compared to 45 for both unburned and multi-burn plots). Deering South Addition plots are depauperate of both native and non-native plant species, with a mean of 10.1 ± 0.9 total species (compared to 17.4 ± 0.4 species in all other plots combined). In addition, when we removed Deering South Addition plots from the analysis, recent fire frequency no longer significantly affected native plant species richness (ANOVA, $F_{(2,105)} = 1.720$, $p = 0.184$). Most likely, the low diversity at Deering South Addition is because the area was unmanaged for years and had begun to succeed to a closed-canopy hammock with few understory species. Repeated manual reduction of hardwoods by Miami-Dade County (in 1995, 1997, 1999, 2002, and most intensively in 2003) as well as a prescribed burn in 2001 has not

yet promoted recovery of the diverse pine rockland understory. Overall, we believe that significant change in pine rockland plant species richness occurs over a longer time span than the length of this study, but we are not able to prove this with our existing dataset.

In contrast to the slow response time of plant species richness, it is interesting to note that even in the relatively short eight-year span of this study, the number of fires received by study plots affected floristic composition. Certain plant species appeared to be much more affected by recent fire frequency than others (Table 2). In both the Biscayne and the Redland regions, the majority of plant species used in the discriminant analysis function are found in pine rockland forests that have very sparse canopy and shrub layers permitting high herbaceous diversity. Those plant species that had the greatest mean coverage in unburned plots are mostly limited to small native herbs and grasses. Exceptions to this

Table 3. Presence and cover of fourteen Florida endangered plant species found in study plots. Asterisks indicate species that are also listed as endangered by the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Columns headed by “# plots” show the number of plots that contained each species.

	1995		2003		Difference		p- value in paired t-test
	# plots	Avg. % cover	# plots	Avg. % cover	# plots	Avg. % cover	
<i>Alvaradoa amorphoides</i>	0	0	1	0.5	1	0.5	N/A
<i>Argythamnia blodgettii</i>	3	1.33	5	1.25	2	-0.08	0.827
<i>Bourreria cassinifolia</i>	1	0.5	1	0.5	0	0	N/A
<i>Chamaesyce deltoidea</i> ssp.							
<i>adhaerens</i> *	0	0	1	3	1	3	N/A
<i>Chamaesyce deltoidea</i> *	7	1.57	11	1.41	4	-0.16	0.87
<i>Chamaesyce deltoidea</i> ssp.							
<i>pinetorum</i>	3	0.5	5	0.5	2	0	0.516
<i>Chamaesyce porteriana</i>	0	0	1	0.5	1	0.5	N/A
<i>Galactia smallii</i> *	5	0.5	7	0.5	2	0	0.001
<i>Ipomoea tenuissima</i>	6	0.92	2	0.5	-4	-0.42	0.185
<i>Koanophyllon villosum</i>	12	3.58	21	1.33	9	-2.25	0.615
<i>Lantana depressa</i>	4	4.13	1	3	-3	-1.13	0.239
<i>Poinsettia pinetorum</i>	3	0.5	10	0.75	7	0.25	0.067
<i>Scutellaria havanensis</i>	3	0.5	2	0.5	-1	0	0.638
<i>Trema lamarckianum</i>	0	0	1	3	1	3	N/A

included the sometimes aggressive native ferns *Nephrolepis biserrata* (Sw.) Schott and *Pteridium aquilinum* var. *caudatum*, native vine *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (L.) Planch., native shrub *Koanophyllon villosum*, and non-native sub-shrub *Macropitium lathyroides* (L.) Urb. With the exception of *K. villosum*, the authors have noted that each of these species can be quick to colonize disturbed areas.

Although there was a positive correlation between fragment size and native plant species richness, this relationship might have been stronger if we had data on mid-sized fragments. We lack these data because there are virtually no mid-sized pine rockland preserves in Miami-Dade County. Close to 95% of pine rockland preserves are < 40 ha in size. All remaining preserves are ≥

80 ha, except for one newly acquired 54-ha unit that contains some pine rockland. As a whole, small fragments had wide variance in the total number of plant species they supported. It was striking that many of the smallest preserves in our study (< 15 ha) had levels of plant species richness that approached or exceeded those of plots in larger preserves. This highlights the importance of conserving even small frag-

Table 4. Presence and cover of the four non-native plant species found in study plots that are classified as “Category I” by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (2007). Columns headed by “# plots” show the number of plots that contained that species in 1995 or 2003. Paired t-tests were conducted to test for significant differences in percent coverage of each taxon in 1995 versus 2003.

	1995		2003		Difference		p- value in paired t-test
	# plots	Avg. % cover	# plots	Avg. % cover	# plots	Avg. % cover	
<i>Ardisia elliptica</i>	3	14.2	1	3	-2	-11.2	0.053
<i>Neyraudia reynaudiana</i>	7	3.9	5	1	-2	-2.9	0.143
<i>Rhynchelytrum repens</i>	0	0	23	1.2	23	1.2	0.01
<i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i>	24	6.1	5	5.4	-19	-0.7	0.111

ments and indicates that preserve size is one of the factors influencing plant species richness, along with soil type, hydrology, fire history, and disturbance.

Over the study period, the significant increase in cover of federally endangered *Galactia smallii* as well as the increased occurrences of 11 other rare plant species suggests pine rockland preserves in Miami-Dade County are being managed in a positive way supporting floristic diversity. This study was not designed to detect rare plant species or track them over time; thus, we have insufficient data to explain directly why rare plant species presence and cover changed or did not change over time. Monitoring and research efforts that include focusing on specific taxa, tagging individual plants, and mapping with GPS and GIS technology would be more effective for detecting the response of rare plant species to land management activities. Nevertheless, data gathered during this larger study suggest many rare plant species are thriving in Miami-Dade County pine rockland preserves, and active management can prevent rare species losses.

Non-native invasive plant species

Ongoing invasive plant species programs in Miami-Dade County preserves most likely contributed to the fact that overall non-native plant species were not a significant component of plant cover in study plots. The decline in abundance of the invasive non-native species *Schinus terebinthifolius*, *Neyraudia reynaudiana*, and *Ardisia elliptica* Thunb. from 1995 to 2003 can be attributed to active invasive species management. These three species are all removed regularly when funds permit. An exception to the trend of non-native plant cover decreasing from 1995 to 2003 was the observed increase of the short-lived perennial non-native grass *Rhynchelytrum repens*. The sharp increase in *R. repens* occurrences since 1995 is a major management concern, especially considering that *R. repens* responds positively to fire. It is difficult to treat because it often grows interspersed with native grasses and herbs, and it has recently been shown to displace native grass species in pine rocklands (Pos-

sley and Maschinski 2006).

Conclusions

At the local scale, this study elucidates some of the factors influencing species assemblage and suggests directional trends for cover of both rare native species and non-native invasive species in managed preserves. Region and corresponding edaphic factors strongly influenced the assemblage of native species present in study plots. To a lesser degree, recent fire history also influenced native species assemblage. We showed that significant loss of native plant diversity did not occur during the eight-year time scale of this study. However, increase in occurrences of the invasive grass *Rhynchelytrum repens* should cause alarm for South Florida land managers. At the broader scale, this work demonstrates the ecological value that exists in urban fragments, even when they are small and fire-suppressed, emphasizing the importance of acquisition, preservation, and restoration of these parcels.

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Appendix. All vascular species recorded in study plots, 1995 and 2003. Column 1 indicates which species were used in the stepwise discriminant analysis (SDA) model, with species used from Biscayne region plots indicated with a 'B' and those used from Redland region plots indicated with an 'R'. Column 2 indicates which year(s) the taxon appeared in study plots. Non-native species are underlined.

R	BOTH	<i>Abildgaardia ovata</i> (Burm.f.) Kral
	1995	<u><i>Acacia auriculiformis</i></u> A. Cunn. ex Benth.
BR	BOTH	<i>Acalypha chamaedrifolia</i> (Lam.) Mull.Arg.
B	2003	<i>Aeschynomene viscidula</i> Michx.
	BOTH	<i>Agalinis fasciculata</i> (Elliott) Raf.
	BOTH	<u><i>Albizia lebbbeck</i></u> (L.) Benth.
	BOTH	<i>Alvaradoa amorphoides</i> Liebm.
	2003	<u><i>Alysicarpus vaginalis</i></u> (L.) DC.
	BOTH	<i>Ambrosia artemisiifolia</i> L.
	1995	<i>Ampelopsis arborea</i> (L.) Koehne
B	2003	<i>Andropogon glomeratus</i> (Walt.) B.S.P. var. <i>hirsutior</i> (Hack.) C. Mohr
R	BOTH	<i>Andropogon glomeratus</i> (Walt.) B.S.P. var. <i>pumilus</i> Vasey ex Dewey
	1995	<i>Andropogon gyrans</i> Ashe
	BOTH	<i>Andropogon ternarius</i> Michx.
	2003	<i>Andropogon tracyi</i> Nash
	BOTH	<i>Andropogon virginicus</i> L.
	2005	<i>Andropogon virginicus</i> L. var. <i>decipiens</i> C. Campbell
	BOTH	<i>Anemia adiantifolia</i> (L.) Sw.
BR	BOTH	<i>Angadenia berteroi</i> (A.DC.) Miers
	BOTH	<u><i>Ardisia elliptica</i></u> Thunb.
R	BOTH	<i>Ardisia escallonioides</i> Schiede & Deppe ex Schlttdl. & Cham.
	BOTH	<i>Argythamnia blodgettii</i> (Torr.) Chapm.
	2003	<i>Aristida beyrichiana</i> Trin. & Rupr.

B	BOTH	<i>Aristida purpurascens</i> Poir.
	2005	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i> L.
R	BOTH	<i>Aster adnatus</i> Nutt.
	1995	<i>Aster bracei</i> Britton ex Small
R	BOTH	<i>Aster concolor</i> L.
B	2003	<i>Aster dumosus</i> L.
R	BOTH	<i>Ayenia euphrasiifolia</i> Griseb.
	2003	<i>Baccharis halimifolia</i> L.
	1995	<i>Berlandiera subacaulis</i> (Nutt.) Nutt.
BOTH		<i>Bidens alba</i> (L.) DC. var. <i>radiata</i> (Schultz-Bip) Ballard ex T.E. Melchert
	1995	<i>Bletia purpurea</i> (Lam.) DC.
BOTH		<i>Bouyeria cassinifolia</i> (A.Rich.) Griseb.
	1995	<i>Brickellia mosieri</i> (Small) Shinners
	2003	<i>Buchnera americana</i> L.
B	BOTH	<i>Bulbostylis ciliatifolia</i> (Elliott) Fernald
	2003	<i>Bursera simaruba</i> (L.) Sarg.
BOTH		<i>Byrsonima lucida</i> (P. Mill.) DC.
BOTH		<i>Callicarpa americana</i> L.
R	BOTH	<i>Cassytha filiformis</i> L.
	1995	<u><i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i></u> L.
	1995	<i>Cenchrus gracillimus</i> Nash
R	BOTH	<i>Centrosema virginianum</i> (L.) Benth.
R	BOTH	<i>Chamaecrista deeringiana</i> Small & Pennell
BOTH		<i>Chamaesyce deltoidea</i> (Engelm. ex Chapm.) Small subsp. <i>adhaerens</i> (Small) A. Herndon

(continued)

Appendix. Continued.

- BOTH *Chamaesyce deltoidea* (Engelm. ex Chapm.) Small
- R BOTH *Chamaesyce deltoidea* (Engelm. ex Chapm.) Small subsp. *pinetorum* (Small) A. Herndon
- BOTH *Chamaecrista fasciculata* (Michx.) Greene
- BOTH *Chamaesyce hirta* (L.) Millsp.
- 2003 *Chamaesyce hypericifolia* (L.) Millsp.
- 1995 *Chamaesyce hyssopifolia* (L.) Small
- BOTH *Chamaecrista nictitans* L. var. *aspera* (Muhl. ex Elliott) H.S. Irwin & Barneby
- 2003 *Chamaesyce porteriana* Small
- BOTH *Chaptalia albicans* (Sw.) Vent. Ex Steud.
- BOTH *Chiococca alba* (L.) A.S. Hitchc.
- BR BOTH *Chiococca parvifolia* Wullschl. ex Griseb.
- 2003 *Chromolaena odorata* (L.) King & H. Rob.
- 2003 *Cirsium horridulum* Michx.
- B BOTH *Clematis baldwinii* Torr. & Gray
- R BOTH *Cnidoscolus stimulosus* (Michx.) Engelm. & Gray
- BOTH *Coccothrinax argentata* (Jacq.) L.H. Bailey
- 1995 *Coccoloba diversifolia* Jacq.
- BOTH *Commelina diffusa* Burm.f.
- BOTH *Commelina erecta* L.
- BOTH *Conyza canadensis* (L.) Cronquist var. *pusilla* (Nutt.) Cronquist
- BOTH *Crossopetalum ilicifolium* (Poir.) Kuntze
- B BOTH *Croton glandulosus* L.
- BOTH *Croton linearis* Jacq.
- BOTH *Crotalaria pumila* Ortega
- BOTH *Crotalaria rotundifolia* Walt. ex J.F. Gmel.
- B BOTH *Cynanchum blodgettii* (A. Gray) Shinnery
- 1995 *Cyperus filiculmis* Vahl
- BOTH *Dalea carnea* (Michx.) Poir.
- B BOTH *Desmodium incanum* DC.
- BOTH *Desmodium marilandicum* (L.) DC.
- 1995 *Desmodium tortuosum* (Sw.) DC.
- BOTH *Desmodium triflorum* (L.) DC.
- R BOTH *Dichantherium aciculare* (Desv. & Poir.) Gould & C.A. Clark
- 2003 *Dichantherium commutatum* (Schult.) Gould
- BOTH *Dichantherium ensifolium* (Baldwin ex Elliott) Gould var. *unciphylum* (Trin.) B.F. Hansen & Wunderlin
- 2003 *Dichantherium erectifolium* (Nash) Gould & C.A. Clark
- BOTH *Dichantherium ovale* (Elliott) Gould & C.A. Clark
- 2003 *Dichantherium strigosum* (Muhl. ex Ell.) Freckmann var. *glabrescens* (Griseb.) Freckmann
- 1995 *Digitaria filiformis* (L.) Koeler var. *dolichophylla* (Henrad) Wipff
- B BOTH *Dyschoriste angusta* (A. Gray) Small
- BOTH *Echites umbellata* Jacq.
- B BOTH *Elionurus tripsacoides* Humb. & Bonpl. ex Willd.
- 2003 *Emilia fosbergii* D.H. Nicols.
- B BOTH *Eragrostis elliottii* S. Wats.
- 1995 *Erechtites hieracifolia* (L.) Raf. ex DC.
- 2003 *Eremochloa ophiuroides* (Munro) Hack.
- BOTH *Ernodea cokeri* Britton ex Coker
- 1995 *Eupatorium mikanioides* Chapm.
- 2003 *Eupatorium mohrii* Greene
- 1995 *Eupatorium serotinum* Michx.
- BOTH *Euphorbia polyphylla* Engelm. ex Chapm.
- BOTH *Eustachys petraea* (Sw.) Desv.
- BR BOTH *Evolvulus sericeus* Sw.
- 1995 *Exothea paniculata* (Juss.) Radlk. Ex T. Durand
- 1995 *Ficus altissima* Blume
- BOTH *Ficus aurea* Nutt.
- BOTH *Ficus citrifolia* P. Mill.
- BOTH *Forestiera segregata* (Jacq.) Krug & Urb.
- BOTH *Galactia floridana* Torr. & Gray
- BOTH *Galactia pinetorum* Small
- R BOTH *Galactia smallii* H.J. Rogers ex Herndon
- R BOTH *Galactia volubilis* (L.) Britton
- R BOTH *Galium hispidulum* Michx.

(continued)

Appendix. Continued.

- 1995 *Guapira discolor* (Spreng.) Little
 BOTH *Guettarda elliptica* Sw.
 R BOTH *Guettarda scabra* (L.) Vent.
 R BOTH *Hedyotis nigricans* (Lam.) Fosberg var. *floridana* (Standl.) Wunderlin
 2003 *Hedyotis uniflora* (L.) Lam.
 BOTH *Heliotropium polyphyllum* Lehm.
 BOTH *Hieracium megacephalon* Nash
 1995 *Hypoxis sessilis* L.
 R BOTH *Hyptis alata* (Raf.) Shinnery
 BOTH *Ilex krugiana* Loes.
 R BOTH *Imperata brasiliensis* Trin.
 1995 *Indigofera spicata* Forsk.
 1995 *Ipomoea alba* L.
 B BOTH *Ipomoea indica* (Burm.f.) Merr. var. *acuminata* (Vahl) Fosberg
 BOTH *Ipomoea tenuissima* Choisy
 BOTH *Jacquemontia curtisii* Peter ex Small
 R BOTH *Koanophyllon villosum* (Sw.) King & H. Rob.
 1995 *Lantana camara* L.
 R BOTH *Lantana depressa* Small
 BOTH *Lantana involucrata* L.
 1995 *Lechea torreyi* (Chapm.) Legg. ex Britton
 BOTH *Liatris chapmanii* Torr. & Gray
 2003 *Liatris gracilis* Pursh
 R BOTH *Liatris tenuifolia* Nutt.
 R BOTH *Licania michauxii* Prance
 BOTH *Lyonia fruticosa* (Michx.) G.S. Torr.
 BOTH *Lysiloma latisiliquum* (L.) Benth.
 R BOTH *Macroptilium lathyroides* (L.) Urb.
 BOTH *Melanthera parvifolia* Small
 BOTH *Metopium toxiferum* (L.) Krug & Urb.
 BOTH *Mimosa quadrivalvis* L. var. *angustata* (Torr. & Gray) Barneby
 1995 *Mitreola sessilifolia* (J.F. Gmel.) G. Don
 1995 *Momordica charantia* L.
 BOTH *Morinda royoc* L.
 BOTH *Muhlenbergia capillaris* (Lam.) Trin.
 BOTH *Myrica cerifera* L.
 B BOTH *Nephrolepis biserrata* (Sw.) Schott
 2003 *Nephrolepis exaltata* (L.) Schott
 2003 *Neptunia pubescens* Benth.
 BOTH *Neyraudia reynaudiana* (Kunth) Keng ex A.S. Hitchc.
 BOTH *Opuntia humifusa* (Raf.) Raf.
 BR BOTH *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (L.) Planch.
 R BOTH *Paspalum blodgettii* Chapm.
 2003 *Paspalum caespitosum* Flugge
 B BOTH *Paspalum monostachyum* Vasey
 BOTH *Paspalum setaceum* Michx.
 1995 *Passiflora foetida* L.
 BOTH *Passiflora suberosa* L.
 BOTH *Pectis glaucescens* (Cass.) D.J. Keil
 2003 *Phlebodium aureum* (L.) J. Sm.
 B BOTH *Phyllanthus pentaphyllus* C. Wright ex Griseb. var. *floridanus* G.L. Webster
 R BOTH *Physalis walteri* Nutt.
 BOTH *Piloblephis rigida* (W. Bartram ex Benth.) Raf.
 BOTH *Pinus elliottii* Engelm. var. *densa* Little & Dorman
 BR BOTH *Piriqueta caroliniana* (Walt.) Urb.
 R BOTH *Pityopsis graminifolia* (Michx.) Nutt.
 BOTH *Pluchea rosea* Godfrey
 BOTH *Poinsettia cyathophora* (Murr.) Klotsch & Garcke
 1995 *Poinsettia heterophylla* (L.) Klotsch & Garcke ex Klotsch
 R BOTH *Poinsettia pinetorum* Small
 1995 *Polygala boykinii* Nutt.
 BR BOTH *Polygala grandiflora* Walt.
 1995 *Polygala smallii* R.R. Sm. & D.B. Ward
 1995 *Psidium longipes* (O. Berg) McVaugh
 B BOTH *Psilotum nudum* (L.) P. Beauv.
 BOTH *Psychotria nervosa* Sw.
 R BOTH *Pteridium aquilinum* (L.) Kuhn var. *caudatum* (L.) Sadebeck

(continued)

Appendix. Continued.

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|----|------|--|------|--|
| R | BOTH | <i>Pteris bahamensis</i> (J. Agardh) Fée | BOTH | <i>Serenoa repens</i> (W. Bartram) Small |
| B | 2003 | <i>Pterocaulon pycnostachyum</i> (Michx.) Ell. | 2003 | <i>Setaria parviflora</i> (Poir.) Kerguelen |
| | 1995 | <i>Pteris vittata</i> L. | 2003 | <i>Sida acuta</i> Burm.f. |
| | BOTH | <i>Quercus pumila</i> Walt. | BOTH | <i>Sida elliottii</i> Torr. & Gray |
| | BOTH | <i>Quercus virginiana</i> P. Mill. | BOTH | <i>Sideroxylon salicifolium</i> (L.) Lam. |
| | BOTH | <i>Randia aculeata</i> L. | BOTH | <i>Sisyrinchium nashii</i> Bickn. |
| | BOTH | <i>Rapanea punctata</i> (Lam.) Lundell | BOTH | <i>Smilax auriculata</i> Walt. |
| | BOTH | <i>Rhus copallinum</i> L. | BOTH | <i>Smilax havanensis</i> Jacq. |
| | BOTH | <i>Rhynchospora colorata</i> (L.) H. Pfeiff. | BOTH | <i>Solidago odora</i> Aiton var. <i>chapmanii</i> (Gray) Cronquist |
| | BOTH | <i>Rhynchospora floridensis</i> (Britton) H. Pfeiff. | B | BOTH |
| | BOTH | <i>Rhynchospora grayi</i> Kunth | | <i>Solidago stricta</i> Aiton |
| | 1995 | <i>Rhynchospora intermedia</i> (Chapm) Britton | BOTH | <i>Sorghastrum secundum</i> (Elliott) Nash |
| | BOTH | <i>Rhynchosia michauxii</i> Vail | BOTH | <i>Spermacoce assurgens</i> Ruiz & Pavon |
| | BOTH | <i>Rhynchosia minima</i> (L.) DC. | BOTH | <i>Spermacoce terminalis</i> (Small) Kartesz & Gandhi |
| R | BOTH | <i>Rhynchosia reniformis</i> DC. | B | 2003 |
| | BOTH | <i>Rhynchelytrum repens</i> (Willd.) C.E. Hubbard | | <i>Spermacoce verticillata</i> L. |
| | BOTH | <i>Richardia grandiflora</i> (Cham. & Schtdl.) Scult. & J.H. Schult. | 1995 | <i>Sporobolus junceus</i> (P. Beauv.) Kunth |
| | | | 2003 | <i>Stenotaphrum secundatum</i> (Walt.) Kuntze |
| BR | BOTH | <i>Ruellia succulenta</i> Small | BR | BOTH |
| | BOTH | <i>Sabal palmetto</i> (Walt.) Lodd. ex J.A. & J.H. Schultes | | <i>Stillingia sylvatica</i> L. |
| | 2003 | <i>Sachsia polycephala</i> Griseb. | 1995 | <i>Swietenia mahagoni</i> (L.) Jacq. |
| | 2003 | <i>Samolus ebracteatus</i> Kunth | BOTH | <i>Tephrosia florida</i> (F. Dietr.) C.E. Wood |
| | 2003 | <i>Schefflera actinophylla</i> (Endl.) Harms | BOTH | <i>Tetrazygia bicolor</i> (P. Mill.) Cogn. |
| | BOTH | <i>Schizachyrium gracile</i> (Spreng.) Nash | BOTH | <i>Toxicodendron radicans</i> (L.) Kuntze |
| B | BOTH | <i>Schizachyrium rhizomatum</i> (Swallen) Gould | BOTH | <i>Tragia saxicola</i> Small |
| R | BOTH | <i>Schizachyrium sanguineum</i> (Retz.) Alston | BOTH | <i>Tragia urens</i> L. |
| R | BOTH | <i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> Raddi | 2003 | <i>Trema lamarckianum</i> (Schult.) Blume |
| | BOTH | <i>Scleria ciliata</i> Michx. | BOTH | <i>Trema micranthum</i> (L.) Blume |
| R | BOTH | <i>Scutellaria havanensis</i> Jacq. | BOTH | <i>Trichostema dichotomum</i> L. |
| R | BOTH | <i>Senna mexicana</i> (Jacq.) H.S. Irwin & Barneby var. <i>chapmanii</i> (Isley) H.S. Irwin & Barneby | R | BOTH |
| | 1995 | <i>Senna obtusifolia</i> (L.) H.S. Irwin & Barneby | | <i>Triumfetta semitriloba</i> Jacq. |
| | 2003 | <i>Senna pendula</i> (Humb. & Bonpl. ex Willd.) H.S. Irwin & Barneby var. <i>glabrata</i> (Vogel) H.S. Irwin & Barneby | BOTH | <i>Vaccinium myrsinites</i> Lam. |
| | | | R | BOTH |
| | | | | <i>Vernonia blodgettii</i> Small |
| | | | BOTH | <i>Vitis rotundifolia</i> Michx. |
| | | | 1995 | <i>Waltheria indica</i> L. |
| | | | R | BOTH |
| | | | | <i>Zamia integrifolia</i> Aiton |

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Against Development plan of Coral Reefs Commons
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 3:17:21 PM

I am a resident of Miami-Dade County and I am against the development of Coral Reef Commons on the Pine Rocklands. Miami-Dade has a glut of unused condominiums and commercial real estate space that is distressing the real estate market. It does not make financial sense to build in one of the few wildlife areas the county has left. Not only is the Pine Rocklands home to endangered species but the soil has been contaminated with radioactive materials from animal testing that has not been properly vetted. The potential exposure to these compounds is unfair to future tenants and can open up the developer, the county, state and federal government open to unnecessary and costly litigation.

Please don't hesitate to email me or call at [REDACTED] for questions.

Kind Regards,
Christina Madison Berndt

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: "[Ashleigh Blackford](#)"
Subject: CRC HCP and EA Comments
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:41:39 PM
Attachments: [CRC_HCP_Comments_Miami-Dade_County.pdf](#)

Please see attached comments for the Coral Reef Commons HCP and EA.

Thanks,
Lisa

Lisa Spadafina, Chief
Natural Resources Division
Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources
Environmental Resources Management
Overtown Transit Village



"Delivering Excellence Every Day"

Please consider the environment before printing this email.



Carlos A. Gimenez, Mayor

Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources
Environmental Resources Management



miamidade.gov

May 22, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 30345

Sent Via Email
crc_hcp@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach FL 32960

RE: Review and Analysis of the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford:

The Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources, Environmental Resources Management (DERM) has reviewed the above referenced Coral Reef Commons (CRC) Draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) posted for comments by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and hereby provides historical and background information related to the site and relevant County approvals, along with comments on the HCP and EA.

The subject development site was designated Natural Forest Community (NFC) by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) in 1984. On July 15, 2013, the University of Miami obtained NFC Permit No. 2012-012 from DERM for the removal of 9.8 acres of NFC, which included after-the-fact authorization for impacts to 6.6 acres of NFC that had occurred in prior years without required permits. As a condition of authorizing the permit, the University was required to place a covenant running with the land in favor of Miami-Dade County (OR BK 28925 PGS 1279-1300) on the subject property that requires preservation and perpetual maintenance of the remaining 43.36 acres of designated NFC. On June 26, 2014, the University of Miami and Coral Reef Retail LLC obtained Tree Permit No. 5112 from DERM for proposed impacts to an additional approximately 22.12 acres of tree canopy in the remaining non-NFC portions of the property outside of the preservation areas. Mitigation for removal of the non-NFC tree canopy is required and will consist of replanting of 22.12 acres of tree canopy pursuant to the landscape plan for development of the property. The subject development site also received Miami-Dade County Community Zoning Appeals Board (CZAB) approval (Resolution No. CZAB14-10-13) for a multifamily residential and retail development on October 17, 2013.

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Carlos A. Gimenez, Mayor



Subsequent to issuance of County environmental permits and CZAB approval for this site, on September 11, 2014, the USFWS listed new endangered species and designated critical habitat for these species within the Richmond Pineland complex, which includes the proposed Coral Reef Commons Project site.

The above-mentioned permit, NFC 2012-12, and the associated Restrictive Covenant running with the land in favor of Miami-Dade County currently impose certain obligations and maintenance requirements in specified preservation areas. Chapter 24 of the Code of Miami-Dade County also imposes additional requirements related to matters such as prohibited plant species, exotic plant removal, and thinning of trees, and additional Miami-Dade County permits and authorizations may be required, depending on the development activities proposed. Pursuant to the Code of Miami-Dade County and the executed Restrictive Covenant, it should be noted that the property owners are still required to maintain the designated NFC preservation areas even if no additional development is conducted at the site. Chapter 24 would continue to apply in full force on the subject site, just as it applies throughout Miami-Dade County.

The analysis provided in the HCP uses a Habitat Functional Assessment to calculate ecosystem quality as a surrogate for estimating take, with ecosystem quality results expressed in Habitat Value Units (HVU). However, the HCP does not appear to provide a correlation between the HVU scoring of ecosystem quality of these areas and the presence or utilization by listed species. Furthermore, in reviewing the analysis we note that the habitat functional assessment scoring metrics places a particularly high weight on fire exclusion. This approach may result in underestimating the inherent ecological value of pine rocklands in the absence of recent fire.

The applicant documented the Bartram's Scrub Hairstreak three times within the subject property. However surveys of adult butterflies that include seasonality of adult emergence (October-December) and a survey of existing host plants for larval presence or indications of presence (leaf scarring) are not provided. It is recommended that these surveys be conducted prior to any proposed activities and the results utilized to avoid and minimize impacts during development and guide best management practices for removing individuals that may be impacted. Furthermore individuals that are authorized to be impacted should be incorporated into an off-site mitigation plan including relocation to areas that aren't populated by the butterfly to increase the resilience of species survival and avoid interrupting existing population dynamics within the Richmond area.

Although the HCP does not contain a Miami Tiger Beetle (MTB) survey, the USFWS stated in the EA that the site contains suitable habitat for the species. Therefore, it is recommended that the extent of utilization by MTB at the site be characterized prior to any proposed activities and the results utilized to avoid and minimize impacts to the MTB and guide best management practices for removing individuals that may be impacted. Furthermore individuals that are authorized to be impacted should be incorporated into an off-site mitigation plan including relocation to areas that aren't populated by the MTB to increase the resilience of species survival and avoid interrupting existing population dynamics within the Richmond area. The HCP should ensure that the most sound conservation science and endangered species survey methodologies are being used in evaluation of the species and habitat present on the CRC property.



Carlos A. Gimenez, Mayor

Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources
Environmental Resources Management



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DERM remains committed to assisting USFWS and the applicant with recommendations that avoid and minimize impacts to habitat that is critical to the listed species that are the focus of the subject HCP. If you would like to discuss the details of this letter, please contact me at [REDACTED] or via email at spadal@miamidade.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Spadafina".

Lisa Spadafina, Chief
Natural Resources Division

Attachments: NFC Permit No. 2012-012 and Restrictive Covenant
Tree Permit No. 5112
MDC Community Zoning Appeals Board Resolution No. CZAB14-10-13

Delivering Excellence Every Day



Carlos A. Gimenez, Mayor

Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources
Environmental Resources Management



miamidade.gov

July 23, 2013

Mr. Gerry Altshul



CERTIFIED MAIL NO.: 70040750000191598570
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Mr. Bob Skinner



CERTIFIED MAIL NO.: 70040750000191598587
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Re: Fully executed After-the-Fact Natural Forest Community (NFC) permit (NFC2012-012) and NFC Covenant, for the properties located in the vicinity of SW 152 Street and SW 124 Avenue, Miami, Florida. (Folios: 30-5926-000-0060, 30-5925-000-0015 and 30-5925-000-0025).

Dear Messer's Altshul and Skinner:

Please find attached fully executed copies of after-the-fact NFC Removal permit NFC2012-012 and executed NFC Covenant, with the approved NFC Management Plan, for the above-referenced properties. Per condition #1 of the NFC permit, the NFC Covenant will be recorded with the Clerk's Office within 10 (ten) days of the date of approval of the Miami-Dade County zoning application referenced by RER hearing number Z2006-129.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions concerning the above, please contact me at  or via e-mail at joynej@miamidade.gov.

Sincerely,

John T. Joyner
Natural Resources Planning Section

Attachments: Executed NFC permit (NFC2012-012), executed NFC Covenant and Management Plan

cc: Joseph G. Goldstein, Holland and Knight, LLP

Delivering Excellence Every Day

EXHIBIT B

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF REGULATORY AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES
NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION
NATURAL RESOURCES PLANNING SECTION



After-the-Fact
NATURAL FOREST COMMUNITY
REMOVAL PERMIT NUMBER 2012-012

DATE ISSUED: *July 15, 2013*

PERMITTEE'S NAME: University of Miami Real Estate Development

PERMITTEE'S ADDRESS: [REDACTED]

PHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED]

CONTRACTOR: [REDACTED] Bob Skinner

CONTRACTOR'S ADDRESS: [REDACTED]

PHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED]

LOCATION OF THE
APPROVED WORK: [REDACTED]

FOLIO(s): 30-5926-000-0060, 30-5925-000-0015 and 0025

NFC SITE CODE: P-391

RER PROJECT MANAGER: Tim Joyner

**THIS PERMIT MUST BE POSTED ON-SITE AT ALL TIMES DURING SITE
CLEARING/EARTH WORK AS WELL AS VEGETATION REMOVAL AND DURING
CONSTRUCTION**

**PERMIT FOR NATURAL FOREST COMMUNITY REMOVAL
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
REGULATORY AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES
NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION
NATURAL RESOURCES PLANNING SECTION
APPROVED WORK**

After-the-Fact approval is hereby granted for the removal of 287,496 square feet (6.6 acres) of Natural Forest Community (NFC) pine rockland. Approval is also granted for the removal of 139,392 square feet (3.2 acres) of Natural Forest Community (NFC) pine rockland in accordance with the site sketch entitled "Proposed NFC Area Impacts", prepared by Schwebke-Shiskin and associates, Inc., and dated June 22, 2012. Any additional clearing, including the establishment of firebreaks or fence lines shall require a separate permit from RER. This permit grants the authorization to remove 19.8% of the 49.44-acre pine rockland/hardwood hammock Natural Forest Community. The permittee acknowledges that further subdivision of this property must be approved by RER and that future applications to remove Natural Forest Community may be denied. Permittee agrees to adhere to all conditions of the restrictive covenant entitled "Covenant Running With The Land of University Of Miami Real Estate Department", dated July 8, 2013.

This permit also authorizes the removal of exotic plant species from within ~~the pine~~ pine rockland and hardwood hammock. Any additional clearing shall require a separate permit from RER. All work must be done by hand (i.e. chainsaw); machinery is not permitted within the natural forest community.

ALL WORK SHALL ALSO BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONDITIONS CONTAINED HEREIN. THE PERMITTEE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR COMPLIANCE OF ALL CONTRACTORS AND SUBCONTRACTORS WITH THE CONDITIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS PERMIT. EXCEPT AS AUTHORIZED BY THIS PERMIT, ANY PROTECTED TREE AND/OR PROTECTED NATURAL FOREST COMMUNITY UNDERSTORY VEGETATION THAT IS REMOVED OR EFFECTIVELY DESTROYED SHALL CONSTITUTE A VIOLATION OF SECTION 24-49 OF THE CODE OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY AND WILL BE PURSUED AS SUCH. IN ADDITION, ANY NONCOMPLIANCE WITH THE CONDITIONS OF THIS PERMIT WILL SUBJECT THE PERMITTEE AND RESPONSIBLE CONTRACTORS OR INDIVIDUALS TO THE PENALTY PROVISIONS OF SECTIONS 24-55, 24-56, 24-57, AND SCC OF THE CODE OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY.

CONDITIONS

1. No site clearing work shall occur prior to the execution of a covenant running with the land in favor of Miami-Dade County that preserves 43.36 acres of NFC and prior to the issuance of the Building Permit. The covenant running with the land in favor of Miami-Dade County and approved by RER (copy attached) shall be executed prior to the issuance of this permit and recorded with the Clerk's Office within ten days of the date of approval of the Miami-Dade County zoning application referenced by RER hearing number Z2006-129 and prior to any work being performed.
2. Within sixty (60) days following the final and non-appealable approval of the Miami-Dade County zoning application referenced by RER hearing number Z2006-129, but, in no event, later than two hundred seventy (270) days following the execution of the NFC covenant associated with NFC permit NFC2012-012, the property owner shall coordinate with the Florida Forest Service (FFS) to perform a controlled burn of the pine rockland preserves ("Controlled Burn"). The property owner, in conjunction with FFS, shall use its reasonable efforts to perform a licensed and permitted Controlled

Burn within one and a half (1.5) years of the execution of the NFC covenant. The property owner shall notify RER of any planned Controlled Burns prior to any Controlled Burning event. Commencing two hundred seventy (270) days following the execution of the NFC covenant associated with NFC permit NFC2012-012, the property owner shall submit monthly reports on the status of the coordination with FFS and the Controlled Burn ("Reporting Obligation"). Said Reporting Obligation shall cease either (i) upon completion of a Controlled Burn throughout all portions of the pine rockland, or (ii) a determination by RER, after consultation with the property owner and FFS, that a Controlled Burn is not reasonably feasible, and the completion of an exotic plant eradication event throughout the entire pine rockland.

3. Within sixty (60) days following the final and non-appealable approval of the Miami-Dade County zoning application referenced by RER hearing number Z2006-129, but, in no event, later than two hundred seventy (270) days following the execution of the NFC covenant associated with NFC permit NFC2012-012, the property owner shall initiate an intensive exotic plant eradication event (utilizing chemical and manual removal) over the hardwood hammock areas to be preserved, in order to achieve a less than 3% exotic plant cover ("Hardwood Hammock Eradication Event"). The property owner shall notify RER in writing of its commencement and shall complete the Hardwood Hammock Eradication Event within six (months) of commencing said work. This time-frame may be extended by the Director of RER upon the showing of a good faith effort by the property owner to timely complete the Hardwood Hammock Eradication Event.
4. Within the sooner of ninety (90) days of (i) completion of a Controlled Burn of the pine rockland or (ii) a determination by RER, after consultation with the property owner and FFS, that a Controlled Burn is not reasonably feasible (which determination shall not occur sooner than 240 days following the execution of the NFC covenant associated with NFC permit NFC2012-012), the property owner shall initiate an intensive exotic plant eradication event (utilizing chemical and manual removal) over the pine rockland to be preserved, in order to achieve a less than 3% exotic plant cover ("Pine Rockland Eradication Event"). The property owner shall notify RER in writing of its commencement and shall complete the Pine Rockland Eradication Event within six (months) of commencing said work. This timeframe may be extended by the Director of RER upon the showing of a good faith effort by the property owner to timely complete the Pine Rockland Eradication Event.
5. Prior to performing any work that would have the potential to impact underground utilities, the permittee and contractor shall verify the location of all underground and overhead utility lines and verify that no utilities will be damaged by the work. Contact Sunshine 811 One-Call at 811 or on the web: <http://www.sunshine811.com> to locate underground utility lines. No clearing, excavation, earthwork, tree removal or planting shall commence until the permittee and contractor have verified that utilities will not be damaged by any work.
6. All trees and Natural Forest Community understory vegetation outside of those areas being developed are to remain and be protected by barriers throughout development. No work (including but not limited to land clearing or grading) may begin until RER has verified that all barriers are in place and RER authorization has been given for the commencement of construction (unless prior written approval is granted by RER). The permittee shall notify the RER project manager when the barriers are in place and schedule an inspection (two week's notice is required).
7. Protective barriers shall be constructed of wood, plastic, or metal and shall be a minimum of four (4) feet above ground level. Protective barriers shall be placed around areas designated as natural forest community preservation areas as shown on attached site plan. A copy of the site plans showing the location of barriers must remain on site attached to this permit.

8. Protective barriers must remain in place until development is completed and the Department has authorized their removal.
9. During all site work and construction, no soil, vehicles, heavy equipment (such as bulldozers or backhoes), fill, building materials, construction debris, or dead vegetation shall be placed, stored, or deposited within the areas of protective barriers.
10. There shall be no disruption of soil or rock formations and natural grade shall be maintained within protective barriers.
11. Only native or non-invasive exotic plant species approved by RER, may be planted on-site.
12. A minimum of fifteen days notice must be given prior to any clearing for the salvaging of native plant materials within the permitted area.
13. RER shall be notified 3 days prior to commencement of any clearing of the site.
14. Above ground as well as underground utility lines are prohibited in the preservation areas.
15. Fences and walls shall be constructed to avoid disturbance to any protected Natural Forest Community trees and understory.
16. There shall be no installation of any sprinklers or other irrigation systems within the forest preservation areas without the prior written consent of RER.
17. The remaining 43.36 acres of Natural Forest Community shall be protected and managed in accordance with the conditions of the restrictive covenant dated July 8, 2013.
18. The permittee agrees to create a Special Taxing District or similar mechanism to fund management of the 43.36-acre covenanted NFC. Until such time as a Special Taxing District or similar mechanism has been established, the permittee/property owner shall fund all work required to maintain the NFCs in accordance with the NFC Covenant and Management Plan referenced in this permit.
19. Per Section 24-49.9 of the Code of Miami-Dade County, all prohibited plant species shall be removed from the subject properties prior to development, and their sale, propagation, planting, importation or transportation is prohibited.
20. The subject properties shall be maintained in perpetuity on a quarterly basis to prevent the growth or accumulation of prohibited species including grass, weeds and non-native undergrowth.
21. Issuance of this permit does not relieve the permittee from the requirement to obtain and comply with all necessary approvals or permits from the local municipality, or any other government entity otherwise having independent jurisdiction relating to the authorizations contained herein.

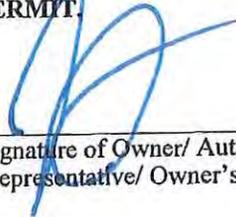
EXOTIC REMOVAL CONDITIONS FOR THE PRESERVATION AREA

1. All dead tree or exotic vegetation removal within the interior of the NFC must be done by hand only (i.e., chainsaws, handsaws). Any felled trees in the interior of the forest should be cut into pieces that can be carried outside of the interior of the natural forest community or left in place. Exotic plant material that is cut shall be removed from the NFC and disposed of properly.
2. There shall be no disruption of soil, rock formations, or any Natural Forest Community native vegetation including shrubs and groundcovers.
3. During all site work no soil, vehicles, or heavy equipment (such as bulldozers or backhoes), fill, building materials, construction debris, or dead vegetation (except dead trees) shall be placed, stored, or deposited within the NFC boundary.
4. Dead trees or snags, which do not pose a threat to persons or property, shall be left in place to provide wildlife habitat.
5. The use of herbicides to prevent regeneration of exotics species is encouraged. Herbicide application shall be in accordance with the product label directions. A copy of the Miami-Dade Park and Recreation's "Management Techniques for the Control of Exotic Plant Species in South Florida" is available upon request.

FEES

Need for Compliance	\$320	Application Fee:	4260 (ATF)
Barrier	\$35	Total Inspection fees	\$555
Utility Sighting	\$	No. of acres cleared	
Preservation Area		6.6@ \$ 3200/acre	\$21,120 ATF
Location	\$	3.2@ \$ 1600/acre	\$5,120
Landscape Plan Review	\$		
Landscape Field			
Inspection (Final)	\$200		
Miscellaneous	\$		
		TOTAL FEES	\$27,055.00
		Paid:	\$230.00
		Due:	\$26,825.00

I HAVE READ THE SPECIAL CONDITIONS CONTAINED IN THIS PERMIT AND FULLY UNDERSTAND THEM. IN SIGNING THIS PERMIT, I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH ALL CONDITIONS OF THIS PERMIT MAY RESULT IN PERMIT REVOCATION, BOND FORFEITURE, WITHHOLDING OF MY CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY, AND ENFORCEMENT ACTION AGAINST ME BY PERA. I ASSUME FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACTIONS OF ALL MY EMPLOYEES, AGENTS, AND PERSONS UNDER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATION TO ME WITH RESPECT TO COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONDITIONS AND LIMITATIONS CONTAINED WITHIN THIS PERMIT.



 Signature of Owner/ Authorized
 Representative/ Owner's Agent

July 8, 2013

 Date Signed

JOE NATOLI

 Print Name

SR VP FOR BUSINESS &

 Title FINANCE

THIS PERMIT IS NOT VALID UNTIL SIGNED BY THE DIRECTOR OF PERA OR THE DIRECTOR'S DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE.



 RER Director or Designee

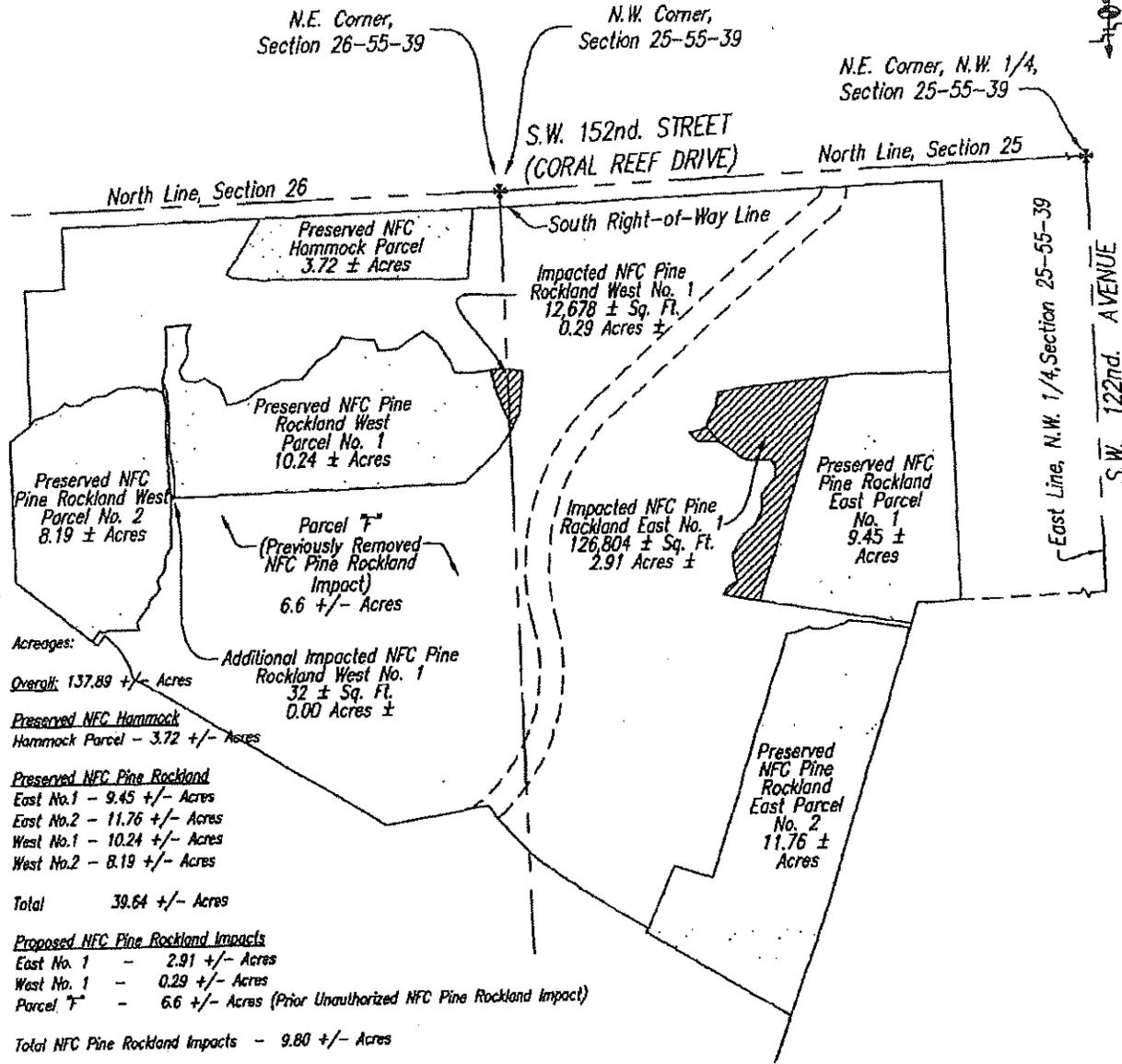
July 15, 2013

 Date Signed

EXHIBIT C

SKETCH TO ACCOMPANY LEGAL DESCRIPTION
PROPOSED NFC AREA IMPACTS

Scale: 1"=500'



Acres:

Overall: 137.89 +/- Acres

Preserved NFC Hammock
Hammock Parcel - 3.72 +/- Acres

Preserved NFC Pine Rockland
East No.1 - 9.45 +/- Acres
East No.2 - 11.76 +/- Acres
West No.1 - 10.24 +/- Acres
West No.2 - 8.19 +/- Acres

Total 39.64 +/- Acres

Proposed NFC Pine Rockland Impacts

East No. 1 - 2.91 +/- Acres
West No. 1 - 0.29 +/- Acres
Parcel F - 6.6 +/- Acres (Prior Unauthorized NFC Pine Rockland Impact)

Total NFC Pine Rockland Impacts - 9.80 +/- Acres

Total NFC Pine Rockland - 39.64 + 9.80 = 49.44 +/- Acres

Total Preserved NFC Area - 43.36 +/- Acres

NFC - denotes NATURAL FOREST COMMUNITY

NOTE: Prepared For: RAM REALTY SERVICES

09/14/12 - Revised To Add Preserved Hammock
09/12/12 - Revised To Add Additional Impacted NFC West No.1

Schwebke-Shiskin & Associates, Inc.
LAND SURVEYORS • ENGINEERS • LAND PLANNERS

(LB-87)

3240 CORPORATE WAY, MIRAMAR, FLORIDA 33025

TEL: BROWARD: (954) 435-2010 FAX: (954) 435-9208

THIS IS NOT A "LAND SURVEY."

ORDER NO.: 199230
DATE: June 22, 2012

SHEET 1 OF 1 SHEET(S)

F.B.: N.A.

PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION

MARK STEVEN JOHNSON SECY-TREAS.
FLORIDA PROP. LAND SURVEYOR NO. 4775

COVENANT RUNNING WITH THE
LAND OF UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
REAL ESTATE DEPARTMENT IN
FAVOR OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS OF MIAMI-DADE
COUNTY, FLORIDA, CONCERNING
NATURAL FOREST COMMUNITY
LAND LOCATED AT SW 124 AVENUE
AND SW 152 STREET, MIAMI-DADE
COUNTY FOLIO NOS. 30-5926-000-0060,
30-5925-000-0015 AND 30-5925-000-0025.

The undersigned, University of Miami Real Estate Department, being the present owner(s) of the following real property, legally described as set forth in Exhibit A (hereinafter called "the Property"):

Located at SW 124 Avenue SW 152 Street, Miami-Dade County (folios 30-5926-000-0060, 30-5925-000-0015 and 30-5925-000-0025) pursuant to Section 24-49.7(I) (C) of the Code of Miami-Dade County, hereby submits this executed covenant running with the land in favor of Miami-Dade County:

The undersigned agrees and covenants to the following

1. All conditions and stipulations contained within Miami-Dade County Tree Removal Permit No. NFC2012-012, attached hereto as Exhibit B and incorporated herein by reference, shall be adhered to.

The Tree Preservation Area of the property, as shown on the Plan entitled "Proposed NFC Area Impacts", prepared by Schwebke-Shiskin & Associates, Inc., dated June 22, 2012 and attached hereto as Exhibit C and incorporated herein by reference, shall be preserved in a natural condition so that existing pineland/hammock canopy and pineland/hammock understory vegetation are not disturbed or removed and remain free from exotic herbaceous and exotic woody vegetation.

3. Any and all persons holding a security interest of any kind whatsoever in the property has/have been advised of, and has/have agreed to, the execution of this Covenant Running With the Land.
4. The Miami-Dade County Environmental Resources Management Department (hereafter referred to as "DERM") shall have the right to inspect the Property at reasonable times to determine whether the Property is being used and maintained in the manner promised by the undersigned owner in this covenant and in compliance with Chapter 24-49.
5. After this Covenant is accepted by the County, the Covenant shall be promptly filed with the Clerk of Court for recording in the official records of Miami-Dade County.

6. The undersigned owner(s) covenant(s) and agree(s) that no trees or understory shall be removed from the area(s) designated as the Natural Forest Community Preservation Area, attached hereto as Exhibit "C", without the prior written consent of DERM.
7. The undersigned owner agree(s) and covenant(s) that no trimming of vegetation other than minor trimming that does not substantially alter the size or canopy spread of a tree(s) shall be conducted on the area(s) designated as the Natural Forest Community Preservation Area of the Property, without the prior written consent of DERM.
8. Prior to the entry into a landlord-tenant relationship with respect to the Property, the undersigned agree(s) to notify in writing all proposed tenants of the Property of the existence and contents of this Covenant.
9. The undersigned agree(s) and covenant(s) that this Covenant and the provisions contained herein may be enforced by the Director of DERM by preliminary, permanent, prohibitory, and mandatory injunctions, as well as otherwise provided for by law or ordinance.
10. This agreement and Covenant shall be recorded in the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida and the provisions hereof shall constitute a Covenant Running with the Land and shall remain in full force and effect

and be binding upon the undersigned, their heirs, legal representatives,
estates, successors, grantees and assigns.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned, being the Owner(s) of the Property, agree(s) to the terms of this Covenant, hereby create same as a covenant Running with the Land, and set their hands and seal unto this Covenant this 8 day of JULY, 2013.

INDIVIDUAL

WITNESSES:

sign Margaret Perritt
print MARGARET PERRITT
sign Virginia Averani
print Virginia Averani

WITNESSES:

sign _____
print _____
sign _____
print _____

OWNER(S):

sign [Signature]
print JOE NATOLI
Address 1252 MEMORIAL DR.
SUITE 230 ASHE
CORAL GABLES, FL

OWNER(S):

sign _____
print _____
Address _____

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF MIAMI-DADE

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this 8 day of July, 2013, by Joe Natoli, who is personally known to me or who has produced _____ as identification and who did take an oath.



NOTARY PUBLIC:

Sign [Signature]
Print _____
State of Florida at Large (Seal)
My Commission Expires _____

THIS INSTRUMENT PREPARED BY:

John T. Joyner
DERM-ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
[Redacted]

Natural Forest Community (NFC) Management Plan

Property Folio(s): 30-5926-000-0060, 30-5925-000-0015 and 30-5925-000-0025
Property Addresses: 12500 SW 152 Street and 15657 SW 127 Avenue
NFC Permit No.: NFC2012-012
Date: July 2013

Executive Summary:

The subject property (folios 30-5926-000-0060, 30-5925-000-0015 and 30-5925-000-0025) is part of the former four square mile Richmond Naval Air Station property. Specifically, the property owner controls forested and non-forested areas including areas to be managed and preserved, which total 39.64 acres of Natural Forest Community (NFC) Pine Rockland and 3.72 acres of Natural Forest Community (NFC) Hammock as confirmed in the field by RER staff in late 2011 and the subject of a binding letter dated 10/17/2011.

With the assistance and support of the Miami-Dade County RER Forested Resources program, a management plan has been developed for the perpetual management of 39.64 acres of NFC Pine Rockland and 3.72 acres of NFC Hardwood Hammock. This plan includes controlled burns, physical exotic plant removal and chemical follow up treatments to ensure the health of these unique habitats in perpetuity, while at the same time taking into account safety and health concerns of nearby property and residents. Additionally, monitoring will occur to track the biological health of the on-site NFC preserves and make further recommendations to the management regimen as part of a dynamic adaptive management strategy.

Introduction:

The property owner has requested approval (Z2006-0129) for a Commercial and Residential project, on 137.89 acres of the former UM South Campus Property. Included in the development proposal are roadways, the surface water management system, 39.64 acres of NFC Pine Rockland Habitat preserves and 3.72 acres of native NFC Hardwood Hammock preserve. This plan also takes into account the past unauthorized clearing of 6.6 acres of Natural Forest Community. The following details the Management and Monitoring Activities to preserve and protect the natural areas in accordance with Chapter 24 of the Code of Miami-Dade County.

Area History:

The Coral Reef Commons site (f/k/a University of Miami South Campus) is a small part of the former Richmond Naval Air Station (RNAS), which used to, and to an extent still does, contain some of the most significant upland natural areas remaining in Miami-Dade County. The four square mile area included 853 acres of unique Pine Rockland Forest. Additionally, the 34 acres of finger glade habitats in Richmond represent nearly all of the remaining habitat type in Dade County. Two federally-endangered plant species occur in the fire-maintained pine Rocklands of Richmond. The Deltoid Spurge (*Chamaesyce deltoidea*) is most commonly associated with limestone outcroppings throughout Richmond. The Tiny Polygala (*Polygala smallii*) is extremely rare, and is found at sandy

pockets in limited areas of Richmond. Exotic Pest plants, particularly Burma Reed (*Neyraudia reynaudiana*) and Brazilian Pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) are increasingly common on previously impacted parcels, parcels adjacent to development and along the edges of the pinelands.

In 1964, the University of Miami leased a portion of the RNAS. UM designated 350 acres for a horticultural farm and established the Tropical Foods Research Center in what is now the southeastern portion of MetroZoo. In addition to these activities, a portion of the subject property was utilized for biomedical research; this area was included in the NFC application to be authorized as after-the-fact impacts.

Today, Miami MetroZoo and the Gold Coast Railroad Museum both occupy portions of the former RNAS, and border the southern and eastern boundary of the Coral Reef Commons project.

Habitat Descriptions:

A. Physiography

Miami-Dade County's pine rockland forests and hardwood hammocks are associated with a geologic formation called the Miami Rock Ridge. This Pleistocene topographic feature, composed of exposed or partially exposed oolitic limestone bedrock extends for approximately 70 miles between northeastern Miami-Dade County and the Mahogany Hammock region of Everglades National Park. The Miami Rock Ridge averages nine feet and is no more than 25 feet in elevation and varies between 4 and 10 miles in width (Davis 1943; USDA 1947). The surface of the rock ridge is irregular with frequent pinnacle rock and solution hole formations. Numerous transverse drainages exist where ancient tidal waters eroded portions of the oolite shoal. These transverse drainages, underlaid by marl soils, contained freshwater graminoid wetland vegetation before drainage and divided the rock ridge into a series of islands which were historically covered by pine rockland forest. Miami-Dade County's pine rocklands occupied approximately 180,000 acres in presettlement times (U.S.D. A. 1947).

B. Flora

Miami Rock Ridge was historically dominated by southern slash pine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*) forests. Miami-Dade County's pine rockland forests are further characterized by a diverse understory of herbs, graminoids, palms and other woody plant species. Its floral composition can be attributed to its proximity to the tropics, peninsular connection to the temperate zone and the unique isolated nature of the underlying limestone substrate. Endemic plant species, that is species that occur only in a limited geographic region, are an important part of the pine rockland flora. In total over 55 endemic taxa occur in southern Florida pinelands. Hardwood hammocks are also present on the Miami-Rock Ridge in areas where lack of fire has allowed the succession to this plant community.

Management Plan Goals:

The overall goal of this management plan is to ensure the preservation of the property's pine rockland and hardwood communities and the rare plants that they contain. This requires the ongoing removal and control of exotic plant species and monitoring to track vegetation changes and effectiveness of treatment. Periodic controlled burns within pine rocklands are necessary in order to achieve optimal preservation and maintenance of this community.

The main objective of the NFC Pine Rockland and NFC Hardwood Hammock management plan is to maintain the NFC preserve areas with less than 3% exotic vegetation cover, in perpetuity, as required by the NFC Covenant referenced below.

Pine Rockland Goals:

Over the last 20-30 years, as residential and commercial developments have expanded to surround the subject property, the fire regimen has been reduced or eliminated, and the vegetation structure has become altered. Once the Coral Reef Commons project is constructed, we anticipate that further restrictions will be placed upon the fire programs. Before additional restrictions to controlled burns are in place, a controlled burn shall be performed in with FFS coordination and in accordance with the initial controlled burning timelines stated below. All controlled burns shall be followed up with management appropriate exotic plant control follow up, including but not limited to, the herbicide treatment of re-sprouting Burma Reed (*Neyraudia reynaudiana*). The diligent application of this management plan will ensure the long term health of the ecosystem as well as provide appropriate native habitat for wildlife.

- Reduce fuel load
- Maintain fire breaks (outside of preserves)
- Reduce the amount of incendiary fires
- Ensure a mosaic of vegetation cover
- Eliminate exotic and prohibited vegetation (less than 3% after management events).
- Control native hardwood plants
- Preserve maintain State and Federally listed plants and their habitats
- Monitor the results of the management activities yearly
- Provide wildlife habitat

Hardwood Hammock Goals:

The on-site hardwood hammock habitat, located at the northern boundary of the site along SW 152nd Street, has become increasingly impacted by exotic vegetation, including exotic grasses such as Cane Grass (*Neyraudia sp.*) and Brazilian Pepper

(*Schinus terebinthifolius*). However, the area still contains remnant hardwood hammock trees, shrubs and grasses. As part of the habitat management plan for the property, the following is proposed to meet the requirement of less than 3% exotic vegetation and the preservation of State and Federally listed plants:

- Eliminate exotic and prohibited vegetation (less than 3% after management events).
- Preserve maintain State and Federally listed plants and their habitats
- Monitor the results of the management activities yearly
- Provide wildlife habitat

Required Initial Management Plan Activities

The property owner shall complete the following activities subsequent to the execution of the NFC covenant referenced below and prior to any development of the property:

Pine rockland: Initial Controlled Burn

Within 60 (sixty) days following the final and non-appealable approval of the Miami-Dade County zoning application referenced by RER hearing number Z2006-129, but, in no event, later than two hundred seventy (270) days following the execution of the NFC covenant associated with this management plan and prior to site development, the property owner shall coordinate with FFS to perform a controlled burn of the pine rockland preserves. The property owner, in conjunction with FFS, shall use its reasonable efforts to perform a licensed and permitted Controlled Burn within one and a half (1.5) years of the execution of the NFC covenant. The property owner shall notify RER of any planned Controlled Burns prior to any Controlled Burning event. Commencing two hundred seventy (270) days following the execution of the NFC covenant associated with NFC permit NFC2012-012, the property owner shall submit monthly reports on the status of the coordination with FFS and the Controlled Burn ("Reporting Obligation"). Said Reporting Obligation shall cease either (i) upon completion of a Controlled Burn throughout all portions of the pine rockland, or (ii) a determination by RER, after consultation with the property owner and FFS, that a Controlled Burn is not reasonably feasible, and the completion of an exotic plant eradication event throughout the entire pine rockland.

Hardwood Hammock: Initial Exotic Control

Within sixty (60) days following the final and non-appealable approval of the Miami-Dade County zoning application referenced by RER hearing number Z2006-129, but, in no event, later than two hundred seventy (270) days following the execution of the NFC

covenant associated with NFC permit NFC2012-012, the property owner shall initiate an intensive exotic plant eradication event (utilizing chemical and manual removal) over the hardwood hammock areas to be preserved, in order to achieve a less than 3% exotic plant cover ("Hardwood Hammock Eradication Event"). The property owner shall notify RER in writing of its commencement and shall complete the Hardwood Hammock Eradication Event within six (months) of commencing said work. This time-frame may be extended by the Director of RER upon the showing of a good faith effort by the property owner to timely complete the Hardwood Hammock Eradication Event.

Pine Rockland: Initial Exotic Control

Within the sooner of ninety (90) days of (i) completion of a Controlled Burn of the pine rockland or (ii) a determination by RER, after consultation with the property owner and FFS, that a Controlled Burn is not reasonably feasible (which determination shall not occur sooner than 240 days following the execution of the NFC covenant associated with NFC permit NFC2012-012), the property owner shall initiate an intensive exotic plant eradication event (utilizing chemical and manual removal) over the pine rockland to be preserved, in order to achieve a less than 3% exotic plant cover ("Pine Rockland Eradication Event"). The property owner shall notify RER in writing of its commencement and shall complete the Pine Rockland Eradication Event within six (months) of commencing said work. This time-frame may be extended by the Director of RER upon the showing of a good faith effort by the property owner to timely complete the Pine Rockland Eradication Event.

Required Management Plan Activities:

Pine Rockland:

- Perform a controlled burns throughout all pine rockland preserve areas every three (3) to seven (7) years.
- Annually remove and chemically treat all exotic plants. This shall be performed by a certified applicator, with the first treatment occurring in accordance with the Initial Exotic Management timelines stated above, then yearly (at a minimum) thereafter.
- Hand remove and herbicide treat of native hardwoods (except State-listed species) on a yearly basis, at a minimum.
- Monitoring reports tracking elimination of exotic and prohibited vegetation and re-growth of native vegetation shall be submitted to Miami-Dade County on a yearly basis (see monitoring program below).

Hammock:

- Manual removal and chemical treatment of all exotic plants by a certified applicator, with the first treatment occurring in accordance with the Initial Exotic Management timelines stated above, then yearly (at a minimum) thereafter.
- Native vegetation plantings if necessary in areas where remaining native plants cover 10% or less of the treatment area. All proposed plant material shall be approved by RER prior to installation.
- Monitor reports tracking elimination of exotic and prohibited vegetation and re-growth of native vegetation shall be submitted to Miami-Dade County on a yearly basis (see monitoring program below).

Controlled Burns:

Controlled burns should occur approximately every three (3) to seven (7) years. To lessen fuel loading, chemical or manual removal of excess fuels may be required prior to performing a controlled burn. Additionally, within 60 (sixty) days following the final and non-appealable approval of the Miami-Dade County zoning application referenced by RER hearing number Z2006-129, but, in no event, later than two hundred seventy (270) days following the execution of the NFC covenant associated with this management plan and prior to site development, the property owner shall coordinate with FFS to perform a controlled burn of the pine rockland preserves. The property owner, in conjunction with FFS, shall use its reasonable efforts to perform a licensed and permitted Controlled Burn within one and a half (1.5) years of the execution of the NFC covenant. The property owner shall notify RER of any planned Controlled Burns prior to any Controlled Burning event. Commencing two hundred seventy (270) days following the execution of the NFC covenant associated with NFC permit NFC2012-012, the property owner shall submit monthly reports on the status of the coordination with FFS and the Controlled Burn ("Reporting Obligation"). Said Reporting Obligation shall cease either (i) upon completion of a Controlled Burn throughout all portions of the pine rockland, or (ii) a determination by RER, after consultation with the property owner and FFS, that a Controlled Burn is not reasonably feasible, and the completion of an exotic plant eradication event throughout the entire pine rockland.

Chemical Treatment/ Manual Removal:

Due to the close proximity of residential housing, it is recommended that chemical treatment (with approved herbicide) be utilized to control exotic vegetation on the site. All treatments should be performed by a licensed contractor utilizing proven methods,

including hand removal where necessary. The use of heavy machinery within the NFC preserve areas is prohibited.

Hand removal shall be necessary in areas containing heavy *Neyraudia sp.*, as application of chemicals may result in non-target destruction native species. Excessive and obvious non-target destruction of native plant species shall constitute of violation of Section 24-49 of the Code of Miami-Dade County.

Monitoring Program:

In order to ensure the success of the management plan, the following monitoring program shall be implemented, dependent on the type of management to occur.

Monitoring Stations: As shown on the _____, the NFC preserves are broken up into four distinct areas (East 1 & 2 and West 1 & 2). Each approximately ten acre parcel should have two monitoring areas, each with a set photo station with a 100' transect. An initial monitoring report, to be submitted to RER within 1 (one) year of the execution of the covenant, will set these stations. Monitoring stations should be marked with a fire-proof indicator, and GPS coordinates should be included in the initial report. Additionally, any communities of Deltoid Spurge (*Chamaesyce deltoidea*) or Tiny Polygala (*Polygala smallii*) noted during field inspections should be marked with GPS Coordinates and re-inspected during subsequent monitoring events.

Monitoring Report Submittals: Subsequent to the submittal of the initial report the property owner shall submit reports on a yearly basis.

NFC Covenant:

As required by Chapter 24 of the Code of Miami-Dade County, an NFC covenant shall be executed and be recorded prior to the approval of any NFC removal on the subject property. This management plan details the how the NFC shall be managed and shall also be recorded along with the NFC covenant. The property owner agrees to abide by all conditions of the covenant, the NFC Removal Permit (NFC2012-012) and this management plan.

Conclusion:

Implementation of the items in this report will serve to ensure compliance with the NFC Removal Permit issued by Miami-Dade RER and ensure the perpetual vitality and protection of this unique habitat. _____

EXHIBIT A

Folio: 30-5926-000-0060

Address: [REDACTED]

Legal Description: 25-26 55 39
BEG 35FTS OF NW COR SEC 2S TH
E1461.35FT S1400FT W144.39FT
N 84 DEG W 971.04FT W234.77FT
N 59 DEG W 49.73FT W20.78FT S 58
DEG W 36.57FT N 81 DEG W
446.62FT S1020.51FT N 58 DEG W
1095.51FT W8.35FT S2.13FT W40FT
NELY NLY NWLY A/D 149.45FT N 51
DEG W 372.16FT E15.55FT N92.18FT
S 51 DEG E 79.18FT N1164.24FT
E1654.93FT TO POB
& LESS PORT OF NE1/2 OF SEC 26
DESC AS FOLLOWS COMM NE1/2 COR OF
NW1/4 OF SEC 25 TH S 02 DEG E
1435FT S 87 DEG W 1334.39FT S 16
DEG W 1097.40FT S 19 DEG W
326.90FT N 58 DEG W 554.90FT
N 31 DEG E 12.58FT N 58 DEG W
284.32FT NWLY AD 397.80FT S 80
DEG W 295.73FT FOR POB CONT
S 80 DEG W 41.49FT N 58 DEG W
973.96FT NWLY AD 173.16FT S 38
DEG N 40FT N 01 DEG E 2.13FT
N 88 DEG E 8.35FT S 58 DEG E
1095.51 FT N 01 DEG W 150.41FT
TO POB& LESS PORT OF NE1/2 OF SEC
26 DESC AS FOLLOWS COMM AT NE1/2
COR OF NW1/4 OF SEC 25 TH S 02
DEG E 1435FT S 87 DEG W 1334.39FT
S 16 DEG W 1097.40FT S 19 DEG W
326.90FT N 58 DEG W 554.90FT
N 31 DEG E 12.58FT N 58 DEG W
284.33FT NWLY AD 397.80FT S 80
DEG W 337.22FT N 58 DEG W
284.33FT NWLY AD 397.80FT S 80
DEG W 337.22FT N 58 DEG W
973.96FT NWLY AD 173.61FT N 38
DEG E 30FT N S1 DEG W 309.24FT

N 01 DEG W 475.84FT FOR POB CONT
NO1 DEG W436.30FT N88 DEG E130FT
NO1 DEG W 200FT S 88 DEG E 200FT
S 01 DEG E 688.03FT N 51 DEG E
87.05FT TO POB
OR 11339-435 1281 4

Folio: 30-5925-000-0015

Address: [REDACTED]

Legal Description: ~~25 26 55 39 28.67 AC M/A~~
~~PORT OF E1/2 OF SEC 26 & W1/2 OF~~
~~SEC 25 DESC BEG 1435.03FTS &~~
~~2834.40FTWLY OF NE COR OF NW1/4~~
~~OF SEC 25 CONT S 87 DEG W~~
~~219.92FT S 16 DEG W 986.03FT S 6~~
~~DEG W 493.28FT N 84 DEG W~~
~~851.37FT N 31 DEG E 454.45FT NWLY~~
~~A/D 408.39FT NELY-NLY-NWLY A/D~~
~~745.39FT NELY-NWLY A/D 138.22FT~~
~~N 2 DEG W 36.64FT S 88 DEG E~~
~~10.06FT S 59 DEG 49.73FT S 88 E~~
~~284.77FT S 84 DEG E 971.04FT TO~~
~~POB & LESS PORT DESC AS COMM NE~~
~~COR OF NW1/4 OF SEC 25 TH S 0~~
~~DEG E 1435FT S 87 DEG W 1334.39FT~~
~~S 16 DEG W 1097.40FT S 19 DEG W~~
~~326.90FT N 58 DEG W 136.28FT FOR~~
~~POB TH N 58 DEG W 418.62FT N 31~~
~~DEG E 12.58FT N 58 DEG W 284.32FT~~
~~NWLY AD 382.77FT SWLY AD 67.61FT~~
~~EELY AD 408.39FT TH S 31 DEG W~~
~~454.45FT S 84 DEG E 851.31FT N 06~~
~~DEG E 156.48FT M/L TO POB~~
~~E/A/U 30-5925-000-0010~~
~~OR 17841-2169 1097 3~~

Folio: 30-5925-000-0025

Address: [REDACTED]

Legal Description

25 55 36 6.23 AC M/L
BEG 1435FTS & 1334.39FTW OF NE
COR OF NW 1/4 TH S 16 DEG W
1097.40FT S 19 DEG W 326.90FT
N 58 DEG W 136.28FT N 06 DEG E
336.80FT N 16 DEG E 986.03FT
N 87 DEG E 219.92FT TO POB
F/A/U 30-5925-000-0010
OR 24121-4014 1205 6
OR 24121-4014 1205 00



Carlos A. Gimenez, Mayor



miamidade.gov

TREE REMOVAL PERMIT

Permit Number: 5112
Project Manager: Tim Joyner

Issuance Date: 6-26-2014

Permittee: University of Miami Real Estate Office
Address: [Redacted]
Phone#: [Redacted]
Co-permittee and Contractor: RAM Realty Services Coral Reef Aetail LLC
Address: [Redacted]
Phone: [Redacted]

Project Location: Located in the vicinity of and bounded by SW 152nd Street on the north, SW 124th Avenue on the east, theoretical SW 158th Street on the south and theoretical SW 130th Avenue on the west.

Subject Properties (Folio numbers): 30-5926-000-0035, 30-5926-000-0060, 30-5925-000-0015 and 30-5925-000-0025

Bond Required: \$385,473.60

Permit Fees: \$15,499.20

Approved Work: Removal of non-specimen and specimen trees in accordance with the plans entitled, "Specific Purpose Survey, Prepared for Ram Realty Services 4801 PGA Boulevard, Palm Beach Gardens, Florida 33418", Sheets 2 of 14, 4 of 14, 5 of 14, 6 of 14, 7 of 14, 8 of 14, 9 of 14, 10 of 14, 11 of 14, 12 of 14, , 13 of 14 and 14 of 14, prepared by Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc and dated 4-2-14 (revised). All tree removals will be completed within two years of the date of permit issuance unless prior written approval has been obtained by RER-DERM.

All work shall be performed in accordance with the following landscape plans:

- "The Residences at Coral Reef Commons", prepared by Alex Knight, and dated April 8, 2014
- "Coral Reef Commons Tract 1 Prepared for RAM Realty Services", prepared by Kimley-Horn and dated 4-2-14 (revised)
- "Coral Reef Commons Tract 2 Prepared for RAM Realty Services", prepared by Kimley-Horn and dated 4-2-14 (revised)
- "Coral Reef Commons Tract 3 Prepared for RAM Realty Services", prepared by Kimley-Horn and dated 4-2-14 (revised)
- "Coral Reef Commons Tract 4 Prepared for RAM Realty Services", prepared by Kimley-Horn and dated 4-2-14 (revised)

Total tree canopy approved for removal is 963,684 square feet.

In accordance with Section 24-49.7(b) of the Miami-Dade County Code, a performance bond in the amount of \$385,473.60 shall be posted, prior to the commencement of any jurisdictional tree work authorized by this permit, to ensure compliance with the conditions of this permit including implementation of the landscape plans. The landscape installation must be completed, verified, and approved by RER-DERM and the permittees must be in compliance with all conditions of this permit prior to the release of the performance bond. The permittees shall notify the RER project manager when the landscape installation is complete and shall schedule a final inspection with RER-DERM (two weeks notice is required).

A contribution to the Tree Trust Fund has been made in the amount of \$5,571.20 to satisfy replacement requirements associated with specimen tree removal, pursuant to Section 24-49.2(4)(II)(5) of the Miami-Dade County Code. This contribution shall be used for the purchase or maintenance of pine rockland within Miami-Dade County.

Reviewed by: CKG

PERMIT CONDITIONS

1. Protective barriers shall be constructed around each NFC preservation area and all other areas containing trees where tree removal work has not been approved, prior to the commencement of construction activities in the vicinity of NFC preservation areas and unpermitted tree resources. The protective barriers shall be constructed of wood, plastic or metal and shall be a minimum of four (4) feet above ground level and be placed no less than six (6) feet (radius distance) from the trunk of any protected tree, cluster of trees or preservation area. Protective barriers shall be in place prior to the start of any construction, must remain in place until development is completed and the Department has authorized their removal.
2. During all site work and construction, no soil, vehicles, heavy equipment (such as bulldozers or backhoes), fill, building materials, construction debris, or dead vegetation shall be placed, stored, or deposited within the areas of protective barriers, nor shall there be disposal of any waste material such as paints, oils, solvents, asphalt, concrete, mortar or any other material harmful to trees or understory plants within the areas surrounded by protective barriers. Natural grade shall be maintained within protective barriers. In the event that the natural grade of the site is changed as a result of site development, such that remaining trees resources are affected, tree wells or retaining walls will be required.
3. A barrier inspection shall be required prior to commencement of any work or construction on the property that is subject to this permit, including but not limited to any preconstruction clearing or grading of the parcel. A Barrier Inspection Request form shall be submitted at least two (2) weeks before commencement of any work pursuant to this condition and work is prohibited until the barrier inspection has been conducted and the barriers approved by the Department.
4. The cutting, pruning or trimming of trees not authorized for removal under this permit shall be performed in accordance with the most recent American National Standards (ANSI) A-300 Standard Practices for Tree Care Operations. All tree cutting, pruning or trimming of jurisdictional trees not performed in accordance with the referenced standards shall be considered effective destruction and is prohibited by this condition unless this permit is modified or prior written approval has otherwise been obtained from the Department.
5. Fences and walls for the development of these properties shall be constructed to avoid disturbance to any protected tree(s) and understory. Post holes and trenches located close to the tree(s) shall be dug by hand and adjusted as necessary, using techniques such as discontinuous footings, to avoid damage to major roots. Fences and walls are prohibited in the preservation areas as well as in all other forested areas not being cleared under this permit or NFC permit 2012-012.
6. Underground utility lines shall be placed outside the areas surrounded by protective barriers. If such placement is not possible, disturbance shall be minimized by using techniques such as tunneling or overhead utility lines. Underground utilities and above ground utilities are prohibited in the preservation areas as well as in all other forested areas not being cleared under this permit or NFC permit 2012-012.
7. A hold may be placed on future building permit process numbers associated with the subject properties to ensure that all permit requirements are met. The permittees shall notify the RER-DERM project manager when the replanting is complete and shall schedule a final inspection (two weeks notice is required). Holds on Certificates of Occupancy will only be released to allow for issuance of Certificates of Occupancy provided that:
 - all required canopy replanting has been verified and approved.
 - initial exotic vegetation removal has been completed in all NFC preservation areas (prescribed fire may be conducted in the pine rockland NFC preservation areas in lieu of hand removal).
 - all NFC preservation areas are being maintained free of exotics.

- all prohibited species have been removed from the subject properties.
 - all portions of the subject properties are being maintained free of prohibited species.
8. To replace lost tree canopy, the permittees shall replant 963,684 sq. ft. of tree canopy. Replanting shall be performed in accordance with the landscape plan titled "The Residences at Coral Reef Commons", prepared by Alex Knight and dated April 8, 2014, as received by Miami-Dade County, April 10, 2014 as well as the landscape plans entitled "Coral Reef Commons Tact 1", prepared by Kimely-Horn and Associates, Inc. and dated 4-2-14, "Coral Reef Commons Tact 2", prepared by Kimely-Horn and Associates, Inc. and dated 4-2-14, "Coral Reef Commons Tact 3", prepared by Kimely-horn and Associates, Inc. and dated 4-2-14 and "Coral Reef Commons Tact 4", prepared by Kimely-horn and Associates, Inc. and dated 4-2-14.
 9. All replacement trees shall have a minimum quality of Florida No. 1 grade or better.
 10. Replanting under condition 8 above shall take place within 12 months of the approved tree removal work conducted under this permit. Any changes to the canopy replacement location or species list shall be approved in writing by the RER-DERM.
 11. Replanting must be verified and approved by the RER-DERM. The permittees shall notify the RER-DERM when the replanting is complete and shall schedule a final inspection by calling [REDACTED] and/or submitting a final inspection request (two weeks notice is required).
 12. The permittees shall make a contribution to the Miami-Dade County Tree Trust Fund, in accordance with the amounts required pursuant to the fee schedule, for any canopy replacement that does not meet the minimum quality standards of Florida No. 1 grade or better, or that is not installed within twelve months. The permittees shall submit the required Tree Trust Fund contribution to RER-DERM within 30 days of receipt of a notification from the Department of the required contribution.
 13. This permit does not convey to the permittees or create for the permittees any property right, or any interest in real property, nor does it authorize any entrance upon or activities on property which is not owned or controlled by the permittees.
 14. All activities shall be implemented as set forth in the plans, specifications and performance criteria as approved by this permit. Any deviation from the permitted activity and the conditions for undertaking that activity shall constitute a violation of this permit.
 15. This permit and referenced plans shall be kept on-site during all phases of preconstruction activities such as demolition, clearing of parcel, earthwork, re-grading and through construction. The complete permit shall be available for review at the work site upon request by RER-DERM staff. The permittees shall require the contractor to review the complete permit prior to commencement of the activity authorized by this permit.
 16. Pursuant to Section 24-49 of the Miami-Dade County Code, prohibited plant species shall be removed or eradicated from all portions of the subject properties (folios: 30-5925-000-0015, 30-5925-000-0025, 30-5926-000-0035 and 30-5926-000-0060). A prohibited plant species list is included below. These prohibited species shall be removed in accordance with the timeframes below. Furthermore, prohibited plant species shall not be sold, propagated, planted, imported or transported on these properties unless a variance has been granted by Miami-Dade County.
 - Prohibited plant species removal on folio 30-5925-000-0015 shall commence prior to or concurrent with the issuance of the first building permit or the commencement of tree removal work authorized by this permit, whichever occurs first, and shall be completed within one year.
 - Prohibited plant species removal on folio 30-5925-000-0025 shall commence prior to or concurrent with the issuance of the first building permit or the commencement of tree removal work authorized by this permit and shall be completed within one year of commencement of work on this folio.

- Prohibited plant species removal on folio 30-5926-000-0035 shall commence prior to or concurrent with the issuance of the first building permit or the commencement of tree removal work authorized by this permit and shall be completed within one year of commencement of work on this folio.
- Prohibited plant species removal on folio 30-5926-000-0060 shall commence prior to or concurrent with the issuance of the first building permit or the commencement of tree removal work authorized by this permit and shall be completed within one year of commencement of work on this folio.

<i>Abrus precatorius</i> (Rosary pea)	<i>Flacourtia indica</i> (Governor's plum)	<i>Pennisetum purpureum</i> (Elephant grass)
<i>Acacia auriculiformis</i> (earleaf acacia)	<i>Hydrilla verticillata</i> (hydrilla)	<i>Pistia stratiotes</i> (Water lettuce)
<i>Adenanthera pavonina</i> (red sandalwood)	<i>Hygrophilla polysperma</i> (Indian swampweed)	<i>Pueraria montana</i> var. <i>lobata</i> (Kudzu)
<i>Albizia lebbek</i> (Woman's tongue)	<i>Hymenachne amplexicaulis</i> (West Indian marsh grass)	<i>Rhodomyrtus tomentosa</i> (Rose myrtle)
<i>Antigonon leptopus</i> (Coral vine)	<i>Imperata cylindrica</i> (Cogongrass)	<i>Rhynchelytrum repens</i> (Natal grass)
<i>Ardisia crenata</i> (coral ardisia)	<i>Ipomoea aquatica</i> (Water-spinach)	<i>Ricinus communis</i> (castorbean)
<i>Ardisia elliptica</i> (shoebuttan ardisia)	<i>Jasminum dichotomum</i> (Gold Coast jasmine)	<i>Sapium sebiferum</i> (Chinese tallowtree)
<i>Bischofia javanica</i> (bishopwood)	<i>Jasminum fluminense</i> (Brazilian jasmine)	<i>Scaevola taccada</i> (Beach naupaka)
<i>Casuarina</i> spp. (Australian pine)	<i>Leucaena leucocephala</i> (lead tree)	<i>Schefflera actinophylla</i> (Umbrella tree)
<i>Cestrum diurnum</i> (Day jessamine)	<i>Ludwigia peruviana</i> (Peruvian primrosewillow)	<i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> (Brazilian pepper)
<i>Cinnamomum camphora</i> (Camphortree)	<i>Lygodium</i> spp. except <i>L. palmatum</i>	<i>Senna pendula</i> var. <i>glabrata</i> (climbing cassia)
<i>Colubrina asiatica</i> (Asian nakedwood)	<i>Macfadyena unguis-cati</i> (Catclaw vine)	<i>Solanum tampicense</i> (Aquatic soda apple)
<i>Cupaniopsis anacardioides</i> (Carrotwood)	<i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i> (Punk tree)	<i>Solanum viarum</i> (Tropical soda apple)
<i>Dalbergia sissoo</i> (Indian rosewood)	<i>Melia azedarach</i> (Chinaberry)	<i>Talipariti tiliaceum</i> (Mahoe, sea hibiscus)
<i>Dioscorea alata</i> (White yam)	<i>Merremia tuberosa</i> (yellow morning-glory)	<i>Tectaria incisa</i> (Incised halberd fern)
<i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i> (Air potato)	<i>Mikania micrantha</i> (Mile-a-minute, bittervine)	<i>Thespesia populnea</i> (Seaside mahoe)
<i>Eichornia crassipes</i> (Water-hyacinth)	<i>Mimosa pigra</i> (Black mimosa)	<i>Tribulus cistoides</i> (Puncture vine)
<i>Ficus altissima</i> (Council tree)	<i>Neyraudia reynaudiana</i> (Burmareed)	<i>Urochloa mutica</i> (Paragrass)
<i>Ficus benghalensis</i> (Banyan tree)	<i>Paederia</i> spp. (Sewervine, skunkvine)	
<i>Ficus microcarpa</i> (Indian laurel)	<i>Panicum repens</i> (Torpedograss)	

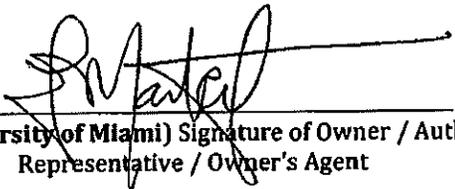
- Pursuant to Section 24-49 of the Miami-Dade County Code, each folio (30-5925-000-0015, 30-5925-000-0025, 30-5926-000-0035 and 30-5926-000-0060) shall be maintained to prevent the growth or accumulation of all prohibited species including non-native grasses, weeds and undergrowth.
- The survival of all trees counted towards canopy mitigation shall be ensured to live at least one (1) year from the date the final inspection was passed. If the tree(s) die, they must be replaced by the same Florida grade number one tree of equal or greater size.
- Replanting must be verified and approved by the RER-DERM. The permittees shall notify the DRER when the replanting is completed and call to schedule a final inspection (two weeks notice is required).
- Prior to performing any work that would have the potential to impact underground utilities, the permittees and contractor shall verify the location of all underground and overhead utility lines and verify that no utilities will be damaged by the work. Contact Sunshine 811 One-Call at 811 or on the web: <http://www.sunshine811.com/> to locate underground utility lines. No clearing, excavation, earthwork, tree removal or planting shall commence until the permittees and contractor have verified that utilities will not be damaged by any work.
- Pursuant to applicable regulations including, but not limited to Policy CON-9A of the Miami-Dade County CDMP, all activities that adversely affect critical habitat for listed species shall be prohibited pursuant to this permit condition throughout all areas of the subject properties except as otherwise authorized by this permit or permit NFC 2012-012. In

addition, any critical habitat located outside of the areas to be cleared under this permit or permit NFC 2012-012 shall be preserved unless prior written approval has been obtained by RER-DERM and, if applicable, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Except as otherwise authorized by this permit or permit NFC 2012-012, damage, removal or destruction of any state or federally listed threatened or endangered species or their habitat is prohibited.

ALL WORK SHALL BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONDITIONS CONTAINED HEREIN. THE PERMITTEES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR COMPLIANCE OF ALL CONTRACTORS AND SUBCONTRACTORS WITH THE CONDITIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS PERMIT AS APPLICABLE. EXCEPT AS AUTHORIZED BY THIS PERMIT, ANY PROTECTED TREE(S) OR UNDERSTORY REMOVED OR EFFECTIVELY DESTROYED SHALL CONSTITUTE A SEPARATE VIOLATION OF SECTION 24-49 OF THE CODE OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY AND WILL BE PURSUED AS SUCH. IN ADDITION, ANY NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONDITIONS OF THIS PERMIT WILL SUBJECT THE PERMITTEES AND RESPONSIBLE CONTRACTORS OR INDIVIDUALS TO THE PENALTY PROVISIONS OF SECTION 24-49, 24-30, 24-31 AND 8CC OF THE CODE OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY.

ISSUANCE OF THIS PERMIT DOES NOT RELIEVE THE PERMITTEES FROM THE REQUIREMENT TO OBTAIN AND COMPLY WITH ALL NECESSARY APPROVALS OR PERMITS FROM THE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT ENTITY HAVING JURISDICTION RELATING TO THE AUTHORIZATIONS CONTAINED HEREIN.

I HAVE READ THE CONDITIONS CONTAINED IN THIS PERMIT AND FULLY UNDERSTAND THEM. IN SIGNING THIS PERMIT, I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH ALL CONDITIONS OF THIS PERMIT MAY RESULT IN PERMIT REVOCATION, BOND FORFEITURE, WITHHOLDING OF MY CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY, AND ENFORCEMENT ACTION AGAINST ME BY THE DEPARTMENT OF REGULATORY AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES. I ASSUME FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACTIONS OF ALL MY EMPLOYEES, AGENTS, AND PERSONS UNDER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATION TO ME WITH RESPECT TO COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONDITIONS AND LIMITATIONS CONTAINED WITHIN THIS PERMIT.

(University of Miami) Signature of Owner / Authorized Representative / Owner's Agent

6/19/14

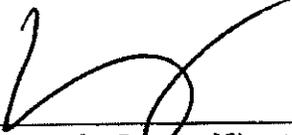
Date Signed

LARRY MARDERT

Print Name

V.P. REAL ESTATE & FACILITIES

Title



(RAM Realty Services) Signature of Owner / Authorized Representative / Owner's Agent
Coral Reef Retail LLC

Manager

Title

Coral Reef Retail LLC, By: Coral Reef Commons Ram LLC, as managing member; By: Keith L. Cummings, Manager

Print Name

6/12/14

Date Signed

RESOLUTION NO. CZAB14-10-13

WHEREAS, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI applied for the following:

REQUESTS #1 - #15 ON EXHIBIT "A"

- (1) DISTRICT BOUNDARY CHANGE from AU to BU-2.
- (2) SPECIAL EXCEPTION to permit a liquor package store spaced less than the required 2500' from a public school.
- (3) NON-USE VARIANCE to permit a shopping center with 1,326 parking spaces (1,339 required).
- (4) NON-USE VARIANCE to waive the zoning regulations requiring a 5' high masonry wall where a business lot abuts a RU zoned property.
- (5) NON-USE VARIANCE to permit a parcel of land with a 0' frontage (75' required) on a public street and to permit access to a public street by means of a private drive.
- (6) VARIANCE OF AIRPORT REGULATIONS to permit a new educational facility within the Kendall-Tamiami Executive Airport No-School Zone (new educational facilities not permitted).
- (7) NON-USE VARIANCE to permit outparcels with a minimum landscape open space of 10% (14% to 18% minimum required for each out parcel).
- (8) NON-USE VARIANCE to waive the required 5' wide required landscape buffer, consisting of a 6' high wall hedge or fence along a portion of the (east) property line.
- (9) NON-USE VARIANCE to waive the zoning regulations requiring section line rights-of-way to be located on the section line; to permit SW 127 Avenue to curve to the west of the section line.
- (10) NON-USE VARIANCE to waive the zoning regulations requiring all uses to be conducted within completely enclosed buildings, to permit an outdoor garden center.
- (11) NON-USE VARIANCE to permit a 4' high berm with a 6' high wall/fence for a total of 10' (8' high maximum permitted).
- (12) NON-USE VARIANCE to permit 7 individual tenants, each with a detached sign, each with an area of 60 sq. ft. (not permitted).
- (13) NON-USE VARIANCE to permit a retail building with 6 wall signs (2 wall signs maximum permitted).

(14) NON-USE VARIANCE to permit 6 directional signs, each with an area of 41 sq. ft. (18 sq ft. maximum permitted for each).

(15) NON-USE VARIANCE to permit 3 of the 6 directional signs setback closer than the required 75' from a right-of-way.

REQUESTS #16 - #19 ON EXHIBIT "B"

(16) DISTRICT BOUNDARY CHANGE from AU to PAD.

(17) NON-USE VARIANCE to permit 997 parking spaces (1,047 parking spaces required).

(18) NON-USE VARIANCE to permit a lawn area of 55.95% (40% maximum permitted).

(19) NON-USE VARIANCE to permit 13 directional signs, each with an area of 10 sq. ft. and a height of 4'6" (3 sq. ft. and 4' high maximum permitted for each).

REQUEST #20 ON EXHIBIT "C"

(20) DISTRICT BOUNDARY CHANGE from AU to RU-4L.

REQUEST #21 ON EXHIBITS "A", "B" & "C"

(21) NON-USE VARIANCE to permit parking within the right-of-way (not permitted).

Upon a demonstration that the applicable standards have been satisfied, approval of request #3 may be considered under Section 33-311(A)(16) (Alternative Site Development Option for the BU Zoning District) or under Section 33-331(A)(4)(b) (Non-Use Variance).

Plans are on file and may be examined in the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources entitled "Coral Reef Commons" as prepared by Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., consisting of 13 sheets. Plans entitled "Proposed Retail Coral Reef Commons" as prepared by Marc Wiener Architect/Planning consisting of 2 sheets. Plans entitled "The Residences at Coral Reef Commons" as prepared by Roger Fry & Associates Architects and consisting of 28 sheets. Plans entitled "The Residences at Coral Reef Commons" as prepared by Alex Knight Landscape Architecture and Planning, consisting of 28 sheets. Plans entitled "Miami Coral Reef, Fl." as prepared by BRR Architecture, consisting of 2 sheets, plans entitled "Signage Master Plan" as prepared by Tgadesign and consisting of 2 sheets and 2 sheets preparer unknown for a total of 75 sheets, Sheet A-0.2 dated stamped received 7/17/13 and the remaining sheets all dated stamped received 5/16/13 with sheets A-0.3, A-0.4 & LM-1 last handwritten revision dated 7/29/13. Plans may be modified at public hearing.

SUBJECT PROPERTY: EXHIBIT A: (BU-2 Zoning District) A portion of Sections 25 and 26, Township 55 South, Range 39 East, Miami-Dade County, Florida, being more particularly described as follows: Commence at the Northeast corner of the Northwest 1/4 of said Section 25; thence run S02°06'52"E, along the East line of the Northwest 1/4 of said

Section 25, for 1435.00 feet; thence run $S87^{\circ}29'21''W$ for 1190.00 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING of the following described parcel of land; thence continue $S87^{\circ}29'21''W$ for 144.39 feet; thence $S16^{\circ}48'45''W$ for 1097.40 feet; thence run $S19^{\circ}30'47''W$ for 326.90 feet (said last mentioned 3 courses being coincident with the boundary of the lands described in that certain "Corrective Quitclaim Deed" recorded in Official Records Book 9159 at Page 926, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida); thence run $N58^{\circ}51'13''W$ for 554.90 feet; thence run $N31^{\circ}08'47''E$ for 12.58 feet; thence $N58^{\circ}51'13''W$ for 284.32 feet to a Point of Tangency of a circular curve concave to the Northeast; thence run Northwesterly along the arc of a circular curve to the right, having a radius of 1025.32 feet and a central angle of $22^{\circ}13'44''$, for an arc distance of 397.80 feet; thence $S80^{\circ}00'00''W$ for 337.22 feet; thence $N58^{\circ}51'16''W$ for 973.96 feet to a point on the next described curve concave to the southwest (said point being on the arc of a circular curve and lying $S73^{\circ}51'04''W$ from the radius point of the next described curve); thence run Northwesterly along the arc of a circular curve concave to the Southwest, having a radius of 283.84 feet and a central angle of $35^{\circ}02'38''$, for an arc distance of 173.61 feet; thence $S38^{\circ}48'26''W$ for 40.00 feet; thence $N51^{\circ}11'33''W$ for 341.34 feet; thence $N01^{\circ}55'14''W$ for 456.21 feet; thence $N51^{\circ}36'37''E$ for 87.05 feet; thence $N01^{\circ}55'14''W$ for 436.30 feet; thence $N88^{\circ}04'30''E$, along a line 255.00 feet South of and parallel with, as measured at right angles to, the North line of said Section 26, for 130.00 feet; thence $N01^{\circ}55'14''W$ for 200.00 feet; thence $N88^{\circ}04'30''E$, along a line 55.00 feet South of and parallel with, as measured at right angles to, the said North line of Section 26, for 1454.94 feet; thence $N87^{\circ}29'25''E$, along a line 55.00 feet South of and parallel with, as measured at right angles to, the North line of said Section 25, for 1461.49 feet; thence $S02^{\circ}06'48''E$ for 1380.03 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING, lying and being in Sections 25 and 26, Township 55 South, Range 39 East, Miami-Dade County, Florida. Less: A portion of Sections 25 and 26, Township 55 South, Range 39 East, Miami-Dade County, Florida, being more particularly described as follows: Commence at the Northeast corner of the Northwest 1/4 of Section 25, Township 55 South, Range 39 East, Miami-Dade County, Florida; thence run $S02^{\circ}06'52''E$, along the East line of the Northwest 1/4 of said Section 25, for a distance of 1435.00 feet to a point; thence run $S87^{\circ}29'21''W$ for a distance of 1190.00 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING of the following described parcel of land; thence continue $S87^{\circ}29'21''W$ for a distance of 144.39 feet to a point; thence run $S16^{\circ}48'45''W$ for a distance of 1097.40 feet to a point; thence run $S19^{\circ}30'47''W$ for a distance of 326.90 feet to a point (said last mentioned 3 courses being coincident with the boundary of the lands described in that certain "Corrective Quitclaim Deed" recorded in Official Records Book 9159 at Page 926; thence run $N58^{\circ}51'13''W$ for a distance of 554.90 feet to a point; thence run $N31^{\circ}08'47''E$ for a distance of 12.58 feet to a point; thence run $N58^{\circ}51'13''W$ for a distance of 284.32 feet to a Point of Curvature of a circular curve concave to the Northeast; thence run Northwesterly along the arc of a circular curve to the right, having a radius of 1025.32 feet and a central angle of $22^{\circ}13'44''$, for an arc distance of 397.80 feet to a point; thence run $S80^{\circ}00'00''W$ for a distance of 337.22 feet to a point; thence run $N58^{\circ}51'16''W$ for a distance of 973.96 feet to a point on the next described circular curve concave to the Southwest (from said point a line bears $S73^{\circ}51'04''W$ to the radius point of the next described curve); thence run Northwesterly along the arc of a circular curve to the left; having a radius of 283.84 feet and a central angle of $35^{\circ}02'38''$, for an arc distance of 173.61 feet to a point; thence run $S38^{\circ}48'26''W$, radial to the last described curve, for a distance of 40.00 feet; thence run $N51^{\circ}11'33''W$ for a distance of 341.34 feet to a point; thence run $N01^{\circ}55'14''W$ for a distance of 456.21 feet to a point; thence run $N51^{\circ}36'37''E$ for a distance of 87.05 feet to a point; thence run $N31^{\circ}52'32''E$ for a distance of 24.16 feet to a point; thence run $N69^{\circ}29'33''E$ for a distance of 78.63 feet to a point; thence run

N48°41'09"E for a distance of 37.63 feet to a point; thence run S57°12'22"E for a distance of 16.93 feet to a point; thence run N85°18'33"E for a distance of 39.98 feet to a point; thence run N53°58'07"E for a distance of 46.26 feet to a point; thence run N86°03'08"E for a distance of 44.52 feet to a point; thence run N60°54'26"E for a distance of 42.77 feet to a point; thence run N84°42'21"E for a distance of 42.74 feet to a point; thence run N64°52'56"E for a distance of 2.59 feet to a point; thence run N88°05'14"E for a distance of 24.79 feet to a point; thence run S68°57'37"E for a distance of 27.39 feet to a point; thence run S89°53'21"E for a distance of 35.89 feet to a point; thence run S62°10'16"E for a distance of 25.63 feet to a point; thence run N89°47'41"E for a distance of 13.22 feet to a point; thence run N18°46'11"W for a distance of 39.40 feet to a point; thence run N10°56'17"E for a distance of 23.91 feet to a point; thence run S88°57'56"E for a distance of 53.82 feet to a point; thence run S22°49'01"E for a distance of 20.84 feet to a point; thence run S80°09'44"E for a distance of 41.92 feet to a point; thence run N68°29'39"E for a distance of 33.11 feet to a point; thence run S56°11'51"E for a distance of 60.41 feet to a point; thence run S20°49'07"E for a distance of 62.11 feet to a point; thence run N72°59'51"E for a distance of 69.90 feet to a point; thence run N52°07'12"E for a distance of 48.90 feet to a point; thence run N69°53'27"E for a distance of 49.28 feet to a point; thence run N66°43'40"E for a distance of 39.29 feet to a point; thence run S89°19'00"E for a distance of 64.06 feet to a point; thence run N39°29'11"E for a distance of 73.66 feet to a point; thence run N60°13'23"E for a distance of 36.87 feet to a point; thence run N49°33'37"E for a distance of 41.43 feet to a point; thence run N29°47'40"E for a distance of 37.43 feet to a point; thence run S81°01'39"E for a distance of 48.70 feet to a point; thence run S84°19'51"E for a distance of 58.83 feet to a point; thence run S23°07'12"E for a distance of 37.61 feet to a point; thence run N84°11'38"E for a distance of 66.39 feet to a point; thence run N55°22'41"E for a distance of 52.50 feet to a point; thence run N59°45'56"E for a distance of 43.43 feet to a point; thence run S55°26'40"E for a distance of 58.65 feet to a point; thence run S32°39'07"E for a distance of 63.63 feet to a point; thence run S27°44'00"E for a distance of 50.78 feet to a point; thence run S86°23'57"E for a distance of 57.35 feet to a point; thence run N80°52'51"E for a distance of 60.54 feet to a point on the next described circular curve concave to the Northeast (said point bearing S81°52'29"W from the radius point of the next described curve); thence run Southerly and Southeasterly along the arc of a circular curve to the left, having a radius of 412.56 feet, a central angle of 51°10'13", a chord distance of 356.33 feet through a chord bearing of S33°42'37"E, for an arc distance of 368.46 feet to a Point of Tangency; thence run S59°17'44"E for a distance of 40.04 feet to a point on the next described circular curve concave to the East; thence run Southerly along the arc of a circular curve to the left, having a radius of 710.73 feet, a central angle of 37°40'54", a chord distance of 459.04 feet through a chord bearing of S09°06'54"W, for an arc distance of 467.42 feet to a point; thence run N80°16'28"E, radial to the last described circular curve, for a distance of 40.00 feet to a point; thence run S72°42'25"E for a distance of 781.22 feet to a point; thence run N17°13'33"E for a distance of 212.51 feet to a point; thence run N80°06'51"W for a distance of 115.46 feet to a point; thence run N17°17'43"E for a distance of 764.36 feet to a point; thence run N84°10'45"E for a distance of 82.37 feet to a point; thence run N89°36'23"E for a distance of 317.43 feet to a point; thence run S02°06'48"E for a distance of 751.34 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING, lying and being in Sections 25 and 26, Township 55 South, Range 39 East, Miami-Dade County, Florida.

EXHIBIT B: (P.A.D. Zoning District) A portion of Sections 25 and 26, Township 55 South, Range 39 East, Miami-Dade County, Florida, being more particularly described as follows: Commence at the Northeast corner of the Northwest 1/4 of Section 25, Township 55 South,

Range 39 East, Miami-Dade County, Florida; thence run S02°06'52"E, along the East line of the Northwest 1/4 of said Section 25, for a distance of 1435.00 feet to a point; thence run S87°29'21"W for a distance of 1190.00 feet to a point; thence continue S87°29'21"W for a distance of 144.39 feet to a point; thence run S16°48'45"W for a distance of 1097.40 feet to a point; thence run S19°30'47"W for a distance of 326.90 feet to a point (said last mentioned 3 courses being coincident with the boundary of the lands described in that certain "Corrective Quitclaim Deed" recorded in Official Records Book 9159 at Page 926, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida); thence run N58°51'13"W for a distance of 554.90 feet to a point; thence run N31°08'47"E for a distance of 12.58 feet to a point; thence run N58°51'13"W for a distance of 284.32 feet to a Point of Curvature of a circular curve concave to the Northeast; thence run Northwesterly along the arc of a circular curve to the right, having a radius of 1025.32 feet and a central angle of 22°13'44", for an arc distance of 397.80 feet to a point; thence run S80°00'00"W for a distance of 337.22 feet to a point; thence run N58°51'16"W for a distance of 590.58 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING of the following described parcel of land; thence continue N58°51'16"W for a distance 383.38 feet to a point on the next described circular curve concave to the Southwest (from said point a line bears S73°51'04"W to the radius point of the next described curve); thence run Northwesterly along the arc of a circular curve to the left; having a radius of 283.84 feet and a central angle of 35°02'38", for an arc distance of 173.61 feet to a point; thence run S38°48'26"W, radial to the last described curve, for a distance of 40.00 feet; thence run N51°11'33"W for a distance of 341.34 feet to a point; thence run N01°55'14"W for a distance of 456.21 feet to a point; thence run N51°36'37"E for a distance of 87.05 feet to a point; thence run N31°52'32"E for a distance of 24.16 feet to a point; thence run N69°29'33"E for a distance of 78.63 feet to a point; thence run N48°41'09"E for a distance of 37.63 feet to a point; thence run S57°12'22"E for a distance of 16.93 feet to a point; thence run N85°18'33"E for a distance of 39.98 feet to a point; thence run N53°58'07"E for a distance of 46.26 feet to a point; thence run N86°03'08"E for a distance of 44.52 feet to a point; thence run N60°54'26"E for a distance of 42.77 feet to a point; thence run N84°42'21"E for a distance of 42.74 feet to a point; thence run N64°52'56"E for a distance of 2.59 feet to a point; thence run N88°05'14"E for a distance of 24.79 feet to a point; thence run S68°57'37"E for a distance of 27.39 feet to a point; thence run S89°53'21"E for a distance of 35.89 feet to a point; thence run S62°10'16"E for a distance of 25.63 feet to a point; thence run N89°47'41"E for a distance of 13.22 feet to a point; thence run N18°46'11"W for a distance of 39.40 feet to a point; thence run N10°56'17"E for a distance of 23.91 feet to a point; thence run S88°57'56"E for a distance of 53.82 feet to a point; thence run S22°49'01"E for a distance of 20.84 feet to a point; thence run S80°09'44"E for a distance of 41.92 feet to a point; thence run N68°29'39"E for a distance of 33.11 feet to a point; thence run S56°11'51"E for a distance of 60.41 feet to a point; thence run S20°49'07"E for a distance of 62.11 feet to a point; thence run N72°59'51"E for a distance of 69.90 feet to a point; thence run N52°07'12"E for a distance of 48.90 feet to a point; thence run N69°53'27"E for a distance of 49.28 feet to a point; thence run N66°43'40"E for a distance of 39.29 feet to a point; thence run S89°19'00"E for a distance of 64.06 feet to a point; thence run N39°29'11"E for a distance of 73.66 feet to a point; thence run N60°13'23"E for a distance of 36.87 feet to a point; thence run N49°33'37"E for a distance of 41.43 feet to a point; thence run N29°47'40"E for a distance of 37.43 feet to a point; thence run S81°01'39"E for a distance of 48.70 feet to a point; thence run S84°19'51"E for a distance of 58.83 feet to a point; thence run S23°07'12"E for a distance of 37.61 feet to a point; thence run N84°11'38"E for a distance of 66.39 feet to a point; thence run N55°22'41"E for a distance of 52.50 feet to a point; thence run N59°45'56"E for a distance of 43.43 feet to a point; thence run S55°26'40"E for

a distance of 58.65 feet to a point; thence run S32°39'07"E for a distance of 63.63 feet to a point; thence run S27°44'00"E for a distance of 50.78 feet to a point; thence run S86°23'57"E for a distance of 57.35 feet to a point; thence run N80°52'51"E for a distance of 60.54 feet to a point on the next described circular curve concave to the Northeast (said point bearing S81°52'29"W from the radius point of the next described curve); thence run Southerly and Southeasterly along the arc of a circular curve to the left, having a radius of 412.56 feet, a central angle of 51°10'13", a chord distance of 356.33 feet through a chord bearing of S33°42'37"E, for an arc distance of 368.46 feet to a Point of Tangency; thence run S59°17'44"E for a distance of 40.04 feet to a point on the next described circular curve concave to the East; thence run Southerly along the arc of a circular curve to the left, having a radius of 710.73 feet, a central angle of 43°00'55", a chord distance of 521.14 feet through a chord bearing of S06°26'54"W, for an arc distance of 533.59 feet to a Point of Reverse Curvature with a circular curve concave to the West; thence run Southerly along the arc of a circular curve to the right, having a radius of 601.58 feet, a central angle of 11°34'10", a chord distance of 121.27 feet through a chord bearing of S09°16'29"E, for an arc distance of 121.47 feet to a point; thence run N84°11'11"W for a distance of 190.75 feet to a point; thence run N58°12'21"W for a distance 36.74 feet to a point; thence run S88°07'34"W for a distance of 684.39 feet to a point; thence run S31°08'38"W for a distance of 295.07 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING, lying and being in Sections 25 and 26, Township 55 South, Range 39 East.

EXHIBIT C: (RU-4L Zoning District) A portion of Sections 25 and 26, Township 55 South, Range 39 East, Miami-Dade County, Florida, being more particularly described as follows: Commence at the Northeast corner of the Northwest 1/4 of Section 25, Township 55 South, Range 39 East, Miami-Dade County, Florida; thence run S02°06'52"E, along the East line of the Northwest 1/4 of said Section 25, for a distance of 1435.00 feet to a point; thence run S87°29'21"W for a distance of 1190.00 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING of the following described parcel of land; thence continue S87°29'21"W for a distance of 144.39 feet to a point; thence run S16°48'45"W for a distance of 1097.40 feet to a point; thence run S19°30'47"W for a distance of 326.90 feet to a point (said last mentioned 3 courses being coincident with the boundary of the lands described in that certain "Corrective Quitclaim Deed" recorded in Official Records Book 9159 at Page 926, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida); thence run N58°51'13"W for a distance of 554.90 feet to a point; thence run N31°08'47"E for a distance of 12.58 feet to a point; thence run N58°51'13"W for a distance of 284.32 feet to a Point of Curvature of a circular curve concave to the Northeast; thence run Northwesterly along the arc of a circular curve to the right, having a radius of 1025.32 feet and a central angle of 21°23'21", for an arc distance of 382.77 feet to a point on the next described circular curve concave to the West; thence run Northeasterly and Northerly along the arc of a circular curve to the left, having a radius of 601.58 feet, a central angle of 64°42'59", a chord distance of 643.94 feet through a chord bearing of N17°17'56"E, for an arc distance of 679.49 feet to a Point of Reverse Curvature with a circular curve concave to the East; thence run Northerly along the arc of a circular curve to the right, having a radius of 710.73 feet, a central angle of 05°20'01", a chord distance of 66.14 feet through a chord bearing of N12°23'27"W for an arc distance of 66.16 feet to a point; thence run N80°16'28"E, radial to the last described circular curve, for a distance of 40.00 feet to a point; thence run S72°42'25"E for a distance of 781.22 feet to a point; thence run N17°13'33"E for a distance of 212.51 feet to a point; thence run N80°06'51"W for a distance of 115.46 feet to a point; thence run N17°17'43"E for a distance of 764.36 feet to a point; thence run N84°10'45"E for a distance of 82.37 feet to a point; thence run N89°36'23"E for a distance of 317.43 feet to a point; thence run

S02°06'48"E for a distance of 751.34 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING, lying and being in Sections 25 and 26, Township 55 South, Range 39 East.

LOCATION: The Southwest corner of SW 152 Street & SW 124 Avenue, Miami-Dade County, Florida, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing of the Miami-Dade County Community Zoning Appeals Board 14 was advertised and held, as required by law, and all interested parties concerned in the matter were given an opportunity to be heard, and at which time the applicant requested to waive the re-filing period, and requested permission to withdraw the requested non-use variance to permit outparcels with a minimum landscape open space of 10% on Exhibit A (Item #7), and at which time the applicant proffered a Declaration of Restrictions and a Planned Area Development Agreement which among other things provided:

DECLARATION OF RESTRICTIONS:

1. **Site Plan.** The Property shall be developed substantially in accordance with the plans previously submitted, entitled "Coral Reef Commons," as prepared by Kimley Horn and Associates, Inc., consisting of 13 sheets; plans entitled "Proposed Retail Coral Reef Commons," as prepared by Marc Weiner Architect/Planning, consisting of 2 sheets; plans entitled "The Residences at Coral Reef Commons," as prepared by Roger Fry & Associates Architects, consisting of 28 sheets; plans "The Residences at Coral Reef Commons," as prepared by Alex Knight Landscape Architecture and Planning, consisting of 28 sheets; plans entitled "Miami Coral Reef, Fl." as prepared by BRR architecture, consisting of 2 sheets; plans entitled "Signage Master Plan," as prepared by TGA Design and consisting of 2 sheets; and 2 sheets preparer unknown, for a total of 75 sheets. Sheet A-0.2 dated stamped received July 17, 2013, and the remaining sheets dated stamped received May 16, 2013, and the last handwritten revisions on sheets A-0.3, A-0.4, and LM-1 dated July 29, 2013 (the "Plans"). Said Plans may be modified at public hearing.
2. **Permitted Uses.**
 - (A) As depicted in the Application and the Plans, the Commercial Parcel shall be developed in accordance with the BU-2 zoning district regulations, the RU-4L Parcel shall developed in accordance with the RU-4L zoning district regulations, and the PAD Parcel shall be developed in accordance with the PAD zoning district regulations.
 - (B) Consistent with the terms of the CDMP Declaration, in no event shall the total vehicle trip generation associated with the overall development of the Property exceed a total of 1,660 net external PM peak hour vehicle trips. The calculation of

net external PM peak hour vehicle trips shall be prepared using the trip generation rates and methodological assumptions provided in the attached Exhibit "F" (the "Trip Rates and Assumptions") to this Declaration. Upon any application for site plan approval for all or any portion of the Property, the then Owner of the parcel that is the subject of the site plan application shall provide the Department or its successor department with a trip generation analysis, using the Trip Rates and Assumptions, which demonstrates that the proposed development program for the Property, including that portion of the Property that is the subject of the site plan application, will not generate in excess of 1,660 net external PM peak hour vehicle trips.

(C) Liquor package store use shall be limited to that certain parcel of land identified on the Plans as Tract 1 of the Commercial Parcel.

(D) Nothing in this Paragraph shall limit the ability for the development and operation of schools, libraries or other governmental, civic, or institutional uses or the conduct of special events, including but not limited to farmers' markets and holiday events/celebrations.

3. Transit Improvements. In an effort to enhance public transportation in the area, the Owner shall provide a bus pullout bay on the south side of SW 152 Street adjacent to Outparcel 6, as identified on the Plans. In addition, prior to the issuance of a certificate of use and occupancy for any improvements within the Property, the Owner shall design and install or cause the design and installation of a bus stop and bus shelter adjacent to the sidewalk at said bus pullout bay location substantially in accordance with the design prepared by Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., dated 9/27/12, and attached hereto as Exhibit "G" to this Declaration.

4. Donation of Public Library Site. The Owner shall, prior to the Board of County Commissioners' approval of the final plat, make a written offer, by certified mail or other means of verified delivery, to the County to convey a parcel of land within the Property, containing not less than 18,000 gross square feet, for use as a public library site (the "Library Parcel"). If the County notifies the Owner in writing of its desire to acquire the Library Parcel and such notice is received by the Owner within two (2) years after the County's receipt of the Owner's written offer of conveyance (the "Acceptance Period"), the Library Parcel shall be conveyed to the County at no cost to the County and with no encumbrances preventing its use as a public library facility. Six (6) months prior to the expiration of the Acceptance Period, the Owner shall send written notice, by certified mail or other means of verified delivery, of such expiration date to the Director of the Miami-Dade Public Library System, or his successor. If the Director or his successor does not receive such written notice six (6) months prior to the expiration date, the expiration date shall be tolled by the amount of the delay, but the Owner shall not be in violation of this Declaration. If the County declines the proposed conveyance of the Library Parcel, it shall provide written notice of its decision and shall at the Owner's request promptly execute an acknowledgment and release substantially in the form attached to this Declaration as Exhibit "H". If the County fails to provide written notice of its election to accept the conveyance of the Donated Library Parcel within the Acceptance Period, including any tolling, or declines to accept the proposed conveyance Library Parcel, the Owner shall be forever released of the obligations under this Paragraph. The

Owner may record an affidavit memorializing the County's decision to decline the conveyance of the Library Parcel in the public records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

5. Natural Forest Community ("NFC") Preservation.

- (a) Prior to the approval of a building permit for any portion of the Property, the Owner shall enter into an agreement with the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources or its successor department for the perpetual maintenance, management, and control of the NFC, which agreement shall be substantially in the form attached hereto as Exhibit "I" (the "Maintenance Agreement"). In the event ownership of all or a portion of the NFC is transferred to the County or any other local, state, or governmental agency, or any entity acceptable to the Department, the Owner shall be released of any further obligations under the terms of this Paragraph.
- (b) The removal of additional NFC for the construction of additional firebreaks shall be prohibited. Any additional firebreaks needed shall be constructed outside of and contiguous to the NFC.

6. Exotic Plant Species.

- (a) Pursuant to Policy CON 8I of the Miami-Dade County Comprehensive Development Master Plan Conservation Element, prohibited plant species shall be eradicated from all portions of the site prior to any development of the Property. Due to the presence of pine rocklands throughout the Property, which are a globally imperiled plant community containing habitat for rare, threatened and endangered species, the planting of invasive exotic pest plant species for landscaping or any other purposes shall be prohibited. For purposes of this condition, invasive exotic pest plant species are defined as all prohibited species and all controlled species listed in the Comprehensive Development Master Plan, Section 24-49.9 of the Miami-Dade County Code, the Miami-Dade County Landscape Manual, and all Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council Category One and Category Two listed species.
- (b) All portions of the Property that are not designated NFC shall be maintained pursuant to Sections 19-13 and 19-14 of the Miami-Dade County Code to prevent the uncontrolled growth or accumulation of grass, weeds and nonnative undergrowth. Maintenance shall occur not less than twice yearly and more frequently as necessary.
- (c) Designated NFC preservation areas shall be maintained to prevent the growth of invasive exotic pest plant species as defined in Subparagraph (a) above in accordance with a management plan approved by the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources or its successor department.

7. PAD Parcel Landscaping. Landscaping within the PAD Parcel shall utilize Paspalum sod, or other acceptable similar drought tolerant grass species, to the greatest extent possible for sod and lawn areas.

8. Prohibition of Vehicular Access to Zoo Miami. Vehicular access to Zoo Miami (S.W. 124 Street) through Tract 2 shall be prohibited. This restriction shall not apply to bicycle and/or pedestrian access to Zoo Miami.
9. Notice to Future Owners or Lessees. The Owner, its successors, and assigns shall provide to all initial future grantees or lessees of any residential, retail, or office unit within the Property a written notice, acknowledgement, and waiver acknowledging that the Property is located within the vicinity of Miami-Dade County's Zoo Miami and other future uses as reflected within the "Miami Metro Zoo Master Plan and Further Development" (the "Zoo Plan"), as prepared by Portico Group for the Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department, dated September 2002, as may be revised or substituted, and in the vicinity of designated NFC, which are subject to periodic controlled burnings to maintain the health and quality of protected pinelands. All initial contracts for sale or lease of any portion of the Property shall contain the following statement:

"Grantee(s) (or Lessee(s)) hereby acknowledges and understand(s) that the property which is the subject of this conveyance contains and is located within the vicinity of the Miami-Dade County's Zoo Miami and other possible future public and recreational uses ("Public Uses"), as reflected in the "Miami Metro Zoo Master Plan and Further Development" ("Zoo Plan"), as prepared by Portico Group for the Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department, dated September 2002, as amended from time to time. Additionally, the property which is subject to this conveyance is located in the vicinity of designated Natural Forest Communities (NFC), which are subject to periodic controlled burnings to maintain the health and quality of protected pinelands. As a result, Grantee (or Lessee) may be affected by noise and traffic generated by said Public Uses and smoke generated by the controlled burnings. By acknowledging this notice, Grantee (or Lessee), its successors, and assigns hereby acknowledges and agrees that such existing or future Public Uses or controlled burnings do not constitute and shall not be deemed a nuisance by said Grantee (or Lessee)."

10. Miami-Dade Police Department Facility. In order to accommodate the citizens, businesses, and police resources operating within the Property, an indoor, secured police work station shall be provided on the Property within three (3) years of the issuance of the first building permit for the Property. The work station may be located within any building on the Property as deemed appropriate by the Owner and the Miami-Dade County Police Department and shall include a desk/work table equipped with telephone and internet access, access to restroom facilities, and a "Police Only" parking space located near the work station. In the event the Miami-Dade County Police Department determines that a work station is not required, this condition shall be null and void and of no further effect.

PLANNED AREA DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT:

1. Site Plan. That said Property shall be developed substantially in accordance with the plans previously submitted, entitled "The Residences at Coral Reef Commons,"

as prepared by Roger Fry & Associates Architects, consisting of 28 sheets, and "The Residences at Coral Reef Commons," as prepared by Alex Knight Landscape Architecture and Planning, consisting of 28 sheets. Sheet A-0.2 dated stamped received July 17, 2013, and the remaining sheets dated stamped received May 16, 2013, and the last handwritten revisions on sheets A-0.3, A-0.4, and LM-1 dated July 29, 2013 (the "Plans"), as may be modified at the public hearing. Said Plans being on file with the Miami-Dade County Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources, and by reference made a part of this Agreement.

2. Residential Density Restriction. The maximum number of dwelling units on the Property shall be 600 dwelling units at an average density of 12.8 units per gross acre.
3. Development Schedule. Development of the Property is projected to commence no later than 24 months following the final approval of the Application. The project shall be developed in two (2) phases. Completion of the project is estimated to be 10 years from the date of commencement.
4. Additional Quantitative Data.
 - (a) Total Number of Bedrooms. The total number of bedrooms on the Property shall not exceed 1,188.
 - (b) Total Building Coverage. The total area of building for the Property shall not exceed 284,483 ± square feet, or 23.4% of the Property.
 - (c) Open Space. The area of common open space for the Property shall consist of at least 552,593 ± square feet and shall be in accordance with Section 33-284.27(l) of the Code, as may be amended from time to time.
 - (d) Residential Density. The maximum residential density on the Property shall be 12.8 units per gross acre. The maximum residential density of the buildable site area, which consists of +/-27.85 acres, shall be 21.5 units per acre.
 - (e) Building Setbacks. The building setbacks for the Property shall be as follows:
 - (i) Front Setback: 10'-0"
 - (ii) Side Setback: 20'-0"
 - (iii) Rear Setback: 18'-0" minimum (to garage building shown on the Plans)
 - (iv) Setbacks Between Buildings: 15'-0"
 - (f) Private and Public Roads. The area of those private roadways and parking areas shown as private on the Plans shall be 380,426 ± square feet. The area of the public roads within the Property is +/-0 acres.
 - (g) Population Projection. The estimated population projection resulting from the development of the Property is 1,314 people or 2.19 persons per unit pursuant

to calculations performed by the Miami-Dade County, Regulatory and Economic Resources Department Research Section.

5. Types of Dwelling Units. The Owner agrees that the Property shall be developed with multi-family dwelling units with a number of models and sizes¹ as follows:

Three-Story Apartment

1/1 Unit approx. 600 s.f. - 800 s.f.

2/2 Unit – approx. 900 s.f. - 1,200 s.f.

3/2 Unit – approx. 1,100 s.f. - 1,500 s.f.

6. Accessory Uses. The Owner agrees that the accessory uses on the Property shall be limited to a guard house, pools, pool cabanas, a clubhouse, park area, a community center, and associated recreational uses, and all other uses related and incidental thereto.
7. Ownership and Maintenance of Roadways, Lake, Landscape and Common Areas. One or more property owners' association(s) shall be created for the maintenance of the roadways, lake, landscape and common areas within the PAD Property.
8. Pedestrian and Vehicular Access. The Owner agrees to provide permanent and safe access for pedestrian and vehicular traffic within the Property at all times. Access shall also be provided at all times to fire, police, health, sanitation, and other public service personnel and vehicles. Furthermore, all streets or accessways within the Property shall be installed by the Owner, including, but not limited to, sidewalks, drainage facilities, water, sewers, and fire hydrants, subject to the approval of the appropriate departments of Miami-Dade County.
9. Water and Sewer Provider. Water and sewer utility services shall be provided to the Property by the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department or its successor entity in accordance with Miami-Dade County Code requirements.

WHEREAS, this Board has been advised that the subject application has been reviewed for compliance with concurrency requirements for levels of services and, at this stage of the request, the same was found to comply with the requirements, and

WHEREAS, upon due and proper consideration having been given to the matter and to the recommendation of the Developmental Impact Committee, it is the opinion of this Board that the requested district boundary changes to BU-2 on Exhibit A (Item #1), PAD on Exhibit B (Item #16), and RU-4L on Exhibit C (Item #20) would be consistent with the Comprehensive Development Master Plan and would be compatible with the neighborhood and area concerned

and would not be in conflict with the principle and intent of the plan for the development of Miami-Dade County, Florida, and should be approved, and that the requested special exception to permit a liquor package store spaced less than the required 2500' from a public school on Exhibit A (Item #2), the requested non-use variance to permit a shopping center with 1,326 parking spaces on Exhibit A (Item #3), the requested non-use variance to waive the zoning regulations requiring a 5' high masonry wall where a business lot abuts a RU zoned property on Exhibit A (Item #4), the requested non-use variance to permit a parcel of land with a 0' frontage on a public street and to permit access to a public street by means of a private drive on Exhibit A (Item #5), the requested variance of airport regulations to permit a new educational facility within the Kendall-Tamiami Executive Airport No-School Zone on Exhibit A (Item #6), the requested non-use variance to waive the required 5' wide required landscape buffer, consisting of a 6' high wall hedge or fence along a portion of the (east) property line on Exhibit A (Item #8), the requested non-use variance to waive the zoning regulations requiring section line rights-of-way to be located on the section line; to permit SW 127 Avenue to curve to the west of the section line on Exhibit A (Item #9), the requested non-use variance to waive the zoning regulations requiring all uses to be conducted within completely enclosed buildings, to permit an outdoor garden center on Exhibit A (Item #10), the requested non-use variance to permit a 4' high berm with a 6' high wall/fence for a total of 10' on Exhibit A (Item #11), the requested non-use variance to permit a 4' high berm with a 6' high wall/fence for a total of 10' on Exhibit A (Item #12), the requested non-use variance to permit a retail building with 6 wall signs on Exhibit A (Item #13), the requested non-use variance on a modified basis to permit 6 directional signs, each with an area of 36 sq. ft. in lieu of the requested 41 sq. ft. on Exhibit A (Item #14), the requested non-use variance to permit 3 of the 6 directional signs setback closer than the required 75' from a right-of-way on Exhibit A (Item #15), the requested non-use variance to permit 997 parking spaces on Exhibit B (Item #17), the requested non-use variance to permit a

lawn area of 55.95% on Exhibit B (Item #18), the requested non-use variance to permit 13 directional signs, each with an area of 10 sq. ft. and a height of 4'6" on Exhibit B (Item #19), and the requested non-use variance to permit parking within the right-of-way on Exhibits A, B, and C (Item #21) would be compatible with the area and its development and would be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the regulations and would conform with the requirements and intent of the Zoning Procedure Ordinance and would be consistent with the Comprehensive Development Master Plan, and that and that the requested special exception on Exhibit A (Item #2) would not have an adverse impact upon the public interest and should be approved, and that the proffered Declaration of Restrictions and Planned Area Development Agreement should be accepted, and that the requests to waive the re-filing period and to withdraw Item #7 should be granted, and

WHEREAS, a motion to accept the proffered Declaration of Restrictions and Planned Area Development Agreement, to approve Items #1 through #6 and Items #8 through #21 , to waive the re-filing period and to withdraw Item #7 was offered by Curtis Lawrence, seconded by Diane Coats-Davis, and upon a poll of the members present the vote was as follows:

Diane Coats-Davis	aye	Curtis Lawrence	aye
Nehemiah Davis	aye	Neal Spencer	aye

Wilbur B. Bell aye

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Miami-Dade County Community Zoning Appeals Board 14, that the requested district boundary changes to BU-2 on Exhibit A (Item #1), PAD on Exhibit B (Item #16), and RU-4L on Exhibit C (Item #20) be and the same are hereby approved and said property is hereby zoned accordingly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the application special exception to permit a liquor package store spaced less than the required 2500' from a public school on Exhibit A (Item #2), the requested non-use variance to permit a shopping center with 1,326 parking spaces on Exhibit A (Item #3), the requested non-use variance to waive the zoning regulations requiring a 5' high masonry wall where a business lot abuts a RU zoned property on Exhibit A (Item #4), the requested non-use variance to permit a parcel of land with a 0' frontage on a public street and to permit access to a public street by means of a private drive on Exhibit A (Item #5), the requested variance of airport regulations to permit a new educational facility within the Kendall-Tamiami Executive Airport No-School Zone on Exhibit A (Item #6), the requested non-use variance to waive the required 5' wide required landscape buffer, consisting of a 6' high wall hedge or fence along a portion of the (east) property line on Exhibit A (Item #8), the requested non-use variance to waive the zoning regulations requiring section line rights-of-way to be located on the section line; to permit SW 127 Avenue to curve to the west of the section line on Exhibit A (Item #9), the requested non-use variance to waive the zoning regulations requiring all uses to be conducted within completely enclosed buildings, to permit an outdoor garden center on Exhibit A (Item #10), the requested non-use variance to permit a 4' high berm with a 6' high wall/fence for a total of 10' on Exhibit A (Item #11), the requested non-use variance to permit a 4' high berm with a 6' high wall/fence for a total of 10' on Exhibit A (Item #12), the requested non-use variance to permit a retail building with 6 wall signs on Exhibit A (Item #13), the requested non-use variance on a modified basis to permit 6 directional signs, each with an area of 36 sq. ft. in lieu of the requested 41 sq. ft. on Exhibit A (Item #14), the requested non-use variance to permit 3 of the 6 directional signs setback closer than the required 75' from a right-of-way on Exhibit A (Item #15), the requested non-use variance to permit 997 parking spaces on Exhibit B (Item #17), the requested non-use variance to permit a lawn area of 55.95% on Exhibit B (Item #18), the requested non-use variance to permit 13 directional signs, each with an area of 10 sq. ft. and a

height of 4'6" on Exhibit B (Item #19), and the requested non-use variance to permit parking within the right-of-way on Exhibits A, B, and C (Item #21) be and the same are hereby approved, subject to the following conditions:

1. That a site plan be submitted to and meet with the approval of the Director of the Permitting, Environment and Regulatory Affairs Department or its successor Department upon the submittal of an application for a building permit and/or Certificate of Use; said plan must include among other things but not be limited to, location of structure or structures, exits and entrances, drainage, walls, fences, landscaping, etc.
2. That in the approval of the plan, the same be substantially in accordance with that submitted for the hearing entitled "Coral Reef Commons" as prepared by Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., consisting of 13 sheets. Plans entitled "Proposed Retail Coral Reef Commons" as prepared by Marc Wiener Architect/Planning consisting of 2 sheets. Plans entitled "The Residences at Coral Reef Commons" as prepared by Roger Fry & Associates Architects and consisting of 28 sheets. Plans entitled "The Residences at Coral Reef Commons" as prepared by Alex Knight Landscape Architecture and Planning, consisting of 28 sheets. Plans entitled "Miami Coral Reef, Fl." as prepared by BRR Architecture, consisting of 2 sheets, plans entitled "Signage Master Plan" as prepared by TGA Design and consisting of 2 sheets and 2 sheets preparer unknown for a total of 75 sheets, with sheets A-0.3, A-0.4 & LM-1 last handwritten revision dated 07/29/13, Sheet A-0.2 dated stamped received 7/17/13 and the remaining sheets all dated stamped received 5/16/13, except as herein amended to show 6 directional signs, each with an area of 36 sq. ft. and a maximum height of 6' on the commercial parcel.
3. That the use be established and maintained in accordance with the approved plan.
4. That the proposed 6 directional signs, each have a maximum area of 36 sq. ft. and a maximum height of 6' on the commercial parcel.
5. That the requested wall signage not exceed a maximum area of 10% of the wall area.
6. That the parking spaces within the garages and the residential buildings within the PAD site be used for the parking of vehicles only and not be used for the storage of items not connected to the residential uses.
7. That the applicant comply with all of the applicable conditions, requirements, recommendations, requests and other provisions of the Division of Environmental Resource Management of the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources as contained in their memorandum dated July 18, 2013, that is part of the record of the July 30, 2013, DIC recommendation and is incorporated herein by reference.
8. That the applicant comply with all of the applicable conditions, requirements, recommendations, requests and other provisions of the Public Works and Waste Management Department as contained in their memorandum dated July 17, 2013,

that is part of the record of the July 30, 2013, DIC recommendation and is incorporated herein by reference.

9. That the applicant comply with all of the applicable conditions, requirements, recommendations, requests and other provisions of the Miami-Dade Fire rescue Department as contained in their memorandum dated June 19, 2013, that is a part of the record of the July 30, 2013, DIC recommendation and is incorporated herein by reference.
10. That the applicant submits to the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources for review and approval a landscape plan which in addition to the submitted landscape plans shall include the required landscape open space within the commercial parcel and sod area within the residential parcel.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the request to waive the re-filing period be and the same is hereby approved, and that re-filing period is hereby waived.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the request to withdraw Item #7 be and the same is hereby granted and said Item is hereby withdrawn without prejudice.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, pursuant to Section 33-6 of the Code of Miami-Dade County, Florida, the County hereby accepts the proffered Declaration of Restrictions and Planned Area Development Agreement and does exercise its option to enforce the proffered restrictions wherein the same are more restrictive than applicable zoning regulations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, notice is hereby given to the applicant that the request herein constitutes an initial development order and does not constitute a final development order and that one, or more, concurrency determinations will subsequently be required before development will be permitted.

The Director is hereby authorized to make the necessary notations upon the maps and records of the Miami-Dade County Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources and to issue all permits in accordance with the terms and conditions of this resolution.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 17th day of October, 2013.

Hearing No. 13-9-CZ14-1

ej

STATE OF FLORIDA

COUNTY OF MIAMI-DADE

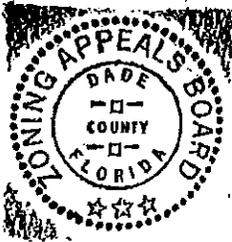
I, Earl Jones, as Deputy Clerk for the Miami-Dade County Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources as designated by the Director of the Miami-Dade County Department of Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources and Ex-Officio Secretary of the Miami-Dade County Community Zoning Appeals Board 14, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that the above and foregoing is a true and correct copy of Resolution No. CZAB14-10-13 adopted by said Community Zoning Appeals Board at its meeting held on the 17th day of October, 2013.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand on this the 25th day of October, 2013.



Earl Jones, Deputy Clerk (3230)
Miami-Dade Department of Department of Regulatory
and Economic Resources

SEAL





miamidade.gov

Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources
Development Services Division

www.miamidade.gov/economy

October 25, 2013

University of Miami
c/o Tracy Slavens

Re: Hearing No. 13-9-CZ14-1
Location: The Southwest corner of SW 152 Street & SW 124 Avenue, Miami-Dade County, Florida

Dear Applicant:

Enclosed herewith is Resolution No. CZAB14-10-13, adopted by the Miami-Dade County Community Zoning Appeals Board, which **accepted your Declaration of Restrictions and Planned Area Development Agreement and approved your request for a district boundary changes to BU-2 on Exhibit A (Item #1), PAD on Exhibit B (Item #16), and RU-4L on Exhibit C (Item #20) and approved the balance of your application** on the above noted location. Please note the conditions under which said approval was granted, since failure to comply with stipulated conditions, if any, will result in the issuance of civil violation notices requiring payment of daily fines.

If stipulated in the resolution that building permits and/or use, occupancy or completion certificates will be required, please note that permits must be obtained and final inspection approvals received for construction work done or required prior to issuance of the applicable certificate(s) pursuant to Section 33-8 of the Zoning Code. Payment of certificates may be subject to annual renewal by this Department. Application for required permits and/or certificates related to use, occupancy or completion should be made with this Department as appropriate. At time of permit application you must provide a copy of this resolution.

Please note that any aggrieved party may appeal the Board's decision to the Board of County Commissioners, within 14 days from the date of posting on the [redacted]. The date of posting is **October 21, 2013**. In the event an appeal is filed, any action undertaken during the appeal period is at the applicant's risk.

Sincerely,

Earl Jones
Deputy Clerk

Enclosure

Delivering Excellence Every Day

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: CRC HCP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:16:10 PM

Dear FWS:

My name is Riley Duncan I live at [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I am writing this email today to state my concerns about the planned construction of the Coral Reef Commons and the decimation of the Richmond Pine Rockland tract. This is a very concerning topic for me because the Richmond tract is the largest area of Pineland forest (outside of the Everglades National Park) and the most biodiverse habitat in the United States. This site is home to some 230 native plant species of which 40 are endemic to the Pine Rockland ecosystem, and of those 40-indigenous species 23-25 can be found nowhere else. As I am sure you are aware the area is considered "critical habitat" to a handful of federally endangered and threatened animals as well, and even though (according to the HCP and EA) not all of these animals have not been documented directly on the CRC site, I fear some of the wildlife such as the bonneted bat will suffer indirectly from the noise and light pollution this project will create.

In your own mission statement, you claim to "Conserve the nature of America". It would be a shame that on your watch and due to your complacency one of South Florida's most precious and irreplaceable habitats would be exploited and lost for commercial gain. I hope that you will stand in opposition to protect and prevent further destruction of one of the world's rarest forests and the federally endangered plants and animals that inhabit it.

Best regards, Riley Duncan

From: [REDACTED]
To: ["Ashleigh Blackford"; "Dell, David"; Crc_hcp@fws.gov](#)
Subject: Center et al comments re Coral Reef Commons draft HCP and EA
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 3:15:29 PM
Attachments: [2017_05_22 Center et al comments CRC HCP.pdf](#)

Greetings,

Please find attached comments on behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity, Everglades Law Center, South Florida Wildlands Association, Sierra Club Miami Group, Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition, Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association, and Tropical Audubon on the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA). Due to the vulnerability of the species addressed in the HCP – the Florida bonneted bat, Bartram’s scrub hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Miami tiger beetle, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, deltoid spurge, and Florida brickell-bush – and the inadequacies of the proposed HCP as outlined in the enclosed comment letter, we respectfully request that the application for the Coral Reef Commons HCP be denied, as it fails to provide sufficient information to evaluate the project’s impact on listed species and their habitat and it would further fragment and degrade vital habitat for listed species. We also request that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service find that Coral Reef Commons will have significant effects and evaluate the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the project in an Environmental Impact Statement.

In lieu of emailing or mailing you copies of the works cited, I’ve uploaded them to an electronic document transfer service and provided you instructions via email for downloading them. Please let me know if you’d like to receive them a different way.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED] with any questions about this comment letter.

Thank you

Jaclyn Lopez | Florida Director, Senior Attorney
Center for Biological Diversity | [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Sent via electronic mail

May 22, 2017

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
David_dell@fws.gov
Crc_hcp@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov

Re: Comments on Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford:

On behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity, Everglades Law Center, South Florida Wildlands Association, Sierra Club Miami Group, Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition, Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association, and Tropical Audubon, thank you for your consideration of these comments on the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA). Due to the vulnerability of the species addressed in the HCP – the Florida bonneted bat, Bartram’s scrub hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Miami tiger beetle, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, deltoid spurge, and Florida brickell-bush – and the inadequacies of the proposed HCP as outlined below, we respectfully request that the application for the Coral Reef Commons HCP be denied, as it fails to provide sufficient information to evaluate the project’s impact on listed species and their habitat and it would further fragment and degrade vital habitat for listed species. We also request that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) find that Coral Reef Commons will have significant effects and evaluate the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the project in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

I. Project Background

The Richmond pine rocklands are characterized by limestone outcrops, Florida slash pine as the sole canopy species, and a diverse understory of scrubs and herbs. They are also the site of the proposed Coral Reef Commons, a mixed-use development with 900 apartments, a large anchor store, additional retail, and a school.¹ On July 15, 2014 the Service notified the developer of Coral Reef Commons that such a project could result in the “take” of species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and thus, that the developer could be liable for violating federal

¹ Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan (*hereinafter* HCP) at 10.

law.² In November 2014, the developer announced it would submit a Section 10 incidental take permit (ITP) and HCP application to the Vero Beach office of the Service to authorize the take of ESA-listed species, potentially including the Florida bonneted bat (*Eumops floridanus*), Florida leafwing butterfly (*Anaea troglodyta*), Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak butterfly (*Strymon acis bartrami*), Florida brickell-bush (*Brickellia mosieri*), Carter’s small-flowered flax (*Linum carteri* var. *carteri*), deltoid spurge (*Chamaesyce deltoidea* ssp. *deltoidea*), and tiny polygala (*Polygala smallii*) associated with the destruction of irreplaceable and endangered pine rockland habitat.³

In 2015, Coral Reef Retail LLC, Coral Reef Resi PH I LLC, and Ramdev (collectively “RAM Coral Reef”), and the University of Miami (collectively “Applicants”) applied for an ITP for 30 years to take the Florida bonneted bat, Bartram’s hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Miami tiger beetle, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, and white-crowned pigeon in order to develop and operate Coral Reef Commons. The project includes 137.90 acres (including 55.29 acres of on-site mitigation), plus 50.96 acres of off-site mitigation.⁴ The on-site mitigation or “conservation areas” are owned by RAM Coral Reef and include 23.92 acres in what is being called the “west preserve”, 21.61 acres in the “east preserve”, 2.16 acres in the “southern corridor”, 3.72 acres of rockland hammock, and 3.88 acres of “stepping stones”. RAM Coral Reef intends to destroy 82.61 acres on the project site. RAM Coral Reef proposes to place the 51.41 acres (on-site mitigation, minus the stepping stones) under a “conservation encumbrance.”⁵

The Applicants’ proposed off-site mitigation area is ½ mile southeast of the Coral Reef Commons project and is owned by University of Miami. This land is currently under a deed restriction to protect the deltoid spurge.⁶ The Applicants propose to record a deed restriction on the off-site mitigation area to allow for further protections.⁷ Other than to help RAM Coral Reef mitigate for Coral Reef Commons, it is not clear why University Miami has applied for an incidental take permit for this project. It is the Applicants’ position that the on-site preserve will offset the incidental take impacts,⁸ and that the off-site mitigation provides “additional substantial conservation benefits.”⁹

Applicants have submitted a draft EA for the HCP and ITP that purports to provide a net benefit to the listed species in the area. The following comments detail the legal inadequacies of the EA and HCP and request that the Service reject the application and/or find that it will have significant impacts and initiate an EIS.

² Service Letter of Concern, July 15, 2014, HCP App. A.

³ Bach, T. Nov. 28, 2014, Developer to Submit Habitat Conservation Plan for Controversial Walmart Project, http://blogs.miaminewtimes.com/riptide/2014/11/developer_to_submit_habitat_conservation_plan_in_order_to_proceed_with_cont.php.

⁴ HCP at 1.

⁵ HCP at 2.

⁶ HCP at 3.

⁷ HCP at 3.

⁸ HCP at 3.

⁹ HCP at 3.

II. Regulatory Background

The ESA, by way of its “language, history, and structure . . . indicates beyond doubt that Congress intended endangered species to be afforded the highest of priorities” for protection under the law.¹⁰ Thus, the ESA prohibits the “take” of a listed species.¹¹ Section 10 of the ESA provides an exception to the take prohibition by allowing the incidental take of a listed species where, “such taking is incidental to, and not the purpose of, the carrying out of an otherwise lawful activity.”¹² An ITP will not be granted unless the applicant submits a conservation plan to the Service, who receives delegated authority from the Secretary of the Department of Interior. The Service then makes a determination that the “impact which will likely result from such taking” and the “steps the applicant will take to minimize and mitigate such impacts . . . will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild.”¹³ Before issuing an ITP, the Service must make a finding that the application and conservation plan provide:

1. the taking will be incidental;
2. the applicant will, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize and mitigate the impacts of such taking;
3. the applicant will ensure that adequate funding for the plan will be provided;
4. the taking will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild; and
5. the measures, if any, required under subparagraph (A)(iv) will be met...¹⁴

Prior to granting an ITP application, the Service must also undergo the consultation process with itself, as outlined in Section 7 of the ESA, to assure that granting the permit “is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of habitat of such species.”¹⁵ To jeopardize the continued existence of the species is to engage in an activity that either, “directly or indirectly . . . reduces appreciably the likelihood of both the survival and recovery of a listed species in the wild by reducing the reproduction, numbers, or distribution of that species.”¹⁶

When engaging in Section 7 consultation to determine whether the approval of an ITP will cause jeopardy, the Service is required to render its decision by evaluating the “best scientific and commercial data available.”¹⁷ If the Service determines the project is unlikely to cause jeopardy to the species or adverse modification of its habitat, the agency must provide a statement specifying the impact of the incidental take on the listed species, outlining “reasonable and

¹⁰ *Tennessee Valley Authority v. Hill*, 437 U.S. 153, 174 (1978).

¹¹ To “take” a species is to “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any conduct. 16 U.S.C. § 1532(19).

¹² 16 U.S.C. § 1539(a)(1)(B).

¹³ 16 U.S.C. § 1539(a)(2)(A)(i–iv).

¹⁴ 16 U.S.C. § 1539(a)(2)(B). The term “measures” in subsection (v) refers to “any additional measures the Secretary may require as being necessary or appropriate for the purposes of the plan.” *Id.* at § 1539 (a)(2)(A)(iv).

¹⁵ *Id.* at § 1536(a)(2).

¹⁶ *Florida Key Deer v. Brown*, 364 F.Supp.2d 1345, 1359 (U.S. Dist. Ct. S.D. Fla. 2005) (*citing* 50 C.F.C. § 402.02).

¹⁷ 16 U.S.C. § 1536(a)(2).

prudent measures” to minimize the impact from incidental take, and setting forth any conditions the agency and applicant must follow in accordance with the ITP.¹⁸

In addition to its obligations under the ESA, the Service also must satisfy its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) before it may issue an ITP. NEPA requires that all federal agencies carrying out “major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment” produce a “detailed statement” that specifies the impact the proposed action will have on the environment, the adverse effects resulting from the proposed action that cannot be avoided, and any alternative actions.¹⁹ Under NEPA, the agency must also consider “any irreversible . . . commitments of resources,” such as the loss of a protected species caused by the proposed action.²⁰

Federal agencies, like the Service here, must prepare an EIS prior to engaging in “major Federal actions” that significantly affects the environment.²¹ An agency’s decision to grant a permit may constitute “major federal action,” triggering the need for an EIS.²²

III. Coral Reef Commons Will Negatively Impact Pine Rocklands

The Coral Reef Commons HCP is legally and scientifically deficient because it does not adequately evaluate the loss of habitat the project will cause; it does not evaluate at all human population growth in the area or other regional developments; and it does not adequately evaluate the impact of climate change on the species. If the Service fully evaluated these impacts, it would not be able to authorize take of the listed species without determining that the take, in light of the cumulative and synergistic threats, will jeopardize some of those species.

A. Coral Reef Commons Will Destroy and Fragment Habitat

The pine rockland community is one of the most endangered habitats in North America.²³ Pine rocklands provide critical foraging and nesting habitat for a diverse array of wildlife, including federally listed species.²⁴ They also provide cover and roosting sites to a variety of wildlife species.²⁵ Pine rockland ecosystems contain a rich herbaceous flora with many narrowly endemic animal species.²⁶ These once-extensive communities have been plagued by development in the region, and are now greatly reduced and have been divided into many smaller fragments.²⁷

¹⁸ *Id.* at § 1536(b)(4)(A–C).

¹⁹ 42 U.S.C. § 4332(C)(i–iii).

²⁰ *Id.* at § 4332(c)(iv–v).

²¹ 42 U.S.C. § 4332(c).

²² *Sierra Club v. Van Antwerp*, 526 F.3d 1353, 1361 (11th Cir. 2008).

²³ Williams, D.A., Y. Wang, M. Borchetta, and M.S. Gaines, *Genetic diversity and spatial structure of a keystone species in fragmented pine rockland habitat*, *Biological Conservation*, April 2007, at 256, 257.

²⁴ Service, *Multi-Species Recovery Plan – Pine Rocklands*, 3-161, July 23, 2014.

²⁵ *Id.* at 3-167.

²⁶ Snyder, J.R., M.S. Ross, S. Koptur, and J.P. Sah, *Developing Ecological Criteria for Prescribed Fire in South Florida Pine Rockland Ecosystems*, Se. Env'tl. Research Ctr., July 2005, at 1.

²⁷ *Id.*; URS Corporation Southern. 2007. EEL Program, Management Plan, Part II – Pine Rockland (DRAFT) Chapter 1: The Pine Rockland Habitat, http://regionalconservation.org/ircs/pdf/publications/2007_09.pdf; FNAI – Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida: 2010 Edition, http://www.fnai.org/PDF/NC/Pine_Rockland_Final_2010.pdf.

Pine rocklands are found in three areas of southern Florida: the Miami Rock Ridge of southeastern peninsular Florida, the Lower Florida Keys, and the southern Big Cypress pinelands.²⁸ The Miami Rock Ridge is characterized by a very diverse shrub layer dominated by hardwoods, and an equally diverse herb layer containing 35 taxa endemic to southern Florida, including several species listed by the federal government as threatened or endangered.²⁹ This area has been fragmented and degraded by past land use practices.³⁰

The north-south distribution of pine rocklands along the Miami Rock Ridge has already been reduced by over 12 miles.³¹ According to the Pine Rocklands Multispecies Recovery Plan (Recovery Plan) for South Florida, the Service's ultimate goal is to restore the pine rocklands by maintaining the function, structure, and ecological processes of pine rocklands, and preventing any further loss, degradation, or fragmentation, of this imperiled South Florida community.³²

In Miami-Dade County, the remaining pine rockland habitat is highly fragmented, with the majority of fragments being less than 50 ha in size and embedded in an urban landscape.³³ The Richmond tract of pine rocklands in Miami-Dade County, where Coral Reef Commons is proposed, contains 260 taxa of native plants.³⁴ Imperiled species that may utilize or depend upon pine rocklands in this area include: Florida bonneted bat, Florida leafwing butterfly, Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly, Miami tiger beetle, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, white-crowned pigeon, Everglades bully, Florida brickell-bush, Carter's small-flowered flax, deltoid spurge, and tiny polygala.³⁵ In addition, the native southeast Florida slash pine endemic to the rockland ecosystem, Dade County pine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*), is redlisted by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.³⁶ The Service identifies acquiring lands that are threatened with development, such as the pine rocklands of the proposed Coral Reef Commons, as the main tool in preventing further destruction or degradation of existing pine rocklands.³⁷

The Coral Reef Commons development threatens to undo the important work the Recovery Plan has prioritized for South Florida, threatens already listed species, and could push many other species to extinction just by this loss of habitat.³⁸ The leading cause of extinction is habitat loss,³⁹

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ Abandoned & Little Known Airfields: Florida – Southern Miami Area. June 11, 2013; 1945 Richmond/South Dade Hurricane Presented by Robert Molleda at 2007 Florida Governor's Hurricane Conference; Macfie, D. Richmond Naval Air Station, 1942-1961, Tequesta.

³¹ Service, *Multi-Species Recovery Plan – Pine Rocklands*, 3-173, July 23, 2014.

³² *Id.* at 3-191.

³³ Williams at 256, 257.

³⁴ FWS, at 3-162.

³⁵ EA at 22-24.

³⁶ <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/18153818/0>.

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ RAM, through University of Miami has already obtained an After-the-Fact Natural Forest Community permit and Covenant to clear vegetation. See DRER letter to Altshul, July 23, 2013.

³⁹ Harris, L. 1984. *The fragmented forest: Island biogeography theory and the preservation of biotic diversity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; Meffe, G.K. 1997. *Principles of conservation biology*. Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, Inc.

and native habitats in Florida are rapidly disappearing.⁴⁰ This has resulted in the extirpation or extinction of 13 vertebrates over the last 150 years.⁴¹ Habitat loss and fragmentation can lead to increased mortality;⁴² reduced abundance;⁴³ disruption of the social structure of populations;⁴⁴ reduced population viability;⁴⁵ isolated populations with reduced population sizes and decreased genetic variation.⁴⁶ Loss of genetic variation may reduce the ability of individuals to adapt to a changing environment; cause inbreeding depression;⁴⁷ reduce survival and reproduction;⁴⁸ and increase the probability of extinction.⁴⁹

Despite the efforts of the Applicants to portray the conservation measures as providing a net benefit for the species on the project site, it is evident and undisputed that the project will result in the loss of more than 80 acres of habitat, including critical habitat for several species, and that the lost habitat would further fragment remaining habitat in the Richmond area.⁵⁰ The draft EA states that Coral Reef Commons would “inhibit connectivity and dispersal of species” across the project site, and would lead to impacts from pesticides, noise, lighting, and traffic.⁵¹ Further loss of habitat for some of these species could push them to the brink of extinction, especially in light of population growth, other nearby development, and the impacts of climate change.

⁴⁰ Kautz, R.S. and J.A. Cox. 2001. Strategic Habitats for Biodiversity Conservation in Florida. *Conservation Biology*, 15(1): 55-77, at 56.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² Jules, E.S. 1998. Habitat fragmentation and demographic change for a common plant trillium in old-growth forest. *Ecology*, 79(5): 1645-1656.

⁴³ Flather, C.H and M. Bevers. 2002. Patchy reaction-diffusion and population abundance: the relative importance of habitat amount and arrangement. *Am Nat*, 159(1): 40-56.

⁴⁴ Ims, R.A. and H.P. Andeassen. 1999. Effects of experimental habitat fragmentation and connectivity on root vole demography. *J. Anim Ecol*, 68(5): 839-852, at 839-49; Cale, P. 2003. The influence of social behavior, dispersal and landscape fragmentation on population structure in a sedentary bird. *Biol Conserv*, 109: 237-248.

⁴⁵ Harrison, S. and E. Bruna. 1999. Habitat fragmentation and large scale conservation: what do we know for sure? *Ecography*, 22(3): 225-232, at 225-30; Srikwan, S. and D.S. Woodruff. 2000. Genetic erosion in isolated small-mammal populations following rainforest fragmentation. In A. a. Young, *Genetics, Demography, and Viability of Fragmented Populations*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 149-172; Cale 2003; Lindenmayer, D. and J. Fisher. 2006. *Habitat Fragmentation and Landscape Change: An Ecological and Conservation Synthesis*. Washington, D.C. Island Press.

⁴⁶ Frankham, R. 1996. Relationship of genetic variation to population size in wildlife. *Conserv Biol*, 10: 1500-1508.

⁴⁷ Ebert, D. C. 2002. A selective advantage to immigrant genes in a *Daphnia* metapopulation. *Science*, 295, 485-488.

⁴⁸ Frankham, R. 1995. Inbreeding and extinction a threshold effect. *Conserv Biol*, 9: 792-799; Reed, D.H. and R. Frankham. 2003. Correlation between fitness and genetic diversity. *Conserv Biol*, 17, 230-237.

⁴⁹ Saacheri, I., M. Kuussaari, M. Kankare, P. Vikman, W. Fortelliu, and I. Hanski. 1998. Inbreeding and extinction in a butterfly metapopulation. *Nature*, 392: 491-494; Westemeier, R.L., J.D. Brawn, S.A. Simpson, T.L. Esker, R.W. Jansen, J.W. Walk, E.L. Kershner, J.L. Bouzat, and K.N. Paige. 1998. Tracking the long-term decline and recovery of an isolated population. *Science*, 282, 1695-1698; Kramer-Schadt, S., E. Revilla, T. Wiegand, and U. Breitenmoser. 2004. Fragmented landscapes, road mortality and patch connectivity: modeling influences on the dispersal of Eurasian lynx. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 41: 711-723; Letcher, B.H., K.H. Nislow, J.A. Coombs, M.J. O'Donnell, and T.L. Dubreuil. 2007. Population response to habitat fragmentation in a stream-dwelling brook trout population. *PLoS ONE* 2(11): e1139; Ruiz-Gutierrez, V., T.A. Gavin, and A.A. Dhondt. 2008. Habitat fragmentation lowers survival of a tropical forest bird. *Ecological Application*, 18(4): 838-846; Sherwin, W.B. and C. Moritz. 2000. Managing and monitoring genetic erosion. In A. a. Young, *Genetics, demography, and viability of fragmented populations*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 9-34.

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Id.*

B. Population Growth and Other Nearby Development Will Contribute to the Loss of Pine Rockland Habitat

A leading cause of habitat loss is human population growth and corresponding land uses. A 2000 analysis of potential ecological connectivity in Florida found that only about half the land identified for habitat connectivity was publically owned and managed.⁵² Meanwhile, *Florida 2060: A Population Distribution Scenario for the State of Florida* predicts Florida's population will grow by 49 percent by 2060. The FWC's *Wildlife 2060: What's at stake for Florida?* estimates that such population increases could result in the conversion of 7 million acres from rural and natural to urban uses.⁵³ It predicts that nearly 3 million acres of existing agricultural lands and 2.7 million acres of native habitat will be claimed by roads, shopping malls and subdivisions; 1.6 million acres of woodland habitat may be lost; wetland habitat may become more isolated and degraded; and gopher tortoises may lose a fifth of their existing range.⁵⁴ While Florida is projected to increase its population statewide by 50% by 2060, Miami-Dade County is projected to grow from 2,253,362 residents in 2000 to 4,046,698 in 2060 – outpacing the expected statewide average at 56%.⁵⁵

Human population nearly doubled in the southeast from 1970-2000.⁵⁶ Florida's population is expected to continue to grow,⁵⁷ and Miami is experiencing a population growth rate of eight percent.⁵⁸ Population growth threatens biodiversity due to increased demand for land, water, and other resources. Metropolitan areas in the southeast United States are adding urbanized land at an even faster rate than population is increasing, with developed land increasing by 47 percent from 1982-1997.⁵⁹ Habitat loss and degradation due to development is generally permanent and poses an increasing threat to imperiled species. In addition to population growth in the region, the Service must also consider the synergistic and cumulative effects of these planned nearby projects, along with all past land use projects.

As the Service is aware, Miami Wilds, a theme park on Miami-Dade County property, is adjacent to the proposed site of Coral Reef Commons and Zoo Miami. The county recently approved \$13.5 million to 20th Century Fox, however, it is unclear how soon work would

⁵² Hctor, T.S., M.H. Carr, and P.D. Zwick. 2000. Identifying a Linked Reserve System Using a Regional Landscape Approach: the Florida Ecological Network. *Conservation Biology*, 14: 984-1000 at 984-99.

⁵³ Cerulean, S. 2008. *Wildlife 2060: What's at stake for Florida?* Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 2.

⁵⁴ *Id.* at 4.

⁵⁵ Zwick, P.D. and M.H. Carr. 2006. *Florida 2060: a population distribution scenario for the state of Florida*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, GeoPlan Center.

⁵⁶ Folkerts, G.W. 1997. State and fate of the world's aquatic fauna. p. 1-16 In: Benz, G.W. and D.E. Collins (editors). 1997. *Aquatic Fauna in Peril: The Southeastern Perspective*. Southeast Aquatic Research Institute Special Publication 1, Lenz Design and Communications, Decatur, GA. 553 pp.

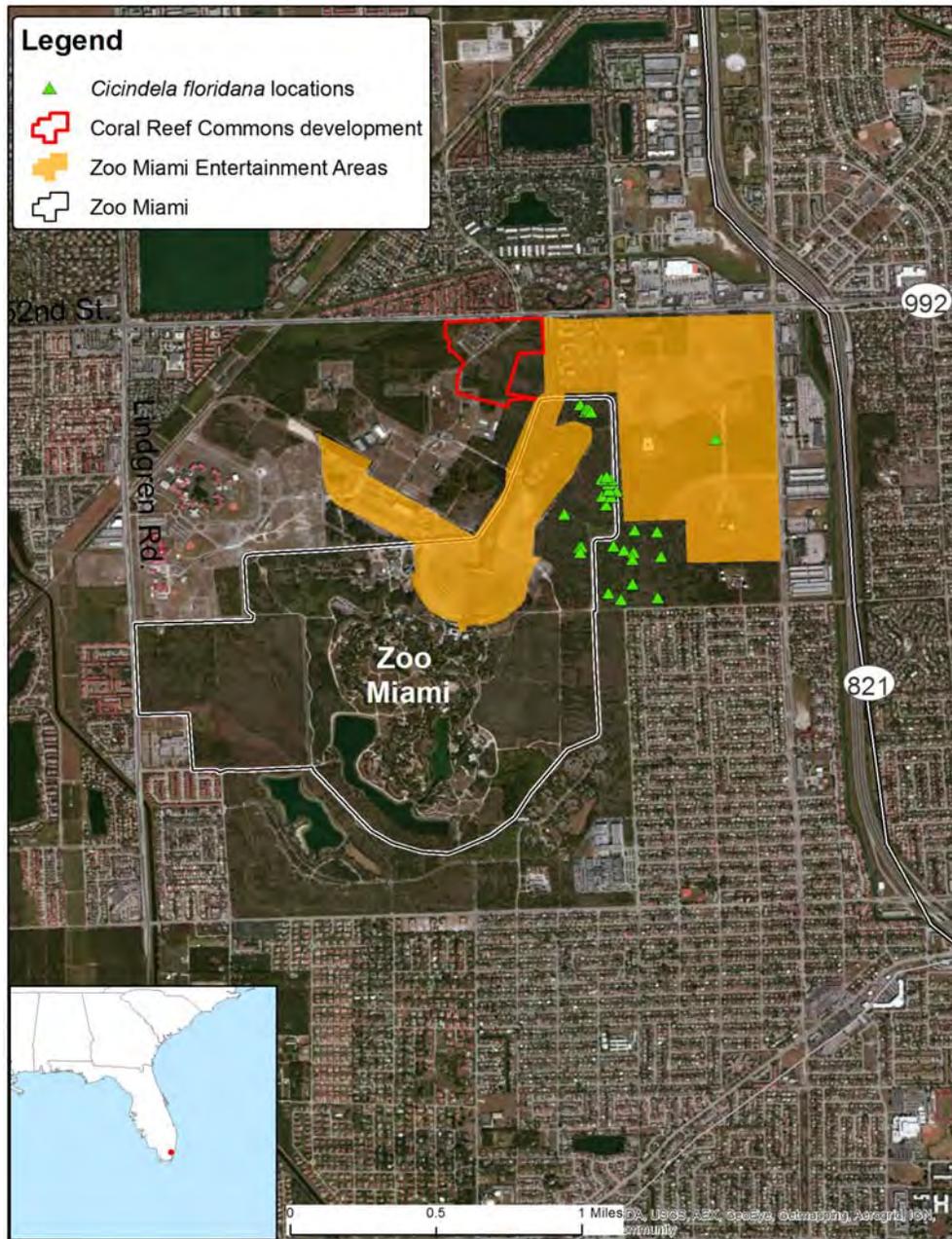
⁵⁷ U.S. Census Bureau 2009.

⁵⁸ U.S. Census Bureau 2009.

⁵⁹ Buckner, M.M., W. Smith, J.A. Takats. 2002. Tennessee, Cumberland, and Mobile River Basins at Risk. A Biological Assessment and Vision for the World Wildlife Fund's Southeast Rivers and Streams Project. Nashville, TN. 52 pp. :

www.worldwildlife.org/what/wherewework/sers/WWFBinaryitem2738.pdf.

begin.⁶⁰ The first phase of Miami Wilds would be a water park, hotel, retail, dining, event complex, and 52 acre parking lot, in direct contact with pine rockland. The second phase of the project would be a theme park on U.S. Coast Guard land. Many of the same species impacted by Coral Reef Commons would be impacted by Miami Wilds.



⁶⁰ Munzenrieder, K. Oct. 23, 2014. Fox Theme Park, Miami Wilds, Wants \$13.5 Million in County Money, http://blogs.miaminewtimes.com/riptide/2014/10/fox_theme_park_miami_wilds_wants_135_million_in_county_money.php; <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=1474675&page=2>.

C. Coral Reef Commons will Exacerbate the Effects of Climate Change

The EA and HCP acknowledge the high vulnerability of pine rockland habitat in Southeast Florida to the “adverse effects” of climate change,⁶¹ but then conclude through a flawed and incomplete analysis that climate change will have no impacts in the proposed project area. As detailed below, the best available science clearly shows that sea level rise, increasing storm surge and tidal flooding, more intense hurricanes, changes in precipitation, and rising temperatures and increases in extreme weather events will have adverse effects on the project area and the species inhabiting the pine rockland ecosystem. The Service must use the best available science and properly evaluate the loss and degradation of habitat that will result from sea level rise and climate change, the pressure this will place on human and non-human populations and habitat, and how these impacts will be compounded by the proposed project.

1. The sea-level rise impacts analysis is fundamentally flawed

The EA and HCP acknowledge that southeast Florida is highly vulnerable to the direct and indirect impacts of sea level rise, but then conclude through a flawed analysis that the proposed project area “would not be expected to be impacted by sea level rise,” including no effects from inundation or saltwater intrusion into groundwater.⁶² The Richmond pine rocklands are less than five miles from the Atlantic Ocean, and sea level rise will clearly adversely impact this low-lying habitat in the near-term. The EA and HCP sea level rise analyses are fundamentally flawed in several key regards, as detailed below.

First, in its cursory sea level rise analysis, the HCP uses a projection of approximately two feet of sea level rise citing the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact (“Compact”)⁶³ Unified Sea Level Rise Projection for 2060.⁶⁴ However, the best available science, including the science cited in the Compact, indicates that sea level rise could plausibly exceed two feet by 2060, and the Service must consider higher sea level rise scenarios over the project lifetime.

⁶¹ EA at 7 (“The inevitable consequences of climate change throughout the 21st century will impact pine rocklands as sea level rise (SLR) and increased precipitation, storm intensity, and annual average temperatures proceed to transform the hydrology and subsequently, the vegetative communities in South Florida, the Florida Keys and Bahamas.”); EA at 118 (“Climate change information summarized by the Service (Attachment 16) strongly suggests that SLR could cause adverse effects throughout MDC, including the Richmond Area and the HCP Plan Area within this century.”); HCP at 151 (“Florida is considered one of the most vulnerable areas to climate change, with Southeast Florida especially susceptible to impacts such as rising sea levels. MDC’s elevation and porous substrate make the region vulnerable to the many potential effects of sea level rise.”).

⁶² EA at 118 (“This effort established a Unified Sea Level Rise Projection that estimates a 14 to 26 in rise in sea level by 2060 for the Southeast Florida region (Compact 2015). Considering this prediction, the property proposed for the development of CRC would not be expected to be impacted by sea level rise.”); EA at 118 (“Consequently, during the life of the permit, adverse effects from the Salt Front to the HCP Plan Area would not be expected to occur.”); HCP at 152 (“All of the On-site Preserves are above the Projected 2060 approximately two foot rise in sea level, thus the Conservation Program is not expected to be impacted by sea level rise.”); HCP at 153 (“Based on these data and model Projections, potential for saltwater intrusion from sea level rise in the next 30 years will not affect the ability to implement the Conservation Program and reach the desired success criteria.”).

⁶³ Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact Sea Level Rise Work Group (Compact). 2015. Unified Sea Level Rise Projection for Southeast Florida. A Document Prepared for the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact Steering Committee. 35 p. (*hereinafter* Compact).

⁶⁴ HCP at 152.

As noted by the Compact, recent regional sea level rise in Miami-Dade County has significantly exceeded global average sea level rise.⁶⁵ Specifically, Wdowinski et al. (2016) found that the average rate of regional sea level rise off Virginia Key since 2006 is 9 ± 4 mm per year, which is much higher than the global average rate between 1993 and 2012 of 3.2 ± 0.4 mm per year based on satellite data and 2.8 ± 0.4 mm per year based on in-situ data.⁶⁶ This is consistent with research that has detected a rapid acceleration in the rate of sea level rise along the US Atlantic Coast since 2000, attributed to the weakening of the entire Gulf Stream system.⁶⁷ Based on evidence of higher regional sea level rise in the Miami region, Wdowinski et al. (2016) concluded that planners “should rely on regional SLR rate projections and not only on the commonly used global SLR projections.”

Second, the Compact provides guidance on the sea level rise projections that planners should use for different time horizons, including short term (2030), medium term (2060) and long term (2100):

- 1) short term, by 2030, sea level is projected to rise 6 to 10 inches above 1992 mean sea level,
- 2) medium term, by 2060, sea level is projected to rise 14 to 34 inches above 1992 mean sea level,
- 3) long term, by 2100, sea level is projected to rise 31 to 81 inches above 1992 mean sea level.⁶⁸

The Compact recommends using the upper curve estimates from its Unified Sea Level Rise Projection for projects which are “not easily replaceable or removable, have a long design life (more than 50 years) or are critically interdependent with other infrastructure or services.”⁶⁹ The proposed project falls squarely into this category because it is not easily removable, has a long design life, and is interdependent since it entails extensive residential and commercial construction intended for long-term operation, as described in the HCP: “Development activities include construction and long-term operation of residential units, retail/commercial uses, a school, and infrastructure improvements, including improvements to the existing main spine road, within approximately 86.49 acres of the CRC Property.”⁷⁰

Therefore, the HCP and EA should conduct the sea level rise analysis using the Compact’s recommended upper curve projection of 34 inches (almost 3 feet) by 2060 and 81 inches (6.75 feet) by 2100.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Compact at 9.

⁶⁶ Wdowinski, S. et al. 2016. Increasing flooding hazard in coastal communities due to rising sea level: Case study of Miami Beach, Florida. *Ocean & Coastal Management* 126: 1-8.

⁶⁷ Sallenger, A.H. et al. 2012. Hotspot of accelerated sea-level rise on the Atlantic coast of North America. *Nature Climate Change* 2: 884-888; Ezer, T. et al. 2013. Gulf Stream’s induced sea level rise and variability along the U.S. mid-Atlantic coast. *Journal of Geophysical Research: Oceans* 118: 685-697; Compact 2015; Park, J. and W. Sweet. 2015. Accelerated sea level rise and Florida Current transport. *Ocean Science* 11: 607-615.

⁶⁸ Compact at 4.

⁶⁹ Compact at 4 (“The upper curve of the Projection should be utilized for planning of high risk Projects to be constructed after 2060 or Projects which are not easily replaceable or removable, have a long design life (more than 50 years) or are critically interdependent with other infrastructure or services.”).

⁷⁰ HCP at 10.

⁷¹ Compact at 5.

Third, the HCP and EA should analyze a time horizon for sea level rise and other climate impacts beyond 30 years since the project's commercial and residential components are clearly intended to be long-lived and operational beyond 30 years. As noted in the HCP, the applicant requested an ITP duration of 30 years, but also requested options for extending the permit in 25-year increments,⁷² which reflects the intention for a long project lifetime. The best available science makes clear that sea level rise will only worsen and accelerate over time under all IPCC emissions scenarios, and that the effects of sea level rise will be long-lived. Scientists estimate that we lock in 8 feet of sea-level rise over the long term for every degree Celsius of warming.⁷³ Thus, the Service should consider sea level rise and other climate impacts over the longer intended lifetime of the project, for the time period through 2100, for which IPCC climate change projections are available.

2. The saltwater intrusion impacts analysis is fundamentally flawed

The HCP and EA must redo the flawed analysis of the potential for saltwater intrusion in the Biscayne Aquifer, which could adversely harm fresh groundwater in the project area. The HCP and EA rely on two USGS reports to evaluate the potential for sea level rise to cause saltwater intrusion in the Biscayne Aquifer. The USGS reports use an unrealistically low scenario of 9 inches (0.73 feet) of sea level rise after 30 years, based on a 1987 National Research Council increased sea level scenario.⁷⁴ However, as discussed above, the Compact estimates 14 to 34 inches of sea level rise by 2060, and the National Research Council and National Climate Assessment similarly estimates much higher sea level rise by mid-century.⁷⁵ Therefore, the HCP and EA cannot reasonably conclude, based on the USGS reports, that sea level rise will not cause adverse effects to fresh groundwater in the project area. The Service should redo the analysis using the sea level rise estimates recommended by the Compact of 34 inches by 2060 and 81 inches by 2100.

3. The analysis of flooding impacts resulting from climate change is inadequate

The EA and HCP must conduct an adequate analysis of the effects of climate-change-related flooding resulting from increasing storm surge and storm intensity, increasing tidal flooding, and precipitation change. Southeast Florida, with its low elevation and dense population, is considered highly vulnerable to flooding.⁷⁶ However, the HCP fails to conduct any analysis of

⁷² HCP at 8.

⁷³ Levermann, A. et al. 2013. The multimillennial sea-level commitment of global warming. PNAS 110:13745-13750.

⁷⁴ Hughes, J.D. J.T. White. 2016, Hydrologic conditions in urban Miami-Dade County, Florida, and the effect of groundwater pumpage and increased sea level on canal leakage and regional groundwater flow (ver. 1.2, July 2016): U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report 2014-5162, 175 p., at 98, 100.

⁷⁵ In its 2012 sea level rise assessment, the National Research Council estimated global sea-level rise at 18 to 48 cm by 2050, and 0.5 m to 1.4 m by 2100. See National Research Council [NRC]. 2012. Sea level Rise for the Coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington: Past, Present, and Future, National Research Council of the National Academies.

⁷⁶ Weiss, J.L. et al. 2011. Implications of recent sea level rise science for low-elevation areas in coastal cities of the coterminous U.S.A. Climatic Change 105:635-645; Strauss, B.H., et al. 2012. Tidally adjusted estimates of topographic vulnerability to sea level rise and flooding for the contiguous United States. Environmental Research Letters 7: 014033; Melillo, Jerry M., Terese (T.C.) Richmond, and Gary W. Yohe, Eds., 2014: Climate Change

climate-related flooding. The EA includes a two-sentence analysis of the potential impacts of increased flooding resulting from more intense storms, which concludes that increased exposure to inundation and salt/brackish water would increase stress to the pine rockland ecosystem.⁷⁷ Despite this acknowledgement, the EA and HCP fail to propose any mitigation for this adverse impact.

As detailed below, the best available science indicates that climate change will impose an increasing flooding risk in the project area by heightening exposure to high-tide flooding and increasing storm surge, compounded by sea level rise. Clearly, the project area is vulnerable to climate-change-induced flooding and the EA and HCP must adequately assess this risk.

Nuisance flooding, also called “sunny day flooding,” occurs when high tide conditions are exacerbated by sea level rise. Nuisance flooding has increased substantially on the East, Gulf and West coasts by 300 to 925 percent since the 1960s, primarily due to sea level rise.⁷⁸ In Miami-Dade County, the significant increase in nuisance flooding due to sea level rise has already resulted in severe property damage. According to a detailed flooding analysis for Miami Beach between 1998 and 2013, flooding frequency significantly increased after 2006, with a 33 percent increase in rain-induced flooding and a more than 400 percent increase in tide-induced flooding, jumping from 2 events during 1998-2005 to 8 to 16 events during 2006-2013.⁷⁹ The post-2006 increased flooding frequency in Miami Beach correlates well with rapid acceleration of sea level rise in Southeast Florida.

Scientific studies project that nuisance flooding will become much more frequent and severe in the next few decades.⁸⁰ For example, an analysis by Dahl et al. (2017) projected that tidal flooding in Virginia Key off Miami will increase significantly in the near-term, from 5.1 flood events per year during 2001-2015 to 46 flood events per year by 2030 and 206 events per year by 2045.⁸¹

Increasingly intense storms and storm surge due to climate change pose additional climate threats to species in the project area. As sea levels rise, storm surge rides on a higher sea surface

Impacts in the United States: The Third National Climate Assessment. U.S. Global Change Research Program, 841 pp; Parkinson, R.W. et al. 2015. Managing the Anthropocene marine transgression to the year 2100 and beyond in the State of Florida U.S.A. *Climatic Change* 128: 85-98.

⁷⁷ EA at 117-118 (“Although tropical storms are Projected to decrease in number, their intensity is conversely Projected to increase which could expose the HCP Plan Area to long duration disturbances from prolonged backwater flooding following each storm. This increased exposure to both inundation and salt/brackish water would further stress the ecosystem’s resiliency to restore ecological services following these disturbances (Attachment 16).”).

⁷⁸ NOAA. 2014. Sea Level Rise and Nuisance Flood Frequency Changes around the United States. NOAA Technical Report NOS CO-OPS 073; Sweet, W.V. and J. Park. 2014. From the extreme to the mean: Acceleration and tipping points of coastal inundation from sea level rise. *Earth’s Future* 2: 579-600; NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration], What is nuisance flooding (2016), <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/nuisance-flooding.html>.

⁷⁹ Wdowinski, S. et al. 2016.

⁸⁰ Moftakhari, H.R. et al. 2015. Increased nuisance flooding along the coasts of the United States due to sea level rise: Past and future, *Geophysical Research Letters* 42: 9846–9852.

⁸¹ Dahl, K.A. et al. 2017. Sea level rise drives increased tidal flooding frequency at tide gauges along the U.S. East and Gulf Coasts: Projections for 2030 and 2045. *PLoS ONE* 12(2): e0170949.

which pushes water further inland and creates more flooding of coastal habitats.⁸² The frequency of high-severity Atlantic hurricanes is increasing,⁸³ which results in more frequent and severe hurricane-generated surge events and wave heights.⁸⁴ Large storm surge events of Hurricane Katrina magnitude have already doubled in response to warming during the 20th century.⁸⁵ A recent study projected a twofold to sevenfold increase in the frequency of Atlantic hurricane surge events for each 1°C in temperature rise.⁸⁶ A separate study projected that, under the RCP 4.5 emissions scenario which the world is exceeding, the intensity of Atlantic hurricanes will increase, accompanied by a median increase in storm surge of 25 percent to 47 percent.⁸⁷ The study highlighted that the risks to coastal populations are highly non-linear, with the population at risk from storm surge flooding increasing by a median of 30 to 154 percent, and up to 434 percent.

4. The conclusion that climate change will not affect the project area is myopic and unsupported

The conclusion by the HCP and EA that that climate change will not affect the project area fails to consider the massive loss and degradation of habitat that will result from sea level rise and other climate change impacts, the pressure this will place on human and non-human populations and habitat, and how those impacts will be compounded by the proposed project. As illustrated in the figures below, even with two feet of sea level rise, many surrounding areas in Southeast Florida will be inundated, including coastal areas of Miami, the Florida Keys, the Everglades, and substantial portions of Big Cypress National Preserve. The Compact's scenario of 34 inches (~three feet) of sea level rise by 2060 worsens inundation of nearby areas. Under the Compact's scenario of five feet to seven feet of sea level rise by 2100, the project region is inundated on all sides, making it an inland island. *See* figures below, created using the Climate Central mapping tool cited by the HCP.⁸⁸ Notably, these projections do not include the added impacts from increases in climate-related flooding.

The extreme level of inland inundation, even under two feet of sea level rise, would create massive habitat loss, mass population migration, and social crisis, which would have significant direct and indirect effects on the project area, species, and habitats. As noted above, endangered pine rockland forests are found in three areas of southern Florida: the Miami Rock Ridge of southeastern peninsular Florida, the Lower Florida Keys, and the southern Big Cypress pinelands. With just two to three feet of sea level rise, the pine rockland forests in the Lower

⁸² Tebaldi, C. et al. 2012. Modelling sea level rise impacts on storm surges along US coasts. *Environmental Research Letters* 7: 014032.

⁸³ Elsner, J.B. et al. 2008. The increasing intensity of the strongest tropical cyclones. *Nature* 455: 92-95; Bender, M.A. et al. 2010. Modeled impact of anthropogenic warming on the frequency of intense Atlantic hurricanes. *Science* 327: 454-458; Kishtawal, C.M. et al. 2012. Tropical cyclone intensification trends during satellite era (1986–2010). *Geophysical Research Letters* 39:L10810.

⁸⁴ Grinsted, A. et al. 2012. Homogeneous record of Atlantic hurricane surge threat since 1923. *PNAS* 109:19601-19605; Komar, P.D. and J.C. Allan. 2008. Increasing hurricane-generated wave heights along the U.S. east coast and their climate controls. *Journal of Coastal Research* 24: 479-488.

⁸⁵ Grinsted, A. et al. 2013. Projected hurricane surge threat from rising temperatures. *PNAS* 110: 5369-5373.

⁸⁶ *Id.*

⁸⁷ Balaguru, K. et al. 2016. Future hurricane storm surge risk for the U.S. gulf and Florida coasts based on projections of thermodynamic potential intensity. *Climatic Change* 138: 99-110.

⁸⁸ HCP at 152.

Florida Keys and southern Big Cypress pinelands would be jeopardized, making it even more critical to protect all remaining habitat in the Miami Rock Ridge region as a refuge for pine rockland species, including the rock pineland habitat in the proposed project area.

The EA and HCP must also consider the effects of coastal squeeze that will result from sea level rise. Coastal species face significant risks from coastal squeeze that occurs when habitat is pressed between rising sea levels and coastal development that prevents landward movement.⁸⁹ Human responses to sea level rise including landward migration and the construction of hard barriers pose significant risks to the ability of species threatened by sea-level rise to move inland, even if other suitable habitats are available.⁹⁰ Notably, a recent study forecast mass migration of human populations in Miami-Dade County in response to future sea level rise.⁹¹ At three feet of sea level rise, 231,336 residents of Miami-Dade County were categorized as vulnerable to inundation, while 1,967,018 residents were vulnerable at six feet of sea level rise. With six feet of sea level rise, Florida is projected to account for nearly half of the total at-risk population in the US, and Miami-Dade County would be most vulnerable coastal county in the US to population displacement from sea level rise. Therefore, development, projected human population growth⁹² and sea level rise threaten pine rocklands species with coastal squeeze, which must be addressed by the Service.

⁸⁹ Scavia, D. et al. 2002. Climate change impacts on US coastal and marine ecosystems. *Estuaries* 25: 149-164; Fitzgerald, D.M. et al. 2008. Coastal impacts due to sea level rise. *Annual Review of Earth and Planetary Science* 36: 601-647; Defeo, O. et al. 2009. Threats to sandy beach ecosystems: a review. *Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science* 81: 1-12; LeDee, O.E. et al. 2010. The challenge of threatened and endangered species management in coastal areas. *Coastal Management* 38: 337-353; Menon, S. et al. 2010. Preliminary global assessment of terrestrial biodiversity consequences of sea level rise mediated by climate change. *Biodiversity and Conservation* 19: 1599-1609; Noss, R.F. 2011. Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Florida's unenviable position with respect to sea level rise. *Climatic Change* 107:1-16.

⁹⁰ Defeo, O. et al. 2009.

⁹¹ Hauer, M.E. et al. 2016. Millions projected to be at risk from sea-level rise in the continental United States. *Nature Climate Change* 6: 691-695.

⁹² Zwick, P. D., and M. H. Carr. 2006. Florida 2060: A Population Distribution Scenario for the State of Florida; available at www.1000fof.org/PUBS/2060/Florida-2060-Report-Final.pdf.

Figure 1. Projected inundation at two feet of sea-level rise.



Figure 2. Projected inundation at three feet of sea-level rise.



Figure 3. Projected inundation at five feet of sea-level rise.



Figure 4. Projected inundation at seven feet of sea-level rise.



5. *The EA and HCP must use the best available science on species and ecosystem harms from climate change*

The EA and HCP's analysis of potential ecological harms from climate change is completely inadequate and must include the best available science, including the studies detailed below.

A growing body of studies demonstrates that climate change is causing serious harm to life on the planet at all scales from genes to entire ecosystems, including a shocking number of climate-related local extinctions. A recent analysis found that climate-related local extinctions are already widespread and have occurred in hundreds of species, including almost half of the 976 species surveyed, across climatic zones, clades, and habitats.⁹³ A separate study estimated that nearly half (47%) of terrestrial non-volant threatened mammals (out of 873 species) and nearly one-quarter (23.4%) of threatened birds (out of 1,272 species) may have already been negatively impacted by climate change in at least part of their distribution.⁹⁴ The study concluded that “populations of large numbers of threatened species are likely to be already affected by climate change, and that conservation managers, planners and policy makers must take this into account in efforts to safeguard the future of biodiversity.” A recent meta-analysis concluded that climate change is already impacting 82 percent of key ecological processes that form the foundation of healthy ecosystems and which humans depend on for basic needs.⁹⁵ Genes are changing, species' physiology and physical features such as body size are changing, species are rapidly moving to keep track of suitable climate space, and entire ecosystems are under stress.

Concerning the effects climate change is expected to have on southeastern environments, the Global Change Research Program stated, “[e]cological thresholds are expected to be crossed throughout the region, causing major disruptions to ecosystems and to the benefits they provide to people.”⁹⁶ Climate models project both continued warming in all seasons across the southeast United States, and an increase in the rate of warming, and an increased frequency, intensity, and duration of extreme heat events.⁹⁷ The warming in air and water temperatures projected for the southeast will create heat-related stress for fish and wildlife. Climate change will alter the distribution of native plants and animals and will lead to the local loss of imperiled species and the displacement of native species by invasives.⁹⁸

Climate change will increase the incidence and severity of both drought and major storm events in the southeast.⁹⁹ The percentage of the southeast region experiencing moderate to severe drought has already increased over the past three decades. Since the mid- 1970s, the area of

⁹³ J.J. Wiens. 2016. Climate-related local extinctions are already widespread among plant and animal species. *PLoS Biol* 14: e2001104.

⁹⁴ Pacifici, M. et al. 2017. Species' traits influenced their response to recent climate change. *Nature Climate Change* doi: 10.1038/NCLIMATE3223.

⁹⁵ Scheffers, B.R. et al. 2016. The broad footprint of climate change from genes to biomes to people. *Science* 354: 719.

⁹⁶ Karl, T.R. et al. (eds.). 2009. *Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States*. U.S. Global Change Research Program. Cambridge University Press, at 115.

⁹⁷ Carter, L.M. et al. 2014: Ch. 17: Southeast and the Caribbean. *Climate Change Impacts in the United States: The Third National Climate Assessment*, J. M. Melillo, Terese (T.C.) Richmond, and G. W. Yohe, Eds., U.S. Global Change Research Program, 396-417.

⁹⁸ Karl, T.R. et al. (eds.). 2009.

⁹⁹ *Id.*

moderate to severe spring and summer drought has increased by 12 percent and 14 percent, respectively.¹⁰⁰ Fall precipitation tended to increase in most of the southeast, but the extent of region-wide drought still increased by nine percent.¹⁰¹ Both drought and severe storms could threaten many of the endemic pine rocklands species with direct mortality and with habitat alteration, altered vegetation, and altered prey base. The warming climate will likely cause ecological zones to shift upward in latitude and altitude and species' persistence will depend upon, among other factors, the protection of current and future suitable habitat climate refugia, and habitat connectivity to allow species to disperse to suitable habitat.¹⁰²

IV. Coral Reef Commons will negatively impact imperiled species

The HCP intends to address impacts to 8 animals, including 5 federally listed species, one candidate species, one federally proposed species, and one state threatened species. It also purports to provide conservation measures for 14 plant species.

Table 1-1. CRC HCP Covered Species Assessed for Incidental Take Authorization (ITA Species).

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	Group	Documented on the CRC Property ²
Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly	<i>Strymon acis bartrami</i>	FE	Insect	Yes
Florida bonneted bat	<i>Eumops floridanus</i>	FE	Mammal	No
Eastern indigo snake	<i>Drymarchon couperi</i>	FT	Reptile	No
Rim rock crowned snake	<i>Tantilla oolitica</i>	ST	Reptile	No
Gopher tortoise	<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	ST, FC	Reptile	No
Florida leafwing butterfly	<i>Anaea troglodyta floridalis</i>	FE	Insect	No
Miami tiger beetle	<i>Cicindelidia floridana</i>	FE	Insect	No
White-crowned pigeon	<i>Patagioenas leucocephala</i>	ST	Bird	No

FE - Federally endangered

FT - Federally threatened

FC - Federal candidate

ST - State threatened

¹⁰⁰ *Id.* at 111.

¹⁰¹ *Id.*

¹⁰² Jones, K.R. et al. 2016. Incorporating climate change into spatial conservation prioritisation: A review. *Biological Conservation* 194: 121-130.

Table 1-2. CRC HCP Plant Species for which Conservation Benefit Is Provided (Plant Species Subject to the “No Surprises” Policy).

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	Group	Documented on the CRC Property ³
Tiny polygala	<i>Polygala smallii</i>	FE	Plant	Yes
Deltoid spurge	<i>Chamaesyce deltoidea</i>	FE	Plant	Yes
Crenulate lead-plant	<i>Amorpha crenulata</i>	FE	Plant	No
Florida brickell bush	<i>Brickelia mosieri</i>	FE	Plant	No
Garber’s spurge	<i>Chamaesyce garberi</i>	FT	Plant	No
Small’s milkpea	<i>Galactia smallii</i>	FE	Plant	No
Sand flax	<i>Linum arenicola</i>	FE	Plant	No
Carter’s small-flowered flax	<i>Linum carteri var. carteri</i>	FE	Plant	No
Blodgett’s silver bush	<i>Argythammia blodgettii</i>	FT	Plant	No
Florida prairie clover	<i>Dalea carthagenensis var. floridana</i>	FC, PL	Plant	No
Florida pineland crabgrass	<i>Digitaria pauciflora</i>	FC, PL	Plant	No
Everglades bully	<i>Sideroxylon reclinatum ssp. austrofloridense</i>	FC, PL	Plant	No
Florida bristle fern	<i>Trichomanes punctatum ssp. floridanum</i>	FC	Plant	No
Clamshell orchid	<i>Encyclia cochleata var. triandra</i>	SE	Plant	No

FE - Federally endangered

FT - Federally threatened

FC - Federal candidate

ST - State threatened

SE - State endangered

PL – Federal proposed listing

When analyzing the impacts of a proposed project on listed species, the Service must consider the direct and indirect impacts added to the environmental baseline.¹⁰³ The environmental baseline includes “past and present impacts of all proposed Federal projects in the action area, the anticipated impacts of all proposed Federal projects in the action area that have already undergone formal consultation, and the impact of State or private actions which are contemporaneous with the consultation in process.”¹⁰⁴ “Action area” means “all areas to be

¹⁰³ 50 C.F.R. § 402.14(g)(3).

¹⁰⁴ *Id.* § 402.04.

affected directly or indirectly by the Federal action and not merely the immediate area involved in the action.”¹⁰⁵

The draft EA states:¹⁰⁶

Alternative 6 is expected to improve the functional value of the pine rockland habitat that is preserved after development and result in a net benefit to the vegetative communities considering development and conservation activities. Consequently, resident wildlife populations, particularly pine rockland dependent species would also be expected to experience an overall beneficial effect. Regardless, adverse effects would also be expected...

The draft EA further details that the preferred alternative 6 would result in the loss of 82.61 acres of habitat, and that the lost habitat would further fragment remaining habitat in the Richmond area.¹⁰⁷ It states that Coral Reef Commons would “inhibit connectivity and dispersal of species” across the project site, and would lead to impacts from pesticides, noise, lighting, and traffic.¹⁰⁸

The draft EA sites mechanical, chemical, and prescribed fire treatments as having the potential to harm species, but that this should be considered in the context that these land management activities are intended to improve the overall quality of lands for the species; however, it goes on to state that the placement of the project “has the potential to make the implementation of prescribed fire more difficult due to concerns over smoke, health effects, and loss of property” and that it “could further complicate the ability of neighboring land owners to conduct prescribed fire because of the addition of people in the landscape and the need to further manage smoke and property risks”.¹⁰⁹ It also concedes that alternatives to prescribed fire, like mechanical removal are not as ecologically effective as fire.¹¹⁰

Despite these impacts, the draft EA states that because of restoration efforts, perpetual preservation, and management of on-site preserves, the project is expected to result in a net benefit, specifically an overall increase in “habitat function” of +3.10 habitat value units.¹¹¹

Small, isolated populations, like the ones found in the Richmond pine rocklands, are vulnerable to extirpation due to limited gene flow, reduced genetic diversity, and inbreeding depression.¹¹² Population isolation also increases the risk of extinction from stochastic genetic and environmental events including drought, flooding, and toxic spills.¹¹³ Habitat modification and cumulative habitat degradation are also major threats for species, which exist in isolated

¹⁰⁵ *Id.*

¹⁰⁶ EA at 70.

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*

¹⁰⁹ *Id.*

¹¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹¹ EA at 71.

¹¹² Lynch, M. 1996. A quantitative-genetic perspective on conservation issues. In: Avise, J.C. and J.L. Hambrick (eds.). Conservation genetics: case histories from nature. Chapman and Hall, New York. pp. 493-494.

¹¹³ FWS 2009.

populations. Due to blocked avenues of dispersal or limited dispersal ability, isolated populations “gradually and quietly perish” as habitat conditions deteriorate.¹¹⁴ The very limited range and low population size of some of these species exacerbate their risk of extinction.

Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak butterfly & Florida leafwing butterfly

Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak butterfly (Bartram’s) and Florida leafwing butterfly are entirely dependent on pine rockland habitat. This habitat has experienced “substantial destruction, modification, and curtailment” and is now regarded as critically imperiled globally, reduced by economic development by 90 percent on mainland south Florida.¹¹⁵ The Service listed the species in 2014 due to loss of pineland habitat, mismanagement of existing habitat, and pesticides. Future threats include loss of genetic diversity and climate change.

Also in 2014, the Service designated critical habitat for the Bartram’s and Florida leafwing. The Bartram’s and Florida leafwing critical habitat overlaps entirely within the proposed 90.2 acres of the project site.¹¹⁶ The project would result in the loss of 39.47 acres of critical habitat for the butterflies.¹¹⁷ Of the 86.49 acres of habitat that would be lost by the project, 33 acres would be developed that support pineland croton and potentially immature and adult Bartram’s, and this loss of habitat has the potential to kill or injure any immature butterflies that occur within the 33 acres.¹¹⁸ The project would also destroy an additional 53 acres that would support adult Bartram’s by providing nectaring plants.¹¹⁹ Studies state that in order for Bartram’s to recover, further habitat loss from development and fire suppression must be stemmed.¹²⁰

Bartram’s and Florida leafwing are vulnerable to extinction due to their severely reduced range, reduced population size, lack of metapopulation structure, few remaining populations, and relative isolation. While the abundance of the Bartram’s and Florida leafwing is not known, each butterfly is estimated to number in the hundreds, and at times, possibly much lower.¹²¹

Bartram’s is restricted to pine rockland habitat and its only host plant is the pineland croton.¹²² Bartram’s has been observed in the Richmond pine rocklands,¹²³ and across the project site. In one field survey alone, Bartram’s was observed three times on the site of the Coral Reef Commons project on the western and southern central portions, though no detail is given as to

¹¹⁴ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). 2000. Mobile River Basin Aquatic Ecosystem Recovery Plan. Atlanta, GA. 128 pp. Available online: ecos.fws.gov/docs/recovery_plans/2000/001117.pdf.

¹¹⁵ 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47230. “Destruction of pine rocklands for economic development has reduced this habitat in Miami-Dade County...to about 11 percent of its natural extent, from approximately 183,000 acres to 20,100 acres.”

¹¹⁶ EA at 25, 71.

¹¹⁷ EA at 72.

¹¹⁸ EA at 73.

¹¹⁹ EA at 73.

¹²⁰ URS Corporation Southern. 2007. EEL Program, Management Plan, Part II – Pine Rockland (DRAFT) Chapter 1: The Pine Rockland Habitat, http://regionalconservation.org/ircs/pdf/publications/2007_09.pdf; FNAI – Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida: 2010 Edition, http://www.fnai.org/PDF/NC/Pine_Rockland_Final_2010.pdf at 35.

¹²¹ 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47237.

¹²² EA at 73.

¹²³ EA at 25.

which of the units the observations were made.¹²⁴ Another observation of Bartram's was made on the east side of the property.¹²⁵ Additionally, 322 pineland croton locations have been identified on the project site, the exact location has not been made available in the EA or HCP,¹²⁶ except that the HCP notes that 60% of the plants were observed on the preserve portions of the project.¹²⁷ The off-site preserve is designated critical habitat, but no surveys have been conducted to determine whether any Bartram's are present.¹²⁸

The draft EA acknowledges that “[f]ragmentation of pine rockland habitat is a concern for species with low mobility, such as the [Bartram's], and could result in the isolation of populations leading to reduced gene flow between sites, localized population declines, and potentially localized extirpation” and that the project would further fragment habitat.¹²⁹ However, the draft EA discounts those impacts by stating that the southern corridor and the stepping stones would reduce the adverse effects of fragmentation. The stepping stones, 3.88 acres of pine rockland plantings,¹³⁰ were specifically designed for the Bartram's,¹³¹ and the southern corridor would establish 2.16 acres of connectivity between the eastern and western preserves. The draft EA states that it is likely that the stepping stones and corridor would allow the populations to remain connected “at some level” but also acknowledges that “because the connective areas across the proposed CRC would be relatively small and narrow, over time, fragmentation could reduce population viability by decreasing the opportunities for genetic exchange and recruitment between preserves.”¹³² This proposal does not address the fact that Bartram's “is rarely encountered more than” 16 feet from its host plant-pine rockland interface and may have limited dispersal abilities.¹³³

Unlike the Bartram's, the Florida leafwing is thought to be a strong flyer capable of dispersal over large areas,¹³⁴ yet it only has one known hostplant, the pineland croton. It has adapted for life in the pine rockland, and with its wings closed, looks like a dead leaf or bark of South Florida slash pine tree.¹³⁵ The Service designated 359 acres of critical habitat in the Richmond pine rocklands for the Florida leafwing, 309 acres of which are private.¹³⁶ While it has not been documented on the project site, the site contains 90.2 acres of Florida leafwing critical habitat.¹³⁷ So while no Florida leafwing have been documented on the project site, the site comprises a significant portion of privately owned critical habitat for the Florida leafwing with potential for restoration for the species.

¹²⁴ EA at 22.

¹²⁵ *Id.*

¹²⁶ *Id.*

¹²⁷ HCP at 44.

¹²⁸ HCP at 44.

¹²⁹ EA at 74.

¹³⁰ EA at 72.

¹³¹ EA at 71.

¹³² EA at 74.

¹³³ *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Endangered Status for the Florida Leafwing and Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak Butterflies*, 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47227.

¹³⁴ 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47227.

¹³⁵ 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47226.

¹³⁶ *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Designation of Critical Habitat for Florida Leafwing and Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak Butterflies*, 79 Fed. Reg. 47180, 47189, 47193-4.

¹³⁷ EA at 23.

The draft EA states that the increased human residential presence could lead to increased potential for predation from dogs and cats.¹³⁸ Aside from referencing a generic requirement that dogs be leashed, the HCP does not propose any specific measures to mitigate this significant threat. Likewise, the draft EA states that the project will produce a great increase in the amount of vehicle traffic which could harm the butterflies by hitting and killing them, or temporarily obscuring movement across roadways, but then discounts this harm by implying that because the speed limit would be 25 or 15 miles an hour, it would be a rare and unlikely event that butterflies would be killed by a passing vehicle.¹³⁹

Despite the objective habitat loss, the draft EA claims that the on-site and off-site preserves would provide a net +3.10 HVU, despite the plain loss of 39.47 acres of habitat for Bartram's and the fact that only a portion of the on-site and off-site preserve provide habitat that supports the Bartram's, and does not appear to take into account the diminished value of remaining lands due to fragmentation.

Every acre of upland critical habitat is vital to these butterflies whose lower elevation sites are imminently threatened with sea-level rise. For example the population of Bartram's on Big Pine Key is just slightly above mean sea level, and "saturation or increase in salinity of the soil would correspondingly change the vegetation and habitat structure making the butterfly's survival at this location in the Keys very unlikely"¹⁴⁰ The Service itself has found that "[i]n the worst-case scenario, which assumes high sea level rise, low financial resources, a 'business as usual' approach to planning, and a doubling of human population, the habitat at Big Pine Key and Long Pine Key may be lost, with the loss of habitat at Long Pine Key resulting in the complete extirpation of the Florida leafwing. Under the worst-case scenario, pine rockland habitat would remain within both Navy Wells and the Richmond Pine Rocklands, both of which currently retain Bartram's scrub hairstreak populations."¹⁴¹ The Service has also concluded that "the loss of this portion [Big Pine Key] of the Florida leafwing's range will further reduce their overall resiliency to threats and limit their capacity for survival and recovery."¹⁴²

The Service must explain how the permanent loss of 39+ acres of critical habitat, plus the further fragmentation of another 50 acres of critical habitat will not appreciably reduce the continued survival or recovery of the butterflies.

Miami tiger beetle

The Service listed the Miami tiger beetle as endangered in October 2016.¹⁴³ The Miami tiger beetle is found only in pine rockland habitat along the Miami Rock Ridge and Richmond area.¹⁴⁴ It has not been documented on the project site; however, no comprehensive studies have been

¹³⁸ EA at 75.

¹³⁹ EA at 75.

¹⁴⁰ 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47233.

¹⁴¹ 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47234.

¹⁴² 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47233.

¹⁴³ 81 Fed. Reg. 68985. We assume the Applicants' statement that "[t]he Miami tiger beetle does not currently receive protection status on either the state or federal level" was an accidental misstatement and not the position of the Applicants given the pending HCP. HCP at 56.

¹⁴⁴ EA at 95; 80 FR 79533.

done of the site, but has been documented on properties north, east, and south of the proposed development. The project site contains suitable habitat for the species and it is expected to occur there.¹⁴⁵ It has been documented on the off-site mitigation area,¹⁴⁶ even on degraded habitat and even paved roads.¹⁴⁷ Detailed and seasonally appropriate surveying should be conducted to document Miami tiger beetle presence throughout the site to better inform pesticide, land clearing, and fire management activities.

Coral Reef Commons would develop 86.49 acres of habitat suitable to the tiger beetle, including 32.91 acres of pine rockland habitat and 53.58 acres of disturbed land.¹⁴⁸ This habitat loss has the potential to injure or kill adults and larvae during construction and lead to further loss through the increased chance for collection. Already there have been multiple instances of the Miami tiger beetle ending up in trade and given that it will use human-made pathways, further exposing them to overexploitation.¹⁴⁹

The HCP and EA also do not appear to provide support for the assumption that the southern corridor will provide habitat connectivity for the tiger beetle between the east and west preserves, therefore the value of that corridor from the perspective of the beetle is questionable. The Service concedes that because the value of degraded land was not taken into account in the habitat value assessment, the project could potentially result in a decrease in not only over all acres of habitat but in habitat value units as well.¹⁵⁰ The Service must explain how this loss and fragmentation of habitat will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of survival or recovery for the Miami tiger beetle.

Florida bonneted bat

The Service listed the Florida bonneted bat as an endangered species under the ESA in 2013.¹⁵¹ It has been detected on the project site, with acoustic equipment detecting clutter, commute, and feeding calls at all 25 stations.¹⁵² Although the off-site mitigation area is within the Service's consultation area and is a focal area for the bat, it has not been surveyed.¹⁵³ It is found in longleaf pine trees and is dependent on forested areas for roosting; however, the species has also been found roosting in palm trees.¹⁵⁴ The greatest threats to the survival of the bonneted bat are mainly anthropogenic threats, such as habitat destruction, fragmentation, and degradation closely linked to various types of development and agriculture.¹⁵⁵ It is anticipated that climate change

¹⁴⁵ EA at 95-96. A limited survey effort on 4.3 acres was conducted on the eastern side of the proposed project in a highly neglected area 80 FR 79533.

¹⁴⁶ HCP at 56.

¹⁴⁷ EA at 95.

¹⁴⁸ EA at 96.

¹⁴⁹ EA at 99-100. See Wirth letter to Service Aug. 9, 2016, Wirth Comment Letter to Service 2015 p. 5-6.

¹⁵⁰ EA at 96.

¹⁵¹ Everglades Nat'l Park, *Florida Bonneted Bat*, NAT'L PARK SERV., <http://www.nps.gov/ever/learn/nature/flbonnetedbat.htm> [hereinafter *Florida Bonneted Bat*].

¹⁵² EA at 23.

¹⁵³ HCP at 49.

¹⁵⁴ *Id.* at 61007.

¹⁵⁵ *Florida Bonneted Bat*.

and sea level rise will both negatively impact the species, which is already suffering from limited suitable habitat.¹⁵⁶

The project would permanently destroy 86.35 acres of land potentially used by the bat, including 73.84 acres of habitat that could be used for bat roosting and foraging.¹⁵⁷ The EA expressly provides for the demolition of bat roost sites and that the removal of a roost site would be harassment and harm.¹⁵⁸ The Service must require that this activity be reported to the Service so that take can be monitor and consultation reinitiated if necessary.

The EA states that the southern corridor and on-site preserves would support the lifecycle of the bat and provide a “more diverse suite of insects and prey items” for the bat.¹⁵⁹ However, it does not provide any support for how a 50-foot wide strip would support the lifecycle of the bat or how it would provide “more diverse” prey or whether that is even helpful to the bat, especially given the EA’s finding that acoustic surveys for the bat in other portions of the Richmond Area where “preferred foraging was found to be in large wide open spaces, which had few obstructions and very little to no artificial lighting.”¹⁶⁰ The EA also acknowledges that not much is known about the effects of light pollution on the Florida bonneted bats,¹⁶¹ but posits that the artificial light could be a benefit to bats because it might attract more prey items.¹⁶² However, the bat has a documented preference for foraging in areas with little or no light in the Richmond area.¹⁶³ More information is needed before the Service permits artificial lights during construction and operation of the project.

Likewise, the EA concedes that no research has been done on the effect of fire management on bats, but suggests that it is expected to benefit from it.¹⁶⁴ We are supportive of fire management, but additional studies should be conducted on the effect of fire management on the bat prior to such activities. The Service must also describe how the loss of habitat for the bat will not appreciably reduce the survival or recover of the species, especially given the importance of upland habitat.

The Service reports that bonneted bat roost sites have been found at 23 to 26 colony sites at 11 locations, as summarized in the table below.

Location of roost sites	Number of colonies
Babcock-Webb WMA	4 to 6
Babcock Ranch	2
North Fort Myers	2
Naples	1
Fakahatchee Strand Preserve SP	2 to 3

¹⁵⁶ *Id.*

¹⁵⁷ EA. at 84.

¹⁵⁸ EA at 85.

¹⁵⁹ EA at 83.

¹⁶⁰ EA at 84.

¹⁶¹ EA at 86.

¹⁶² EA at 86.

¹⁶³ EA at 87.

¹⁶⁴ EA at 84.

Big Cypress National Preserve	3
Everglades City	1
Everglades National Park	1
Ten Thousand Islands	1
Homestead	1
Coral Gables/Miami	4

Seven of the 11 roost site locations are on the Florida coast, and two additional locations (Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve) are extremely low-lying areas that are highly vulnerable to sea-level rise. Based on NOAA’s Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding Impacts Viewer,¹⁶⁵ nine of the 11 roost locations will be either fully or partially inundated under this range of sea-level rise. Four locations would be largely or completely inundated starting at one foot of sea-level rise, threatening the five to six colonies they support within the next few decades: Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, Everglades City, Everglades National Park (Long Pine Key), and Ten Thousand Islands area. Five other locations would be partially inundated at levels of one to six feet, putting 11 more colonies at risk: Homestead, Miami/Coral Gables, Big Cypress National Park, Naples, and North Fort Myers. Only two locations which support six to eight colonies would not be directly affected: Babcock-Webb WMA and Babcock Ranch. This analysis highlights the extreme vulnerability of bonneted bat roosting habitat to sea-level rise.

Additionally, it is likely that the forested areas on which bonneted bats depend may retreat. Florida bonneted bats have been known to roost in longleaf pine flatwoods and in the shafts of royal palms. It is thought that forested areas and old, mature trees are essential roosting habitat for the species, as well. A case study on coastal forest retreat at Withlacoochee Gulf Preserve in Yankeetown, Florida found that the coastal forest is retreating as salt water intrudes freshwater at an estimated rate of seven meters per year over the last 100 years. Therefore, even before coastal forest areas are totally inundated, they can experience significant ecological changes.

The Applicants simply have not provided sufficient data to provide a full picture of environmental impacts to the bonneted bat. Furthermore, the Service is currently considering critical habitat designation for this species. The Service should take no action on the HCP until the critical habitat has been determined for this species.

Eastern indigo snake

The Service listed the eastern indigo snake as threatened under the ESA in 1978.¹⁶⁶ Historically, the species was found throughout Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and portions of Florida; however, the species is now only found within Georgia and Florida.¹⁶⁷ Eastern indigo snakes are more often “found in pinelands, tropical hardwood hammocks, and mangrove forests,” as they

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/slrviewer>.

¹⁶⁶ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, *Multiple Species Recovery Plan for South Florida: Eastern Indigo Snake*, *Drymarchon corasi couperi*, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, 4-567, <http://www.fws.gov/verobeach/msrppdfs/easternindigosnake.pdf> [hereinafter *Eastern Indigo Snake*].

¹⁶⁷ *Id.* at 4-568.

are more inclined to upland habitats and ecosystems.¹⁶⁸ The most frequent types of habitat where the indigo is found includes “pine flatwoods, scrubby flatwoods, dry prairie, tropical hardwood hammocks, edges of freshwater marshes, agricultural fields, coastal dunes, and human-altered habitat”; however, the species needs a variety of these habitats to complete its life cycle.¹⁶⁹ The eastern indigo snake shares a special relationship with the gopher tortoise, which is critical in northern portions of the snake’s range because it will take refuge in the tortoise’s burrows to weather the cold.¹⁷⁰ This relationship is somewhat less critical in the milder south Florida climate where indigo snakes have been documented using manmade refugia and disturbed habitats.¹⁷¹ The snakes are still known to use the underground burrows of these tortoises and other species in the region of the HCP.¹⁷² Thus, the survival of the indigo snake is essentially tied to the health and survival of the gopher tortoise.

The eastern indigo snake was initially listed as threatened as the result of several activities including, habitat destruction and fragmentation, “over-collecting for the pet trade, and mortality from gassing gopher tortoise burrows to collect rattlesnakes.”¹⁷³ Presently, the species is vulnerable to habitat destruction and fragmentation associated with “residential and commercial construction, agriculture, and timbering.”¹⁷⁴ Development will continue to impact the eastern indigo snake because it permits increasing human populations in indigo snake habitat, which leads to an increased risk of snake mortality resulting from vehicular collisions and contact with property owners and domestic animals.¹⁷⁵ The indigo snake is also subject to harm from the bioaccumulation of pesticides in its prey, which results from the use of pesticides in agricultural and silvicultural activities, and from contact with rodenticide used to control rat populations within its range.¹⁷⁶

Although the HCP provides general information about threats to the eastern indigo snake, it fails to provide sufficient information regarding the specific impact the proposed activities will have on indigo snakes. Although habitat destruction is a primary threat to the eastern indigo snake, the HCP fails to address many other important threats. For instance, the HCP fails to provide any measures to address habitat fragmentation, road mortality, and genetic isolation from a growing network of roads and increased traffic; the introduction of environmental pollutants from covered activities, including development, mining, and oil and gas development; and intentional killing of snakes associated with increased interface between developed and natural areas.

The HCP also fails to propose any surveying or monitoring measures. The Service’s recovery plan for the eastern indigo snake highlights monitoring as an essential tool for attaining the snake’s recovery.¹⁷⁷ The project area should be surveyed to determine the relevant locations and

¹⁶⁸ *Id.*

¹⁶⁹ *Id.* at 4-568–4-569.

¹⁷⁰ *Everglades Eastern Indigo Snake.*

¹⁷¹ *Id.*

¹⁷² *Id.* The use of gopher tortoise and other species’ burrows by indigos is often considered taking “refuge.” *Eastern Indigo Snake* at 4-572.

¹⁷³ *Eastern Indigo Snake* at 4-572.

¹⁷⁴ *Id.*

¹⁷⁵ *Id.*

¹⁷⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷⁷ *Eastern Indigo Snake* at 4-579, 4-581.

habitat use of eastern indigo snakes. The plan should also impose a monitoring plan for the life of the permit, which would allow Service to identify take and population declines.

The Service should also consider the impacts of the growing network of roads and increased traffic that will directly and indirectly result from the HCP. Though roads only account for a small area of landscapes, their influence can extend across large areas because they restrict dispersal and gene flow.¹⁷⁸ Transportation infrastructure fragments the landscape, isolating habitat and populations of animals and forcing them to cross roads in an effort to evaluate and access resources, mate with members of other populations, or escape unfavorable circumstances. If snakes cannot successfully move from one “fragment” of habitat to another, the isolation will eventually affect the species’ fundamental population and community dynamics.¹⁷⁹ Further, because snakes are a maligned group of animals, the increased visibility of snakes on roadways will subject them to increased intentional killing by humans.¹⁸⁰

Recognizing “irreparable landscape alteration from the nation’s transportation infrastructure,” Andrews and Gibbons (2005) investigated the behavior of various species of snake near roads.¹⁸¹ The study showed the eastern racer (*Coluber constrictor*), a species of snake that shares the subfamily Colubrinae with the eastern indigo snake, readily crosses roads.¹⁸² Though this information suggests lower risk of habitat fragmentation from road avoidance; it also suggests higher likelihood of road mortality, which would contribute to population reduction and genetic isolation.¹⁸³ The study also concluded that snake species with higher mass-to-length ratios (thick-bodied snakes) are more likely to cross roads at a slower rate of speed, subjecting them to a higher risk of road mortality when they cannot cross quickly enough to avoid collision.¹⁸⁴ The scientists found that even snakes that rely on rapid flight to escape predators (e.g., *Coluber constrictor*) exhibited higher immobilization responses to oncoming vehicles than hypothesized.¹⁸⁵ Because eastern indigo snakes are heavy-bodied snakes of a subfamily that is more likely to cross roads, there is potential for great harm from increased roadways and traffic. Additionally, because eastern indigo snakes range over large areas (as far as 224 hectares), they are more likely to encounter roads and the risk of direct mortality or isolation.¹⁸⁶

Road development and urbanization can also lead to negative population-level impacts, such as skewed population structure via altered sex ratios and composition of age classes and restricted

¹⁷⁸ Clark, R.W., W.S. Brown, R. Stechert & K.R. Zamudio. (2010). Roads, interrupted dispersal, and genetic diversity in timber rattlesnakes. *Conserv. Biol.* 24, 1059–1069.

¹⁷⁹ Andrews, K.M. & J.W. Gibbons. 2005. How Do Highways Influence Snake Movement? Behavioral Responses to Roads and Vehicles. *Copeia* 2005(4): 772–782.

¹⁸⁰ *Id.*

¹⁸¹ *Id.*

¹⁸² *Id.*

¹⁸³ *Id.*

¹⁸⁴ *Id.*

¹⁸⁵ Fahrig, L. & Rytwinski, T. (2009). Effects of roads on animal abundance: an empirical review and synthesis. <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss1/art21> .

¹⁸⁶ *Id.* at 4-571–4-572.

gene flow that results in decreased genetic diversity.¹⁸⁷ The negative impacts of these effects may take decades to become apparent,¹⁸⁸ at which point it may be too late to remedy them.

Breining et al. (2012) have concluded that habitat fragmentation is likely a critical factor for the eastern indigo snake's persistence and that eastern indigo snakes are vulnerable to extinction in conservation areas bordered by roads and developed areas.¹⁸⁹ Though the snake's chances of survival can be quite high in conservation core areas, its survival rates significantly decline in conservation areas along highways and in suburbs.¹⁹⁰ More than half of known snake mortalities documented in the study were caused by humans, directly or indirectly, along roads.¹⁹¹ In light of this study, the Service should consider whether the designated "preservation/plan-wide activities" areas truly provide sufficient refuge for eastern indigo snakes such that they will not be at risk from road-related mortality and human-snake conflict. Many of the areas designated for preservation are small and isolated, which suggests they are not sufficient to appropriately conserve the species. Additionally, the Service should consider whether "corridors" between protected areas are wide enough to provide adequate protection for eastern indigo snakes.¹⁹²

When assessing the HCP's impacts on eastern indigo snake habitat, the Service should not only consider broad habitat types used by the eastern indigo snake (e.g., upland habitat) but also availability of essential microhabitat required by the species. For example, Hyslop et al. (2009) found that "[r]eduction in suitable underground shelters caused by habitat degradation and loss, which reduces or eliminates populations of [gopher tortoise], is likely an important factor in extirpation of the species from areas otherwise perceived as suitable habitat."¹⁹³

Moreover, on July 18, 2016, Krysko et al. published a peer-reviewed article identifying a new, cryptic species of indigo snake in the United States, the Gulf Coast indigo snake (*Drymarchon kolpobasileus*).¹⁹⁴ The study distinguishes the new species from the federally threatened eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon couperi*) using morphological and molecular analyses, and it identifies new distributions for each discrete species based on their observed morphological and genetic differences.¹⁹⁵ This study has several implications for the conservation of the species. On a broad scale, this study takes an already rare and imperiled species of snake and effectively splits it into two separate species that inhabit even smaller ranges. With the apparent increased

¹⁸⁷ Andrews, K.M., J.W. Gibbons & D.M. Jochimsen. 2008. Ecological effects of roads on amphibians and reptiles: a literature review. In *Urban herpetology. Herpetological Conservation*. Vol. 3. Jung, R.E. & Mitchell, J.C. (Eds). Salt Lake City, UT: Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles.

¹⁸⁸ *Id.*

¹⁸⁹ Breining, D.R., M.J. Mazerolle, M.R. Bolt, M.L. Legare, J.H. Drese & J.E. Hines, 2012. Habitat fragmentation effects on annual survival of the federally protected eastern indigo snake. *NASA Publications*. Paper 106.

¹⁹⁰ *Id.*

¹⁹¹ *Id.*

¹⁹² *See Id.*

¹⁹³ Hyslop, N.L., R.J. Cooper & J.M. Meyers. 2009. Seasonal Shifts in Shelter and Microhabitat Use of *Drymarchon couperi* (Eastern Indigo Snake) in Georgia. *Copeia* 3:458–464.

¹⁹⁴ *See* Krysko, K.L., M.C. Granatosky, L.P. Nuñez & D.J. Smith. 2016. A cryptic new species of Indigo Snake (genus *Drymarchon*) from the Florida Platform of the United States. *Zootaxa* 4138(3): 549–569; *see also* Krysko, K.L., L.P. Nunez, C.A. Lippi, D.J. Smith, and M.C. Granatosky. 2016. Pliocene-Pleistocene lineage diversifications in the Eastern Indigo Snake (*Drymarchon couperi*) in the Southeastern United States. *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 98:111-122.

¹⁹⁵ *Id.* (entire).

rarity of these two species, any proposed impact on “eastern indigo snakes” will need to be reassessed based on the ecology and conservation status of each distinct species. Locally, the study reveals that the species in Miami-Dade County is not the eastern indigo snake, as it is identified in the HCP, but rather the cryptic Gulf Coast indigo snake.

Gopher tortoise

The gopher tortoise is a federal candidate species under the ESA and a highly valuable “keystone species” that benefits and ensures the survival of other species in its ecosystem.¹⁹⁶ This tortoise is known to benefit over 300 different species, including eastern indigo snakes, foxes, skunks, and lizards, which use gopher tortoise burrows for shelter and for various parts of their lifecycles.¹⁹⁷ The gopher tortoise is generally found in longleaf pine or oak sandhill ecosystems, but it may also be found in other dry, upland habitats within its historic range.¹⁹⁸ The gopher tortoise has not been documented on site or on the off-site area but is present within the Richmond Area.¹⁹⁹

The greatest threat to the gopher tortoise is habitat destruction, including habitat fragmentation and degradation, caused by urban development, agricultural conversion, forestry, and mining.²⁰⁰ Habitat fragmentation can lead to reproductive isolation, increased predation due to exposed habitat edges, and mortality resulting from vehicular collisions.²⁰¹

When considering the impact of the HCP on the gopher tortoise, the Service must carefully analyze anticipated take and weigh that against the conservation measures proposed by the applicants. First, the Service must determine an accurate accounting of take.

Generally, the Service should consider the special needs of gopher tortoise. Land use and land-management practices are key determinants of gopher tortoise burrows and their abandonment.²⁰² Proximity to farming, urban development, and roads can be detrimental, subjecting gopher tortoises to road kills and death by agricultural machinery.²⁰³ Additionally, the Service should consider the feasibility of prescribed burns, as the covered activities in the HCP will lead to increased interface between urban and suburban areas and natural “preserve” areas. The Service should also consider the potential for introduction of invasive plant species from

¹⁹⁶ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, *Range-Wide Conservation Strategy for the Gopher Tortoise*, U.S. DEPT. OF INTERIOR, 4, <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/candidateconservation/pdf/FinalGopherTortoiseStrategy.pdf> [hereinafter *Conservation Strategy for Gopher Tortoise*].

¹⁹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁹⁸ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: North Florida Ecological Services Office, *Gopher Tortoise (Gopherus polyphemus)*, U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE, http://www.fws.gov/northflorida/gophertortoise/gopher_tortoise_fact_sheet.html.

¹⁹⁹ HCP at 53.

²⁰⁰ *Conservation Strategy for Gopher Tortoise* at 9; NatureServe. 2015. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia, <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.

²⁰¹ *Conservation Strategy for Gopher Tortoise* at 9.

²⁰² Baskaran, L.M., V.H. Dale, R.A. Efroymsen & W. Birkhead. 2006. Habitat Modeling Within a Regional Context: An Example Using Gopher Tortoise. *American Midland Naturalist* 155(2): 335–351.

²⁰³ *Id.*

urban and suburban landscaping and harmful introduced predators, as historically invasive species have had a serious impact on gopher tortoises.²⁰⁴

Finally, the Service should consider the multifaceted impacts of the growing network of roads and increased traffic that will result from the activities proposed in the HCP. Aside from exposing tortoises to increased road kills,²⁰⁵ roads will fragment otherwise suitable gopher tortoise habitat. Additionally, road development facilitates human access into otherwise less accessible gopher tortoise habitat, which will potentially lead to increased gopher tortoise harvest, collection, or direct killing.²⁰⁶

Rim rock crowned snake

Rim rock crowned snakes inhabit pine rockland and tropical hardwood hammocks near fresh water in the Miami area and the Florida keys.²⁰⁷ They can be found in holes and depressions in the oolitic limestone (formed by calcium carbonate) and they have periodically been discovered in rotten logs, under rocks and trash.²⁰⁸ There is little information regarding the population size of this species, however because much of the distinct habitat type this species relies on has been destroyed, it is more than likely the population of this species has declined.²⁰⁹ Habitat fragmentation from development is the biggest threat posed to the snake especially for the population in and around Miami, as its habitat is mixed in with agricultural and residential lands.²¹⁰ In addition, human development and clearing of rockland areas has left it with a very fragmented habitat. In fact, approximately 98% of the original Miami Rock Ridge pinelands have been lost and many rockland hammocks on the Keys and mainland were cleared for agriculture, firewood, and charcoal in the 1800s.²¹¹

The rim rock crowned snake was listed as threatened by the State of Florida in 1975, and it is considered a Species of Management Concern by the Service and is proposed for listing.²¹² The state listing prohibits take but does not protect its habitat. The primary protection need is the preservation of suitable habitat because the current pace of development threatens to eliminate even marginally suitable habitat.²¹³ The snake is found on some protected sites, including Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge, John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, Key Largo Hammocks, and Port Bougainville,²¹⁴ but protection through federal listing and critical habitat designation is necessary to prevent the species' extinction.

²⁰⁴ *Id.*

²⁰⁵ Baskaran, L.M., V.H. Dale, R.A. Efroymson & W. Birkhead. 2006. Habitat Modeling Within a Regional Context: An Example Using Gopher Tortoise. *American Midland Naturalist* 155(2): 335–351.

²⁰⁶ *Id.*

²⁰⁷ Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Rim Rock Crowned Snake Biological Status Review Report. 2 -3 (Nov. 1, 2013) <http://myfwc.com/media/2273373/Rim-Rock-Crowned-Snake-BSR.pdf>.

²⁰⁸ *Id.* at 4-5.

²⁰⁹ *Id.*

²¹⁰ *Id.*

²¹¹ Snyder et al. 1990.

²¹² Scott, C. 2004. *Endangered and Threatened Animals of Florida and their Habitats*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.

²¹³ NatureServe. 2015. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia, available at <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.

²¹⁴ *Id.*

The pine rockland community is one of the most endangered habitats in North America.²¹⁵ Pine rocklands provide critical foraging and nesting habitat for a diverse array of wildlife, including the snake.²¹⁶ They also provide cover and roosting sites to a variety of wildlife species.²¹⁷ Pine rockland ecosystems contain a rich herbaceous flora with many narrowly endemic animal species.²¹⁸ These once-extensive communities have been plagued by development in the region, and are now greatly reduced in area and divided into many smaller fragments.²¹⁹ Pine rocklands are found in three areas of southern Florida: the Miami Rock Ridge of southeastern peninsular Florida, the Lower Florida Keys, and the southern Big Cypress pinelands.²²⁰ A very diverse shrub layer dominated by hardwoods, and an equally diverse herb layer containing 35 taxa endemic to southern Florida, including several species listed by the federal government, characterize the Miami Rock Ridge.²²¹ This area has been fragmented and degraded by past land use practices and hurricanes.²²²

The north-south distribution of pine rocklands along the Miami Rock Ridge has already been reduced by over 12 miles.²²³ According to the Pine Rocklands Multispecies Recovery Plan (“Recovery Plan”) for South Florida, the ultimate goal of the Service is to restore the pine rocklands by maintaining the function, structure, and ecological processes of pine rocklands, and preventing any further loss, degradation, or fragmentation, of this imperiled South Florida community.²²⁴ In Miami-Dade County, the remaining pine rockland habitat is highly fragmented, with the majority of fragments being less than 50 ha in size and embedded in an urban landscape.²²⁵

Unnatural levels of predation from non-native species are another potential threat to the snake. Of greatest concern is the red imported fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta*) because it has invaded South Florida and the Keys.²²⁶ Predation by this non-native species is a reason for declines in some oviparous snake populations in the Southeastern Coastal Plain of Florida, meaning the rim rock crowned snake is also at risk.²²⁷ In addition, over predation by other non-native species to the

²¹⁵ Williams, D.A., Y. Wang, M. Borchetta, and M.S. Gaines, *Genetic diversity and spatial structure of a keystone species in fragmented pine rockland habitat*, *Biological Conservation*, April 2007, at 256, 257.

²¹⁶ FWS, *Multi-Species Recovery Plan – Pine Rocklands*, 3-161, July 23, 2014.

²¹⁷ *Id.* at 3-167.

²¹⁸ Snyder, J.R., M.S. Ross, S. Koptur, and J.P. Sah, *Developing Ecological Criteria for Prescribed Fire in South Florida Pine Rockland Ecosystems*, Se. Envtl. Research Ctr., July 2005, at 1.

²¹⁹ *Id.*; URS Corporation Southern. 2007. EEL Program, Management Plan, Part II – Pine Rockland (DRAFT) Chapter 1: The Pine Rockland Habitat, http://regionalconservation.org/ircs/pdf/publications/2007_09.pdf; FNAI – Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida: 2010 Edition, http://www.fnai.org/PDF/NC/Pine_Rockland_Final_2010.pdf.

²²⁰ *Id.*

²²¹ *Id.*

²²² Abandoned & Little Known Airfields: Florida – Southern Miami Area. June 11, 2013; 1945 Richmond/South Dade Hurricane Presented by Robert Molleda at 2007 Florida Governor’s Hurricane Conference; Macfie, D. Richmond Naval Air Station, 1942-1961, Tequesta.

²²³ FWS, *Multi-Species Recovery Plan – Pine Rocklands*, 3-173, July 23, 2014.

²²⁴ *Id.* at 3-191.

²²⁵ Williams at 256, 257.

²²⁶ Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. *Species Action Plan for the Key Ringneck Snake *Diadophis punctatus acrius**. 3-4 (Nov. 1, 2013) <http://myfwc.com/media/2718849/Key-Ringneck-Snake-Species-Action-Pl.-an-Final-Draft.pdf>.

²²⁷ FWC at 4-5.

Keys, which have growing populations, such as the Cuban tree frog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*), cane toad (*Rhinella marina*), and several introduced lizard species, when coupled with other threats pose a significant risk to the Rim Rock crowned snake.²²⁸ Furthermore, the introduction of other lizard species that also inhabit litter may outcompete the rim rock crowned snake for food.

Florida's diverse native herpetofauna has a history of exploitation to supply the pet trade. The commercial collection of herpetofauna continues today, and many dealers buy, sell, import, and export large numbers of both native and exotic species.²²⁹ Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation list unsustainable exploitation as a primary category of concern leading to herpetofauna population decline.²³⁰ Although the rim rock crowned snake is so rare that humans are very unlikely to encounter it, as with many snake species, humans kill them out of fear or with malice or collect them for pets.

Florida brickell bush & Carter's small-flowered flax

The Service listed the Florida brickell bush and Carter's small-flowered flax as endangered in 2014 and designated 104.06 acres of critical habitat that overlaps entirely within the proposed Coral Reef Commons.²³¹ The plants are only found in Miami-Dade pine rocklands in open, well-lit subcanopy with exposed limestone and minimal organic material.²³² It is estimated there are only 1,550 plants remaining.²³³ The project would result in the loss of 52.85 acres of critical habitat.²³⁴

The plants have not been documented on the project site and the off-site mitigation area appears to not have been surveyed for the species.²³⁵ The Service must analyze and explain how the project will not jeopardize the continued existence of the species or adversely modify critical habitat.

Tiny polygala & deltoid spurge

The Service listed the tiny polygala and deltoid spurge as endangered in 1985 but has never designated critical habitat for them. Surveys conducted by the Applicants report two populations of tiny polygala, including one population of 9 plants within pine rockland slated to be developed.²³⁶ Surveys detected deltoid spurge at three NFC parcels on the Coral Reef Commons site.²³⁷ Surveys have not been done at the off-site mitigation area, but the deed restrictions for the

²²⁸ *Id.*

²²⁹ *Id.*

²³⁰ *Id.*

²³¹ EA at 71-72.

²³² HCP at 63.

²³³ HCP at 63.

²³⁴ EA at 72.

²³⁵ HCP at 66.

²³⁶ App D, Coral Reef Commons Rare Plant and Floristic Inventory and Assessment Report (Woodmansee 2014) at 6.

²³⁷ App D, Coral Reef Commons Rare Plant and Floristic Inventory and Assessment Report (Woodmansee 2014) at 9.

off-site mitigation area indicate that deltoid spurge have been observed there.²³⁸ The Service must analyze and explain how the project will not jeopardize the continued existence of the species.

V. Compliance with the Endangered Species Act

A. The Action Area is Too Narrowly Defined

The HCP and EA do not adequately explain how the HCP plan area was established. Under Section 7 of the ESA, the Service must begin its assessment of the project by determining the environmental baseline. The environmental baseline includes “the past and present impacts of all Federal, State, or private actions and other human activities in the *action area*, the anticipated impacts of all proposed Federal projects in the action area that have already undergone formal or early section 7 consultation, and the impact of State or private actions which are contemporaneous with the consultation in process.”²³⁹ The “action area” includes “all areas to be affected directly or indirectly by the Federal action and not merely the immediate area involved in the action.”²⁴⁰ There must be a correlation between the HCP plan area and the requirements of the action area under the ESA’s implementing regulations.²⁴¹

In this case, the HCP does not adequately explain how the chosen plan area satisfies the definition of “action area.” Some of the species included in the HCP can travel miles from the project site, beyond just the footprint of the defined plan area. For instance, the HCP states that foraging flights of the Florida bonneted bat “can last six hours and may occur at distances of several miles from established roosts.”²⁴² There is no consideration, however, of how the loss of foraging habitat and prey availability and the increase in light, noise, and other disturbances as a result of a multi-use development may shift home ranges or otherwise have behavioral impacts beyond just the project site and offsite mitigation area.

In addition, the HCP recognizes that Bartram’s is “capable of dispersing throughout the landscape as far as three miles from habitat patches”, but there is no discussion of how the loss of habitat as a result of this project could impact dispersal, behavioral foraging responses, and reproduction of these species across the larger landscape.

Despite the far ranging foraging and dispersal characteristics of these species, there is no discussion of the “scientific methodology, relevant facts, or rational connections linking the project’s potential impacts” to the boundaries of the HCP plan area.²⁴³ The Applicants do not discuss or justify their decision to nevertheless restrict their analysis to the project area and offsite mitigation area given these potential impacts. This is a fundamental flaw as the environmental baseline and effects of the action are connected to the action area.²⁴⁴ The lack of

²³⁸ HCP at 61.

²³⁹ 50 CFR 403.02 (emphasis added).

²⁴⁰ 50 CFR 402.02.

²⁴¹ See *Native Ecosystems v. Dombeck*, 304 F.3d 886 (9th Cir. 2002).

²⁴² HCP at 46.

²⁴³ See *Dombeck*, at 902.

²⁴⁴ See *Defenders of Wildlife v. Babbitt*, 130 F. Supp. 2d 121, 129 (D.D.C. 2001).

scientific support for the delineation of the HCP plan area renders it arbitrary and capricious under the law.

B. The Surveys are Inadequate

The Applicants state that they conducted 16 surveys Sept. 2014-Jan. 2015.²⁴⁵ They describe the conditions as mostly cloudy, with one exception when it was “light rain to mostly cloudy.”²⁴⁶ Some of the surveys were for specific species, others were not.²⁴⁷ According to the Applicants, the general species surveys were conducted “in conjunction with other surveying efforts and included qualitatively recording observed flora and fauna.”²⁴⁸

No species-specific surveys for eastern indigo snake were conducted on or off-site, despite the fact that it “would likely have historically been found in the Richmond Area.”²⁴⁹ Likewise no species-specific surveys for rim rock crowned snake were conducted on or off-site, despite the fact that it was “documented in 2009 within the Zoo Miami area.”²⁵⁰ Enge (2004) provides some suggestions for surveying reptile fauna on pine rockland habitat in Miami-Dade County.²⁵¹

Bartram’s was surveyed using pineland croton as a proxy on Sept. 12, 22, 24, 26, Oct. 3, 6, and 7 2014.²⁵² The HCP does not state whether the entire Coral Reef Commons project site or off-site preservation were surveyed.

Florida bonneted bat surveys were conducted in September 2014 at 26 sites in forested areas of the Coral Reef Commons site.²⁵³ It is not clear from the HCP why the western and southwestern portions of the project were not surveyed.

The off-site mitigation area appears to not have been surveyed for any of the species at all.

C. The HCP’s Conservation Strategy is not Specific, Measurable or Accountable

The Service explains in its recently updated HCP Handbook that the conservation strategy of a HCP is the foundation upon which the rest of the HCP is built.²⁵⁴ “The conservation strategy defines what the HCP is trying to accomplish through biological goals, how the applicant will track progress through the monitoring program, and how the applicant will adjust implementation of the HCP through adaptive management and changed circumstances.”²⁵⁵

²⁴⁵ HCP at 36.

²⁴⁶ HCP at 36.

²⁴⁷ HCP at 36.

²⁴⁸ HCP at 36.

²⁴⁹ HCP at 51.

²⁵⁰ HCP at 51.

²⁵¹ Enge, K.M., M.S. Robson, and K.L. Krysko. 2004. Reptile surveys of pine rockland habitat in six Miami-Dade County parks. 67(3) Biological Sciences. pp. 194-204.

²⁵² HCP at 37.

²⁵³ HCP at 39.

²⁵⁴ HCP Handbook at 9-2.

²⁵⁵ HCP Handbook at 9-2.

Development of the HCP's biological goals are built on the foundation of broader conservation efforts at larger scales.²⁵⁶ By framing HCP goals within the context of larger conservation efforts, it should be clear how the HCP may affect the recovery of the species, further progress on large scale planning efforts, help build resilience and adaptive capacity for species to withstand future climatic change, and help protect large scale migration or movement corridors.

It is entirely unclear how the HCP will advance these important efforts. The HCP's biological goals are ill-defined and fail to address the biological needs of the species that will be impacted by the project. The goals include:

- Goal 1: Reduce on-going threats within the Mitigation Areas, and contribute to the recovery of federally listed pine rock land species by increasing their population size and enhancing long term viability
- Goal 2: Preserve and manage pine rocklands and rockland habitat within the CRC property
- Goal 3: Restore the on-site preserves and enhance the off-site mitigation area to promote recruitment and support long-term viability of pine rockland species
- Goal 4: Promote public education and awareness of pine rockland habitat and associated species

These goals leave the reader with countless questions. What are the on-going threats? How much will they be reduced? What does it mean to “contribute to the recovery of species?” How much of a population increase is to be expected? What does it mean to “enhance” or “support” long term viability? How is long-term viability even defined? How is “promoting recruitment” defined? There is also no indication that the preservation and management of habitat within Coral Reef Commons or the enhancement of off-site mitigation is intended to advance any larger scale conservation efforts. It is further unclear how promoting public education and awareness of pine rockland habitat and associated species addresses the biological needs of the species that will be impacted by the project.

The objectives, which are intended to articulate what is to be achieved, fail to provide any clarity. The Service states in its HCP Handbook that objectives need to be specific, measurable, achievable, result-oriented, and time-fixed.²⁵⁷ Instead, the objectives in the draft HCP lack any sort of specificity, direction, or means of measuring their success. Some are mere recitations of the goals. For example, the following three objectives are intended to implement Goal 1 (*Reduce on-going threats within the Mitigation Areas, and contribute to the recovery of federally listed pine rock land species by increasing their population size and enhancing long term viability*):

Objective 2: Provide connectivity from On-Site Preserves to adjacent pine rocklands and serve as a potential site for recruitment of pine rockland species,

²⁵⁶ HCP Handbook at 9-4.

²⁵⁷ HCP Handbook at 9-10.

thereby assisting in expanding population of listed species both on-site and in adjacent habitats.

Objective 3: Provide long-term protection and management of biological integrity and species diversity that is a characteristic of pine rocklands by preserving, restoring and managing the On-site Preserves and the Off-site Mitigation Area

Objective 4: Implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) measures for commercial and residential entities within the CRC Property to reduce impacts from human activity on the On-Site Conservation Areas

While providing connectivity sounds like a good thing, Objective 2 fails to articulate how establishing connectivity will “reduce ongoing threats within the mitigation areas” and “contribute to the recovery of federally listed pine rockland species by increasing their population size and enhancing long term viability.” How much connectivity and in what locations is required to actually advance recovery? Does it depend on the species? If so, to what extent? In addition, the objective only recognizes the *potential* for connectivity between on-site preserves and adjacent pine rocklands to serve as a site for recruitment “for pine rockland species”. Again, which species? All species? What if no recruitment actually occurs for some or all of the species? How does that impact recovery? Even if recruitment were to occur the objective fails to identify by what percentage the applicant anticipates population numbers would increase. The objective merely states that it would “assist” in “expanding a population of listed species both on-site and in adjacent habitats.”

Objective 3 suffers from the same infirmities. What does “provide long term protection and management of biological integrity and species diversity that is a characteristic of pine rocklands” actually mean? How does this translate into contributing to the recovery of federally listed species as set forth in Goal #1?

Objective 4 similarly fails to articulate how voluntary “best management practices” will reduce threats and advance species recovery.

For Goal #2 (*Preserve and manage pine rocklands and rockland hammock within the CRC Property in perpetuity*), Objective 4 states:

Minimize pesticide use to extent practicable by CRC/Master Association within the On-site Preserves and Stepping Stones

Again, what does it mean to “minimize pesticide use to the extent practicable”? By how much? In perpetuity?

And lastly, Objective 1 for Goal 4 is more or less a slightly longer recitation of the Goal.

Establish a community and outreach program within the CRC Property to promote awareness of pine rocklands and their importance, and to ensure the minimization of impacts to the On-site Conservation Area from daily operations

Just what do the Applicants hope will be achieved other than educating the community about the pine rocklands? How does this address the specific biological needs of the species and their habitat and minimize the impacts?

In creating their biological goals and objectives, the HCP Handbook directs applicants to avoid ambiguity, contain measurable elements that can readily be monitored to determine success or failure, develop objectives that are achievable and specify an end-result, and provide time periods during which they will be achieved and not be open-ended.²⁵⁸ The HCP Handbook contains numerous examples of objectives with measurable elements, linked to species specific biological needs, with clearly identified timelines for implementation.²⁵⁹ Climate change considerations should also be included.²⁶⁰ None of these essential elements are present in the Biological Goals and Objectives section in the draft HCP. Further, as explained in greater detail below, the conservation measures intended to achieve the objectives in support of the HCP's goals (avoidance, minimization, and mitigation) area inadequate, based on flawed assumptions, and lack a strong scientific basis. As a result, the conservation strategy lacks the necessary specificity, direction, and assurances for the Service to determine that the project has minimized and mitigated impacts to the extent practicable and that the project will not jeopardize the continued existence of these species as required under sections 10 and 7 of the ESA.

Additionally, the Applicants have not provided any specific information regarding the amount of take anticipated to result from the proposed activities. Thus, the proposed take is too general to meet the requirements for an ITP and HCP under the ESA. An ITP and corresponding HCP are required by law to include:

- (i) A complete description of the activity sought to be authorized;
- (ii) The common and scientific names of the species sought to be covered by the permit, as well as the number, age, and sex of such species, if known;
- (iii) A conservation plan that specifies:
 - (A) The impact that will likely result from such taking;
 - (B) What steps the applicant will take to monitor, minimize, and mitigate such impacts, the funding that will be available to implement such steps, and the procedures to be used to deal with unforeseen circumstances;
 - (C) What alternative actions to such taking the applicant considered and the reasons why such alternatives are not proposed to be utilized; and
 - (D) Such other measures that the Director may require as being necessary or appropriate for purposes of the plan²⁶¹

After considering the statutory and regulatory elements required for an ITP application and HCP, it is clear that the Applicants fail to provide a complete account of the proposed activities and sufficient information related to the number, age, and sex of the listed species to be included in the permit. The Applicants also fail to include sufficient information related to the anticipated

²⁵⁸ HCP Handbook at 9-10-9-11.

²⁵⁹ See HCP Handbook at 9-11.

²⁶⁰ See HCP Handbook at 9-12.

²⁶¹ 50 C.F.R. § 17.22(b)(1).

take for all listed species under the permit, as well as detailed steps that the applicant will take to monitor, minimize, and mitigate, the impacts. There simply is not enough information in the HCP to satisfy the requirements for an ITP and its corresponding HCP as set forth under the Section 10(a)(2)(A) of the ESA and the corresponding regulations.

D. The Applicants have not, to the Maximum Extent Practicable, Minimized and Mitigated the Impacts of the Take

Prior to authorizing an ITP or approving the corresponding HCP, the Service shall engage in formal consultation with itself to ensure that the species will not be jeopardized upon approval of the permits.²⁶² When the Service undergoes formal consultation, it shall provide information related to: 1) the action to be considered; 2) the specific area that will be affected by the action; 3) a description of the threatened and endangered species and/or critical habitat that may be affected by the action; 4) a description of the effects the action may have on the listed species, critical habitat, and an analysis of any cumulative effects; 5) relevant reports including biological assessments and/or environmental impact statements that have been prepared related to the action; and 6) and any relevant information related to the listed species, critical habitat, and proposed action.²⁶³

Here, it is clear that the proposed action, the authorization of an ITP and the approval of a corresponding HCP, will have adverse effects on the several threatened and endangered species. When considering the adverse effects, the Service must quantify the amount of take and habitat loss that it has authorized to date and analyze the impact of those authorizations on the survival and recovery of the species.²⁶⁴

Habitat in South Florida is in high demand for endangered species and developers alike. In South Florida, the population density has been higher than the statewide average since 1960 and in 2010 was estimated to reach 8.2 million people.²⁶⁵ As the South Florida population has increased, the pressure on endangered and threatened species and their habitats has also increased.²⁶⁶ In the past 50 years, it is estimated that more than 8 million acres of forest and wetlands have been cleared for development.²⁶⁷ Nearly all habitat types in South Florida have been devastated by South Florida's population boom.

The Service must examine the cumulative impacts of the take and habitat loss they have previously authorized to determine their effects on these species' recovery.

E. The Applicants Cannot Rely on Onsite and Off-site Mitigation to Overcome the Loss of Habitat

²⁶² *Id.* § 402.14(c).

²⁶³ *Id.* § 402.14(c)(1–6).

²⁶⁴ *See Id.* § 402.14.

²⁶⁵ *The South Florida Ecosystem*, U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERV., 2-19, <http://www.fws.gov/verobeach/msrppdfs/sfecosystem.pdf>.

²⁶⁶ *Id.* at 2-25.

²⁶⁷ *Id.*

The HCP's description of the "[p]roposed action covered by the Incidental Take Permit" only addresses the development of 86.49 acres and "all activities associated with such development,"²⁶⁸ and references the off-site mitigation area only in the context of a so-called "Conservation Program."²⁶⁹ The mention of the off-site mitigation area in the HCP is to offset impacts on the 86.49 acres and to seek take permission for land management activities; however, the off-site mitigation area has not been surveyed, the Applicants make little effort to describe the environmental baseline of that property, and the property is already subject to land use restrictions including the requirement to manage it for the benefit of the deltoid spurge. It is therefore entirely unclear why University of Miami is an applicant and how, absent some binding agreement between RAM and University of Miami, the off-site mitigation area could possibly be considered as mitigation for onsite impacts. Coral Reef Commons will occur on RCR property, no longer owned by University of Miami. University of Miami's interest lies in the ownership of the off-site mitigation, so it is not clear what ITP protections University of Miami are seeking. An applicant can only get mitigation credit if mitigation is performed by the applicant, not a third party.²⁷⁰

Habitat already under conservation is not a new commitment in response to need for ITP mitigation.²⁷¹ The ESA requires the applicant *will* minimize and mitigate, suggesting something actively being done and improving the conservation status of the species.²⁷² Furthermore, it is not clear if the species that Applicants are seeking incidental take protection coverage for also occur on the off-site University of Miami site. Therefore, it is not clear how preservation of this land will offset impacts. While burning could help restore the site, it is not clear how this results in protections for species that RAM Coral Reef will take in constructing and operating Coral Reef Commons. Mitigation measures must be rationally related to the level of take authorized by the permit.²⁷³ Here it is not clear what the nexus is.

According to NFC2012-012, in exchange for county land use approvals, 39.64 acres of Natural Forest Communities pine rockland habitat and 3.72 acres of NFC hardwood hammock habitat are already required to be "preserved in natural condition" pursuant to a covenant that runs with the land, including a controlled burn management regime.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ HCP at 80.

²⁶⁹ HCP at 81.

²⁷⁰ Section 10(a)(2)(B)(ii); *Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center v. NOAA*, _____ (N.D. Ca. 2005). *Sierra Club v. Babbitt*, 15 F. Supp. 2d 1282 (S.D. Ala. 1998).

²⁷¹ 16 USC 1539(a)(2)(B).

²⁷² See also 50 CFR 450.01.

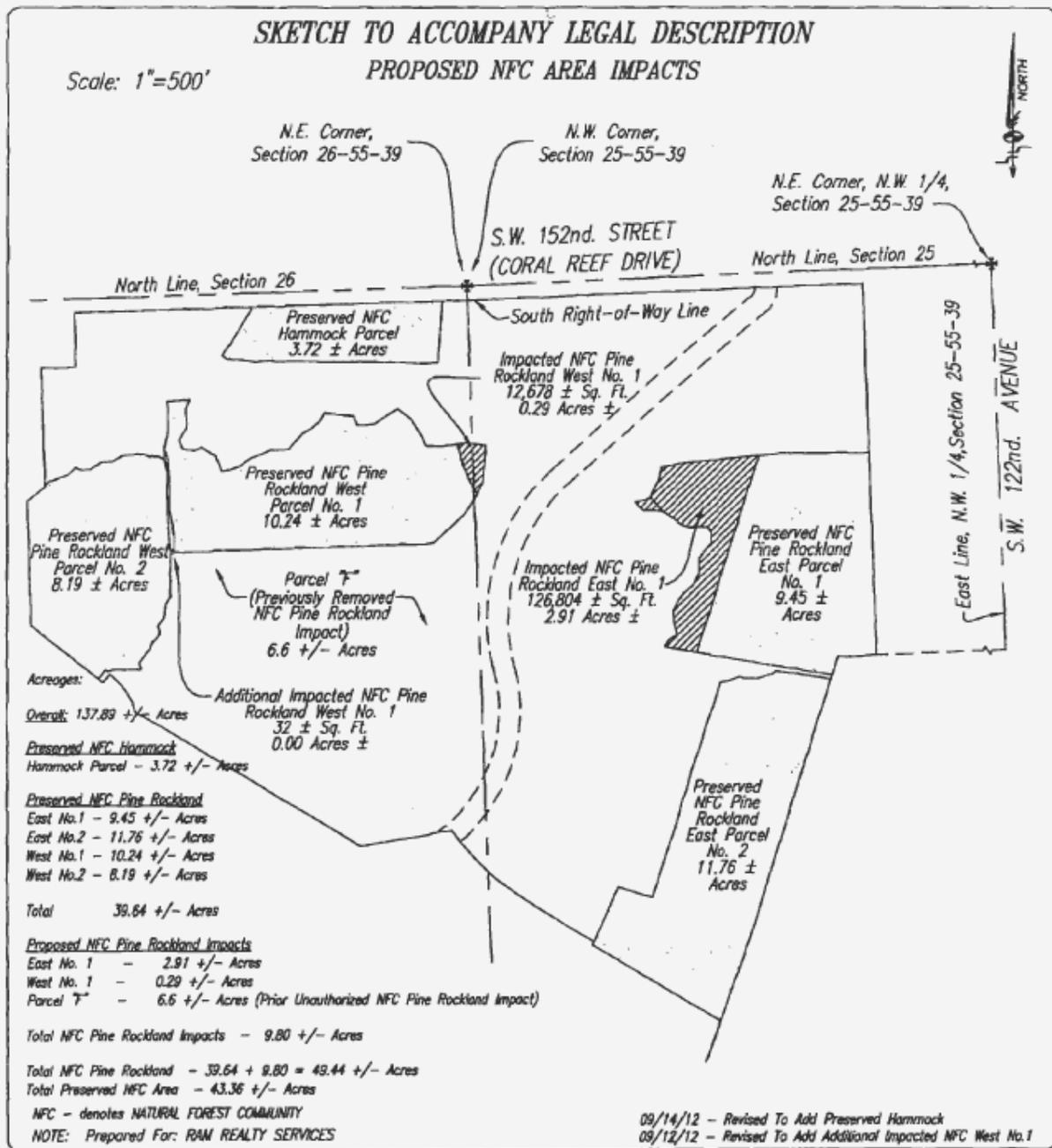
²⁷³ *National Wildlife Federation v. Norton*, 306 F. Supp. 2d 920, 928-9 (E.D. Cal. 2004).

²⁷⁴ HCP App. B.

EXHIBIT C

SKETCH TO ACCOMPANY LEGAL DESCRIPTION
PROPOSED NFC AREA IMPACTS

Scale: 1"=500'



Schwebke-Shiskin & Associates, Inc.
LAND SURVEYORS • ENGINEERS • LAND PLANNERS

(LB-87)

3240 CORPORATE WAY, MIRAMAR, FLORIDA 33025

TEL: BROWARD: (954) 435-2010 FAX: (954) 435-9288

THIS IS NOT A "LAND SURVEY."

ORDER NO.: 199230

DATE: June 22, 2012

SHEET 1 OF 1 SHEET(S)

F.B.: N.A.

PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION:

MARK STEVEN JOHNSON SECY-TREAS.

FLORIDA PROP. LAND SURVEYOR NO. 4775

Likewise, the off-site mitigation area is also already subject to deed restrictions. In 2000 a deed restriction prohibits construction, dumping, removal or destruction of vegetation, excavation, and must be managed consistent with a conservation management plan.²⁷⁵ The management plan requires the hand treatment of Burma reed and prescribed burns.

Despite these existing protections, the Applicants frequently refer to the habitat on the project site as degraded due to lack of management.²⁷⁶ Miami-Dade County Landscape Code, Chapter 18A apply where a permit is required for development. It is unclear whether University of Miami has previously applied for any development permits that would have triggered this code, but the Service should inquire. Regardless, permits sought by RAM Coral Reef certainly would have triggered this code, which requires that certain prohibited plant species shall not be planted and shall be removed.²⁷⁷ Additionally, the Miami-Dade Comprehensive Development Master Plan also appears to require that upland forests included on Miami-Dade County's Natural Forest Inventory, such as those on the project site, be maintained and protected.²⁷⁸

Not only is the University of Miami, a co-applicant here, directly responsible for the degraded state of the habitat, it now asks to be entrusted with rehabilitating the habitat, despite preexisting requirements to do so. Allowing the Applicants to receive credits for habitat they (1) should have already been taking care of pursuant to pre-existing legal requirements; and (2) have nonetheless allowed to degrade – would be the epitome of arbitrary and capricious decisionmaking.

Finally, the HCP offers less than a 2:1 mitigation ratio, both in terms of total acreage (86.49 to 51.41 acres for onsite only or 86.49 to 102.37 acres for onsite and off-site), and in using the novel habitat valuation approach (from 40.72 to 43.82 HVU). As stated above it appears that some of land identified as mitigation is already under some sort of conservation easement, so even the 86.49 to 51.41 and 86.49 to 102.37 may be overstating the compensatory mitigation ratio, and the HVU assessment as described below has many unproven and unlikely success values that likely also skew the supposed lift the project will provide for the mitigation habitat. Regardless of the ultimate mitigation ration, the Service must explain the biological rationale in determining it, particularly in light of a habitat type – pine rocklands – that are now so rare.

F. The Habitat Functional Assessment Violates the Requirements of the ESA

Much of the HCP is based on a habitat functional assessment developed by the Applicants in consultation with the Service. According to the HCP, this assessment was used to classify the quality of habitats on site, assist in the minimization of impacts and to quantify impacts and mitigation requirements.²⁷⁹

The Service should not rely on this assessment in determining whether the Applicants have adequately minimized and mitigated impacts to listed species. First, the HCP fails to adequately explain why take must be measured in the form of an ecological surrogate. Second, the use of

²⁷⁵ HCP App O, UM Richmond Camus Existing Deed Restriction - Off-site.

²⁷⁶ HCP at 2.

²⁷⁷ Ch. 18A-6(C)(1); 18A-12.

²⁷⁸ Miami-Dade County Comprehensive Development Master Plan, CON-8 and CON-9.

²⁷⁹ HCP at 82.

such a surrogate does not make the requisite correlation between species numbers, reproduction, and/or distribution and their habitat. Third, the methodology is unlike the assessments used for the Florida panther and wood stork in that it is not based on years of peer reviewed studies, is not for any one species, and was developed for the sole purpose of obtaining an incidental take permit. Consequently, reliance on this assessment could lead to *ad hoc* decisionmaking for future projects based on speculation and surmise—exactly what the Supreme Court cautioned against twenty years ago in the case, *Bennett v. Spear*. Lastly, due to the many flaws in this assessment the Service cannot fulfill its duties under the ESA to determine that the applicant has minimized and mitigated take to the maximum extent practicable.

In certain instances, like where it is impractical to detect or monitor take of individual species, habitat may be used as a surrogate, but its habitat, not habitat “value”. In this instance, the Applicants attempt to get around the issue that (1) the project will destroy a very rare and valuable habitat type for which there is no available compensation: pine rockland; and (2) that University of Miami has put its thumb on the scale by neglecting the habitat, and likely violating many obligations to maintain the habitat, so that the Applicants can now get credit for a supposed “lift” in habitat value via restoration.²⁸⁰ The Applicants created a novel pine rockland functional assessment by evaluating the quality of the land subject to the development using factors like open canopy, herbaceous flora, exposed limestone, fire frequency, invasive species, and habitat connectivity.²⁸¹ Several of these factors, including fire frequency and presence of invasive species are already within the direct control of the Applicants, and in the case of University of Miami, have been for decades. Applicants cannot now be allowed to cash in on their willful neglect of the property by holding hostage the possibility of doing the right thing, legally and morally, and managing the land for the benefit of the species for the ability to destroy that very same resource.

1. The HCP Does Not Adequately Explain Why An Ecological Surrogate is Appropriate

Ecological surrogates or habitat proxies may only be used when take cannot be quantified. To use a surrogate measure the Service must describe the causal link between the surrogate and take of the covered species, explain why it is not practical to express the amount or extent of anticipated take or to monitor take-related impacts in terms of number of individuals, and set a clear standard for determining when the level of anticipated take has been exceeded.²⁸²

The HCP does not adequately explain why it is impracticable to quantify the take of any of the species identified in the HCP: 8 animal species and 14 plant species. The HCP cites agency policy to use surrogates when species have a low detection probability, there are large temporal fluctuations in population numbers, there is a lack of information on a species, and when multiple species are being considered.²⁸³ But the HCP does not adequately explain why this is appropriate for any or all of the 22 species identified in the plan.

²⁸⁰ Service regulations regarding permit revocation state that willful violation of any state statute involving conditions of the permit or the laws or regulations governing the permitted activity shall be revoke. 50 C.F.R. 13.28. To the extent any of the Applicants’ failures amounts to a violation of an applicable law, the Service, on that basis alone, cannot grant the ITP.

²⁸¹ HCP at 82.

²⁸² HCP Handbook at 8-3.

²⁸³ HCP at 82.

Quantifying take was the preference of Congress when enacting section 10 of the ESA.²⁸⁴ Courts have emphasized that take must be quantified unless it is impracticable.²⁸⁵

2. *The Ecological Surrogate in the Form of a Habitat Functional Assessment Does Not Make the Requisite Correlation Between Species Needs and Their Habitat*

Take may be measured in the form of an ecological surrogate when it is impracticable to quantify take, but there must be a correlation between species numbers, reproduction, and/or distribution and their habitat. This is necessary to ensure that there is a trigger to reinitiate consultation if ecological conditions deteriorate and habitat based mitigation is not offsetting impacts to species.

The proposed ecological proxy for this project is not correlated with the specific population numbers and or trends, reproductive requirements, and/or distribution of species on site and within the off-site mitigation area. The needs of the affected species affected by the project are diverse within the pine rocklands habitat. Some benefit certain species more than others. For example, butterflies are benefited by proximity to and abundance of host plants, nectaring plants, open sunny areas, and shelter from wind. Whereas bats need roosting sites, meaning more canopy, while the HCP calls for less canopy area-wide. The HVU also fails to take into account the value of degraded habitat for species like the bat. Meanwhile, tiger beetles need sandy areas, and white-crowned pigeons need stop over sites even if it is small patches of canopy trees, gopher tortoise need open areas for burrowing and an assortment of plants for foraging.

It is unclear if the habitat that will be destroyed contains certain features that provide unique benefits to certain species in a quantity and quality that exceed what will be in the preserve areas post-project. It is measured strictly based on generalized values area-wide with no fine filter. One cannot tell at the species level if on-site and off-site preservation is enough. Moreover, there is no trigger to reinitiate consultation, and no species-specific performance measures. There are no pre-project or post-project population numbers or if this cannot be quantified an ecological surrogate that correlates with the biological needs of a particular species. For example to ensure the survival and recovery of a local population a certain amount of habitat must be preserved or a minimum number of roost sites (for example) must be maintained. If that declines post-project consultation must be reinitiated and more may need to be done.

3. *The Habitat Functional Assessment Cannot Be Compared to the Panther and Wood Stork Habitat Assessments Used By the Service in Other Consultations*

The proposed habitat functional assessment is not based on a standardized methodology that will apply to all applicants or provide any degree of predictability. It will lead to varying degrees of impacts and mitigation and regulatory uncertainty with no safeguards in place to ensure this project or future actions will not jeopardize a species. The “obvious purpose” of the best

²⁸⁴ H.R. Rep. No. 97-567, at 27 (1982).

²⁸⁵ See *Oregon Natural Resources Council v. Allen*, 476 F.3d 1031 (9th Cir. 2007); *Miccosukee Tribe of Indians v. United States*, 566 F.3d 1257 (11th Cir. 2009). See also Jason Totoiu, *Quantifying, Monitoring, and Tracking “Take” Under the Endangered Species Act: The Promise of a More Informed Approach to Consultation*, 41 *Envtl. L.* 165 (2011) (discussing why quantifying take helps the Service to better monitor and track take under the ESA).

available science requirement “is to ensure that the ESA not be implemented haphazardly, on the basis of speculation or surmise.”²⁸⁶

The Habitat Functional Assessment developed by the Applicants is easily distinguishable from panther and wood stork habitat assessments. The latter are species specific, taking into account unique biological considerations and requirements-reproduction/foraging/prey availability; the former is a broad assessment of a type of habitat with no species level management considerations with no fine filter.

Panther habitat assessment methodology assigns a functional value for various land cover types. Values are derived from peer reviewed studies of panther-habitat relationships using six statistical rankings. The rankings were then averaged and from there land cover types are assigned a habitat suitability value in a GIS.

The HCP’s assessment does not link various land cover types to the specific species and their needs. Nor is there any indication that this valuation system has been peer reviewed. There is no base ratio that provides for the protection of a sufficient acreage of habitat for a particular species. It does not take into account how much habitat has been preserved, its quality, its function, or its location or how much more needs to be protected and how much is available. It does not take into account rate of yearly loss of habitat (development) across a broad geographic region, and the location of that habitat. All of this goes into determining what is needed to recover the population of a species; there is no analysis here of what is necessary to offset impacts to individual species populations. Here there is no consideration of the ratio of conservation lands to impacted lands necessary to support each species or the amount of acreage needed to support a particular population.

It is further unclear how each of the characteristics has a unique value if the Applicants are basically concluding that one characteristic, for example, fire, is going to be used to improve other characteristics, like getting rid of invasives, restoring ground cover, improving soil conditions, etc. Moreover, given the heavy weighting toward improved habitat value based on fire management, there should be assurances that this method will be implemented.

There is no explanation as to how the Applicants delineated the polygons.²⁸⁷ And despite the description of how habitat connectivity and fragmentation was scored,²⁸⁸ it is unclear why polygons that become more isolated after development experienced an increase in valuation score for fragmentation.²⁸⁹ Here the functional assessment was analyzed using a metric that assigned a relative value “with particular attention to obligate species.”²⁹⁰ However, what is important to one species, is not valuable to another.

²⁸⁶ *Bennett v. Spear*, 520 U.S. 154 (1997).

²⁸⁷ HCP at 82.

²⁸⁸ HCP at 87.

²⁸⁹ Compare polygon 60: before .64 and after .8; polygon 61: before .49 and after .81; polygon 66: before .66 and after .71; polygon 79: before .63 and after .87; polygon 81: before .44 and after .54.

²⁹⁰ HCP at 82.

Further, there is a lack of certainty that prescribed fire will be possible post construction. The EA acknowledges that “prescribed fire would not be applied to the Southern Corridor due to its size,” and instead “mechanical and chemical treatments would occur in most areas as part of the initial site management to address reduction of fuel load and exotics.”²⁹¹ There’s no doubt that “[t]he use of prescribed fire is the most critical habitat management tool needed to ensure the survival of rare plant species.” URS 2007 p. 33-34. However, “finding personnel to conduct prescribed fires in Miami-Dade County has been a major obstacle in the proper management of pine rocklands.” URS 2007 at 39. Additionally, “construction of hospitals, schools, apartments, and hotels around [pine rocklands] sites should be discouraged because of conflicts with smoke generation during prescribed fires”²⁹² Given the construction of 900 units, retail, and a school, it seems extraordinarily optimistic, and in fact flies in the face of common sense and past practice that prescribed burning will be a viable land management tool. Therefore, without further support, assurances, or explanation of how the Applicants would conduct prescribed burns, the improvement value of 1.0 for post construction polygons should be changed to preconstruction values of 0.

Also, there appears to be a double accrediting of the removal of exotics which is often times directly related to percent native vegetation cover, and *vice versa*. Both the non-native vegetation and the native vegetation values enjoy the highest weighted value of 0.20.

Finally, the post-construction valuation for exotics, canopy cover, and herbaceous cover are all were awarded the aspirational, and likely overly optimistic value of 1.0. The Service should review the HVU with these considerations in mind and provide a detailed explanation as to how it can use this flawed, opaque model to satisfy its ESA obligations.

G. The Applicants have not Ensured that Adequate Funding for the Plan will be Provided

The Applicants state that the operation of the residential and commercial units will fund the conservation elements of the HCP.²⁹³ That “it will take five years [to achieve] long term maintenance condition”; however, there are no facts or science to support this assertion. This calls into question the financial calculations made in Chapter 11. Further, with respect to evidence of financial commitments, Exhibit L is merely a form of letter of credit with no details and no amounts, and Appendix N (the Draft Conservation Encumbrance - On Site CRC) is missing the essential details. Instead, the Applicants have stated that they will provide draft documents demonstrating their “financial assurance” to the Service for its “review and approval” at some future date.

H. The Take will Appreciably Reduce the Likelihood of the Survival and Recovery of the Species in the Wild

²⁹¹ EA at 76.

²⁹² URS Corp. 2007 at 31 – URS Corporation, The Institute for Regional Conservation, and Muller and Associates, Inc. 2007. Miami Dade County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program Management Plan, Part II: Management of specific habitat types, Chapter 1: The pine rockland habitat. Submitted to Environmentally Endangered Lands Program, Miami, Florida by URS Corporation.

²⁹³ HCP at 10.

The ESA provides for the issuance of an ITP only where the proposed take will not “reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild.”²⁹⁴ The Service must ensure that any proposed action it authorizes is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of their critical habitat.²⁹⁵ Service regulations state:

Jeopardize the continued existence of” means to engage in an action that reasonably would be expected, directly or indirectly, to reduce appreciably the likelihood of both the survival and recovery of a listed species in the wild by reducing the reproduction, numbers, or distribution of that species.²⁹⁶

As described throughout these comment, the evaluation of the species, habitat, and mitigation are deficient in numerous ways and even taken at face value could result in the jeopardy of listed species on the project site. Nothing in the analysis appears to account for species’ recovery or to take into account the long term, permanent nature of the project.²⁹⁷ The analysis discounts the value of exiting habitat, ignores the Applicants’ past degradation of the habitat, and optimistically overestimates the Applicants’ ability to restore the habitat, particularly through fire management. Finally, although plans for a school are mentioned several times in the HCP, no specific plans or analysis of that impact are described at all in the EA or HCP.

VI. Compliance with NEPA

NEPA ensures that federal agencies will have available and carefully consider detailed information concerning environmental impacts, and guarantees that the relevant information will be made available to the public and other agencies that may also play a role in both the decisionmaking process and implementation of that decision.²⁹⁸

A. The EA and HCP do not Consider a Reasonable Range of Alternatives

NEPA requires a “detailed statement” of “alternatives to the proposed action.”²⁹⁹ The alternatives analysis should address “the environmental impacts of the proposal and the alternatives in comparative form, thus sharply defining the issues and providing a clear basis for the choice among options by the decisionmaker and the public.”³⁰⁰ This analysis must “rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives.”³⁰¹

The purpose of this section is “to insist that no major federal project should be undertaken without intense consideration of other more ecologically sound courses of action, including

²⁹⁴ 16 U.S.C. 1539(a)(2)(B)(iv); *Friends of Endangered Species, Inc. v. Jantzen*, 760 F.2d 976, 982 (9th Cir. 1985).

²⁹⁵ 16 U.S.C. 1536(a)(2).

²⁹⁶ 50 C.F.R. 402.02.

²⁹⁷ HCP at 8. The Applicants requested an ITP for only 30 years, despite the long term, permanent nature of a mixed use development.

²⁹⁸ *Robertson v. Method Valley Citizens*, 490 U.S. 332, 349 (1989).

²⁹⁹ 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(c).

³⁰⁰ 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14.

³⁰¹ 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14(a).

shelving the entire project, or of accomplishing the same result by entirely different means.”³⁰² The Council on Environmental Quality describes the alternatives requirement as the “heart” of the environmental impact statement.³⁰³ While an agency is not obliged to consider every alternative to every aspect of a proposed action, reviewing courts have insisted that the agency “consider such alternatives to the proposed action as may partially or completely meet the proposals goal.”³⁰⁴ A viable but unexamined alternative renders an EIS or EA inadequate.³⁰⁵

The draft HCP identifies six alternatives. These alternatives include:

- Alternative 1-No Action Alternative
- Alternative 2-Redevelopment Only/No Restoration
- Alternative 3-Maximum Build-out
- Alternative 4-County Approved Zoning in 2013
- Alternative 5-County Approved Zoning/Stepping Stones and Southern Corridor
- Alternative 6-Reduced Commercial/Increased Preserve (Preferred Alternative)

This is not a reasonable range of alternatives as NEPA requires. Aside from the no action alternative, there is a redevelopment option of 25.4 developed acres, three alternatives consisting of 92-100 developed acres, and a preferred alternative of more than 86 developed acres.

The Applicants summarily reject the redevelopment alternative as not feasible because it does not meet the project purpose of constructing “an environmentally conscious, economically viable, mixed-use development.” As the redevelopment alternative would have mixed use and impact significantly fewer acres of pine rockland habitat than the preferred alternative, the issue appears to be one of economic viability. The Applicants claim the project would not be commercially viable because there is not room for a large anchor tenant but there does not appear to be any financial analysis in the HCP to support this claim.³⁰⁶ Moreover, the Service may not blindly adopt the applicant’s economic rationale as determinative.³⁰⁷ NEPA regulations make it clear that “the emphasis is on what is ‘reasonable’ rather than on whether the proponent or applicant likes it or is itself capable of carrying out a particular alternative.”³⁰⁸ “Reasonable alternatives include those that are practical or feasible from the technical and economic standpoint and using common sense rather than simply desirable from the standpoint of the applicant.”³⁰⁹ “A cursory dismissal of a proposed alternative, unsupported by agency analysis, does not help an agency satisfy its NEPA duty to consider a reasonable range of alternatives.”³¹⁰

³⁰² *Environmental Defense Fund v. Corps of Engineers*, 492 F.2d 1123, 1135 (5th Cir. 1974).

³⁰³ 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14.

³⁰⁴ *Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc. v. Callaway*, 524 F.2d 79, 93 (2d Cir. 1975).

³⁰⁵ See *Muckleshoot Indian Tribe v. U.S. Forest Service*, 177 F.3d 800, 814 (9th Cir. 1999)(quoting *Citizens for a Better Henderson v. Hodel*, 768 F.2d 1051, 1057 (9th Cir. 1985)).

³⁰⁶ See Draft HCP at 70.

³⁰⁷ *Southwest Center for Biological Diversity v. Bartel*, 470 F. Supp. 2d at 1158.

³⁰⁸ CEQ Forty Most Asked Questions Guidelines Concerning CEQ’s NEPA Regulations, Question 2a (Mar. 23, 1981).

³⁰⁹ CEQ Forty Most Asked Questions Guidelines Concerning CEQ’s NEPA Regulations, Question 2a (Mar. 23, 1981).

³¹⁰ *Environmental Protection Information Center v. U.S. Forest Service*, 234 Fed. Appx. 440, 443, 2007 WL 1417163 (9th Cir. 2007).

Further, Alternatives 3, 4, and 5 all have the same amount of commercial development. Alternatives 4 and 5 also have the same number of residential units. As all three alternatives only differ by a matter of a few acres in the total amount of developed property, they are essentially all maximum build out or near-build out scenarios.³¹¹ In rejecting out of hand the redevelopment option and putting forth three substantially similar alternatives for consideration, the applicant has not provided “a clear basis for choice among options by the decisionmaker and the public” as NEPA requires. 40 CFR 1502.14. Courts have also routinely rejected environmental impact statements that fail to provide a true range of alternatives or put forth substantially similar alternatives for consideration. See *Muckleshoot Indian Tribe v. U.S. Forest Service*, 177 F.3d 800, 813 (9th Cir. 1999); *Curry v. U.S. Forest Service*, 988 F. Supp. 541 (W.D. Penn. 1997).

There is also no consideration of alternatives that fall between the 25.4-acre redevelopment only alternative and the more than 86-acre preferred alternative. The draft HCP merely states, “other alternatives were considered and rejected earlier in the process, and therefore, not brought forward for in-depth consideration.”³¹² But NEPA demands more. It is not enough that the applicant considered and rejected out-of-hand alternatives in brief statements in the EA. In *Bob Marshall Alliance*, 852 F.2d 1223, 1228-29 (9th Cir. 1988), the court explained:

The goal of the statute is to ensure “that federal agencies infuse in project planning a thorough consideration of environmental values.” *Conner v. Burford*, 836 F.2d [1521], 1532 [(9th Cir. 1988)]. The consideration of alternatives requirement furthers that goal by guaranteeing that agency decisionmakers “[have] before [them] and take [] into proper account all possible approaches to a particular project (including total abandonment of the project) which would alter the environmental impact and the cost-benefit balance.” *Calvert Cliff’s Coordinating Committee, Inc. v. United States Atomic Energy Commission*, 449 F.2d 1109, 1114 (D.D.C. 1971). NEPA’s requirement that alternatives be studied, developed, and described both guides the substance of environmental decisionmaking and provides evidence that the mandated decisionmaking process has actually taken place. *Id.* Informed and meaningful consideration of alternatives- including the no action alternative-is thus an integral part of the statutory scheme.

It is entirely unclear whether any such less damaging alternatives were considered by the applicant. To the extent they were but dismissed because they did not quite meet the applicant’s economic goals for the project, NEPA “does not permit the agency to eliminate from discussion or consideration a whole range of alternatives, merely because they would achieve only some of the purposes of a multipurpose project.”³¹³ Without a careful and fully informed examination of a range of alternatives-including the redevelopment alternative and other alternatives that result

³¹¹ See Draft HCP at 74.

³¹² Draft HCP at 69.

³¹³ *Town of Matthews v. U.S. Dep’t of Transp.*, 527 F.Supp. 1055 (W.D. N.C. 1981); see also, *North Buckhead Civic Assoc. v. Skinner*, 903 F.2d 1533, 1542 (11th Cir. 1990) (a discussion of alternatives that would only partly meet the goals of the project may allow the decision maker to conclude that meeting part of the goal with less environmental impact may be worth the tradeoff with a preferred alternative that has greater environmental impact.”).

in fewer acres of development than the preferred alternative, the NEPA analysis is “hopelessly skewed” in favor of a preferred alternative that (as explained below) will have significant impacts to a number of species and in many respects is not that much unlike those that call for a maximum build out or near build out of the site.³¹⁴ Moreover, without a reasonable range of alternatives and an independent analysis of the economic feasibility of alternatives (such as the redevelopment only option) that would result in fewer impacts to pine rocklands, the Service cannot make an informed determination that the “applicant will, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize and mitigate the impacts of such taking.”³¹⁵

Finally, the Applicants’ characterization of the no action alternative that no restoration will occur ignores the existing obligations the Applicants are already under, and likely in violation of, to properly manage the land.³¹⁶

B. An EIS Must be Prepared for the Proposed Action

NEPA requires federal agencies to prepare an environmental impact statement for proposed actions that may significantly affect the quality of the environment.³¹⁷ Coral Reef Commons would result in significant environmental impacts, requiring an EIS.

The Council on Environmental Quality’s NEPA regulations identify a number of “significance factors” that federal agencies must consider in determining whether there may be significant impacts that would trigger the need for an EIS.³¹⁸

- Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas
- The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial
- The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks
- The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration
- The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA.

A number of these factors would be triggered by Coral Reef Commons, requiring that an EIS be prepared.

The pine rocklands are unique unto themselves as described above. In addition to representing the last 2% of this habitat type, it is host to numerous imperiled species that exist nowhere else

³¹⁴ See *Commonwealth of Mass. v. Clark*, 594 F. Supp. 1373, 1379 (D. Mass. 1984).

³¹⁵ 16 USC 1539(a)(2)(B)(ii).

³¹⁶ HCP at 69.

³¹⁷ 42 U.S.C. 4332(C).

³¹⁸ 40 C.F.R. 1508.27(b).

on Earth. For that reason alone the impact of the project on pine rocklands is significant and warrants a deeper environmental analysis through an EIS.

As evidenced by the thousands of letter and comments in opposition to this project, the project is highly controversial. The Service should have conducted a public hearing and at this stage should evaluate the impacts of the project through an EIS.

Regarding effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks, nearly all of the proposed restoration that serves as mitigation for the project depends on fire management. The property has not been fire managed (perhaps ever?) by the Applicants and as stated above, may face difficulty in managing the property with fire. This will become even more difficult and perhaps pose human health risks with the addition of 900 residential units, retail, and a school. The fire management plans, their feasibility, assurances of possibility, proof of insurance, should all be required of the Applicants and analyzed under an EIS.

The use of a habitat valuation assessment, particularly the one developed here, may establish a precedent for future actions, especially considering the proposed Miami Wilds project that will be on adjacent, similar habitat. If this proxy for habitat and species take is to be used here, it should be more carefully evaluated through peer review, or in phases of development, which should be reviewed in an EIS.

There is no question that the proposed action “may adversely affect endangered species and their habitat.”³¹⁹ As described throughout these comments, the on and off-site mitigation are wholly inadequate to compensate for the harm, harassment and habitat loss and fragmentation that the project will cause.

Conclusion

The Applicants’ proposed HCP has the potential to impact several federally listed species in a variety of ways: it will further fragment, degrade, and destroy important habitat for these species making it difficult for each of them to shelter, feed, and reproduce; it may disrupt the slow and fragile recovery of the species; it may increase the mortality of these species as the result of vehicular collisions; it may increase the tension between these species and the area’s human population; and it could lead to other unforeseen and unexpected impacts to species we have such little information about. For these reasons and many others stated above, we request that you do not authorize the take of any of these species as proposed in the HCP. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED] with any questions about this comment letter.

³¹⁹ 40 C.F.R. 1508.27(b)(9).

Sincerely,



Jaclyn Lopez, Florida Director
Center for Biological Diversity



P.S. In lieu of emailing or mailing you copies of the works cited, I've uploaded them to an electronic document transfer service and provided you instructions via email for downloading them. Please let me know if you'd like to receive them a different way.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Choose another site vs. extinction of plants & animals
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 6:48:26 PM

Please

Tiina Lombard
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [crc_hcp](#)
Subject: Comment against the Coral Reef Commons Development
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 10:44:50 PM

Dear Mr. David Dell and Ms. Ashleigh Blackford:

I know I should go into the scientific details; the fact that the Pine Rocklands is itself an endangered species; the seven endangered species found in the forest (where a 39 day span was allocated to search for them when some species only surface during certain periods of the year); the traffic congestion, which is already abominable; the fact that only 60 day were given to respond to the HCP when Coral Reef Commons had 3 years to create it; the fact there might be some toxic materials on the premises; the corruption in acquiring the land in the first place; etc., etc.. I'll just say this: my father was one of those Texas flyboys who got job with Pan American in Miami but still loved to hunt, and took us quail hunting in the winters (it was still cold) in the pine forests in the same area. There were fire roads through the forests then and we would drive an old Ford, the airport car, through the woods, following our two bird dogs. He would drive and we would be on the roof, trying to keep from losing sight of the dogs, who were usually a football field in front. In any case, the memories are worth all the junk, the traffic, and anything else Ram Corp is going to create. If the forest were made into a state park, it would give the generations to come, if not the same memories, a least a apercu of pristine nature to keep them going, in bad time and good. I went to a symposium last fall on Pine Rocklands. Besides speakers from all over the world, there were even a few speakers from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. We simply need more than 60 days to get some of those scientist on board and see what they have to say after going over Ram's proposal. 60 days is not enough time. We can continue creating a world of box stores, videos, and brands, and continue voting in people like our present president or we can say enough. And realize that nature has some say in this process too. Before it is too late.

Sincerely, Joe Devre

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Comment on Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 11:20:36 AM

So you have quite a few species that need to be “relocated”... The Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Florida bonneted bat, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, Miami tiger beetle and white-crowned pigeon.

You have the Zoo right behind the property.

So why can’t RAM redesign, and sell (or God forbid, donate) part of the adjacent land to the County and the Zoo and move the species there to be taken care of by the zoo?

What Miami needs is less people, not more malls... and definitely, less greed.

Rodolfo Serra

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Comment on HCP for Coral Reef Commons
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 11:16:53 AM

To whom it may concern,

I am writing with comments about the HCP for Coral Reef Commons. I am a PhD student at North Carolina State University studying the effects of habitat restoration on Bartram's scrub-hairstreaks and their host plants. I find that the document does not do enough to ameliorate threats to these endangered butterflies, primarily this project reduces occupied habitat and increases fragmentation of an already highly fragmented system.

Based on mapped croton locations provided in Figure 3-2 of the HCP, it appears that the development plan erases almost half of the croton present in the project area. The areas proposed as preserves encompass only a fraction of current available habitat and much of the pine rockland in these areas appears too thick to support croton. Based on our experiences on Big Pine Key, if croton is not currently present, it is unlikely to appear even following restoration actions. On Big Pine Key, we have implemented mechanical understory clearing as a restoration strategy and have only seen germination of new seedlings in plots that contained croton prior to clearing (unpublished data). We also have evidence that new plants do not miraculously emerge following fire. We have found no new croton populations within the boundaries of a burn unit that burned in 2011. Prior to the burn, there was no croton within the unit, and we have not found plants following the fire (unpublished data). Therefore, to increase the distribution of croton in preserves, it will take efforts to plant additional plants, simply burning and/or clearing will not be sufficient.

The HCP states that the inclusion of stepping stones and a corridor will "be consistent with several USFWS recovery objectives for pine rocklands including Objective 6, to connect existing pine rocklands by acquiring lands for conservation between them (USFWS 1999)." This is blatantly not true. This project INCREASES fragmentation of an already highly fragmented system. "Connecting" the proposed preserves that are left after development via a very skinny corridor along the boundary does not "connect *existing* pine rocklands," it potentially connects new, smaller, pine rockland fragments. Additionally, corridors and stepping stones only work as conservation strategies if they are designed in a way that aligns with the movement and dispersal behaviors of organisms (For a butterfly example see Schultz and Crone 2001, Crone and Schultz 2003, McIntire et al. 2007, Schultz et al. 2012, and Fender's blue butterfly recovery plan). We do not currently understand how Bartram's hairstreaks, or any of the other listed plants and animals affected by this project, move across the landscape. Therefore, there is no guarantee that the proposed stepping stones or corridors will actually promote movement between the preserves. Instead, it is possible that butterflies never find those small habitat patches and the two preserves remain completely isolated. It is also possible that stepping stones pull butterflies out of preserves, but do not connect them, thus resulting in declining populations within the preserves.

Fire is a necessary part of maintaining pine rockland habitat and burning pine rockland fragments in Miami-Dade County is not easy. I find it hard to believe that the developer will be able to maintain the proposed preserves with fire given the small size of the preserves and

proximity to developed areas. The smaller a pine rockland fragment is, the more difficult it is to control a prescribed fire. Therefore, the conditions under which small fragments can be burned are generally highly restrictive. Not only will increased development limit the ability to burn the proposed preserves and mitigation area, it also will hinder the ability of Miami Dade County to burn pine rocklands adjacent to this proposed development. It is already difficult to get fire on the ground in these pine rocklands and increasing the number of neighbors will likely further restrict the prescription window for fires on Zoo Miami lands. This will negatively impact populations of the protected species that are not directly affected by the development.

This development project will likely result in declines and potential extirpation of a population of a critically endangered butterfly, as well as other listed plants and animals. It will do this by directly reducing the amount of available habitat through development. It also has the possibility to reduce the ability of adjacent lands to be properly managed which will result in habitat degradation for all of the listed species. The actions proposed in the HCP do not adequately mitigate these likely declines and I recommend the USFWS deny the ITP. Pine rockland is the rarest forested ecosystem in the world. Each remaining pine rockland parcel must be protected from development to ensure the persistence of rare, endemic plants and animals.

Crone, E. E., and C. B. Schultz. 2003. Movement behavior and minimum patch size for butterfly population persistence. Pages 561-576 in: C. Boggs, W. Watt, and P. Ehrlich (eds). *Butterflies: Ecology and evolution taking flight*. University of Chicago Press.

McIntire, E. J. B., C. B. Schultz, and E. E. Crone. 2007. Designing a network for butterfly habitat restoration: where individuals, populations and landscapes interact. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 44(4):725-736.

Schultz, C., & Crone, E. (2001). Edge-mediated dispersal behavior in a prairie butterfly. *Ecology*, 82(7), 1879–1892.

Schultz, C. B., Franco, A. M. A., & Crone, E. E. (2012). Response of butterflies to structural and resource boundaries. *Journal of Animal Ecology*, 81(3), 724–734.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2010. Recovery Plan for the Prairie Species of Western Oregon and Southwestern Washington. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon. xi + 241 pp.

Erica Henry

PhD Candidate

North Carolina State University

Raleigh, NC

From: [REDACTED]
To: Crc_hcp@fws.gov; [Blackford, Ashleigh](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Comments on Coral Reef Comments HCP on behalf of Tropical Audubon Society
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 4:00:53 PM

Dear Mr. Bell and Ms. Blackford,

Please find attached a letter from Jose Barros, President of the Tropical Audubon Society, enumerating the concerns we have with the Coral Reef Commons draft HCP and EA. This letter was also sent under separate cover via USPS.

Thank you for your careful consideration of these important issues.

Sincerely,



Erin Clancy

--

For the Birds,

Erin Clancy
Conservation Director

[Tropical Audubon Society](#)

(Twitter, Facebook & Instagram) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | Mobile [REDACTED]



Kindly consider the environment before printing this email

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Comments on Coral Reef commomns EA and HCP
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 12:09:09 AM
Attachments: [Comments on Coral Reef Commons EA and HCP.pdf](#)

Please see the following attached comments

Regards,

Laura Reynolds
Founding and Managing Member





May 22nd, 2017

RE: Coral Reef Commons comment letter regarding the EA & HCP

David Dell

david_dell@fws.gov

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 30345
Ashleigh Blackford

ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov

South Florida Ecological Services Office
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Vero Beach FL 32960

Ashleigh Blackford & David Dell of the US Fish and Wildlife Service:

The pine rocklands of South Florida are an immensely bio-diverse and critically endangered habitat which once stretched across 185,000 of the Miami Atlantic Coastal Ridge. This fire-dependent ecosystem is the most bio-diverse in the state of Florida, and hosts a variety of rare endemic species. It has been identified as globally imperiled and this parcel specifically has been identified as critical habitat for endangered species.

Over the course of the 20th century, the effects of development, deforestation, fragmentation, and fire suppression have reduced the extent of this ecosystem to a paltry 1.5% of its original range or less. As such, many of the endemic species which once called this ecosystem home have been designated as threatened, endangered, or critically endangered, and the habitat itself is considered to be critically endangered. Of the 1.5% of pine rockland habitats which remains intact, a significant proportion occur in small “postage-stamp” communities. Few pine rockland habitats in Miami Dade County exceed 40 hectares, and as such can only support species requiring a minimum range. Presence of larger contiguous forest tracts (above 80 ha) is imperative for the survival of several pine rockland species with large minimum ranges such as the Florida Bonneted bat. Habitat fragmentation has hit these species the hardest, pushing many to the brink of extinction.

It is important to note that the preserved pine rockland habitats of Everglades National Park differ greatly from those of the Miami Rock Ridge in terms of geology, hydrology, and



endemic species content from those of Miami-Dade County. The pine rocklands of Miami-Dade county boast a significantly greater native species richness (182 taxa/.16 ha in Miami-Dade vs 128 taxa/ .1 ha in ENP). Efforts to relocate highly endangered species such as the Miami Tiger Beetle to the more low-lying pine rocklands of Long Pine Key have met with failure as a result of the ecological distinctions between these subsets of pine rockland habitat. Furthermore, the elevation difference which distinguishes the pine rocklands of the Miami Rock Ridge from the more low lying pine rocklands found in Everglades National Park gives these parcels on the ridge a greater chance at long-term health and survival in the face of sea level rise, making these parcels an effective lifeboat habitat for many species which might otherwise face extinction. We mention these facts in order to stress the supreme importance of preserving the last remaining parcels of pine rockland on the Miami Rock Ridge outside of Everglades National Park.

The area known as the Richmond Pine Rocklands on the upper Atlantic Coastal Ridge is the largest contiguous tract of pine rockland habitat outside of Everglades National Park.

The Pine rockland parcel in question contains many highly endangered endemic flora and fauna including the Miami Tiger Beetle, the Florida Leaf-wing Butterfly, the Bertram's Hairstreak butterfly, and several others. It is possible that many more highly endangered or threatened species may be present on the property, but this has yet to be determined due to the absence of virtually any comprehensive surveys of the property. Various individuals who spend significant time in this area have mentioned sightings of species such as the bonneted bat and the rim-rock crown snake, but this remains unconfirmed. The Richmond Pine Rocklands have also been designated as "critical habitat" for the Florida brickell-bush and Carter's small-flowered flax amongst other endangered floral species.

In the wake of hurricane Andrew, the United States Federal Government granted the University of Miami ownership of a large swath of the Richmond Pine Rocklands with a 30 year stipulation that the land be used for educational purposes. During this period the university used the site for animal testing purposes, and generally neglected the environmental needs of the habitat. In 2014 (virtually immediately after the expiration of its mandate to utilize the property educational purposes), the University sold 88 acres of this pine habitat to Ram Realty for the price of \$22 million.

Ram Realty now plans to construct 900 apartments, a Wal-Mart retail center, several other retail establishments, and potentially a school upon the property. This constitutes the first large scale development on a globally imperiled pine rockland habitat since Miami-Dade



County launched its land buying program to preserve this crucial habitat in 1990. In pursuit of this development, Ram has submitted a Habitat Conservation Plan meant to assure the Fish and Wildlife Service that they are doing everything within their power to “avoid, minimize and mitigate the potential impacts of the take”.

After careful review of the Environmental Assessment and Habitat Conservation Plan for the proposed development, we found the document to be wholly insufficient in its efforts to limit undue damage to the highly sensitive pine rockland ecosystem and the many endangered endemic species which inhabit the parcel in question. In fact if this model were to be used that in effect allows for 50% of the critical habitat to be destroyed it is a recipe for pine rockland’s and the species it calls home to become extinct. This sets a dangerous precedent for critical habitat designation across the united states.

The precise nature of our concerns with the plan as it currently stands are outlined below:

1. Ram’s Environmental Assessment lacks crucial data, remains incomplete and is insufficient overall for the scope of this project:

Simply put, the Environmental Assessment for this plan is grossly insufficient and should be replaced with a full Environmental Impact Statement. First and foremost, one must consider that the almost complete absence of comprehensive and open surveying of the property. This makes this assessment virtually meaningless, and will not aid in proof that take is accidental. Without solid information on the true composition of species which occupy this site, it is literally impossible to determine what impacts the proposed project may have. Thus, there is no scientific evidence or conclusions that the TAKE is accidental in nature. In fact, without an a more extensive survey and full EIS this cannot be determined. This necessary step must be complete a full Environmental Impact Statement to be able to accurately quantify take as incidental and to determine if there is significant harm.

Furthermore, the Environmental Assessment is clearly incomplete and bears no mention of potential impacts on species from deforestation and development, nor does it contain a summary, nor an analysis of the ways in which the soil and other abiotic portions of the ecological community may be affected. Without these features the EA can hardly claim to answer any of the most pressing questions regarding whether their



take of species is accidental or incidental to the project. This question is absolutely vital to the matter at hand and must be addressed before any progress is made.

Finally, it is our belief that an Environmental Assessment alone is insufficient for this project. As stated previously, this project constitutes the first large scale development on highly endangered and ecologically sensitive pine rockland habitat since the beginning of Miami Dade County's conservation efforts in the 1990's. The project includes measures to clear-cut and develop over approximately half of the parcel in question, as well as bring upwards of 2,000 humans into the area. There is no realistic scenario in which this development does not negatively impact the species which occupy this area. As such, an Environmental Assessment is insufficient and a full Environmental Impact Statement must be provided.

2. Ram relies on fundamentally flawed and misleading use of "Habitat Value Units" and "Habitat Value Assessment"

The claims made in regard to "habitat value" and the potential increase in "habitat value units" supposedly wrought by the project is incredibly dangerous precedent to set and is a recipe for extinction of critical habitat such as this one. The section in question amounts to little more than Ram realty attempting to misuse a classification/quantification system specifically designed for the management of existing pine rocklands and were never in any way designed to factor in the costs of habitat destruction or development. The authors of the system themselves have objected to its use in this manner. This section constitutes little more than the Ram attempting to write itself a blank check for habitat destruction and development. Ultimately, should the claims in this document be accepted, and the EA and development plans approved, an incredibly dangerous precedent will be set that will allow for the wholesale destruction and development of vast portions of the last remaining parcels of pine rockland forest on this Earth. All the developer need do is argue that the scraps of habitat left destroyed will be "better managed", and by that argument make the obscene claim that the pine rockland community is in fact better served by its own eradication. The last remaining pine rocklands of south Florida and the litany of highly endangered species which occupy them are not wanting for "better" vague, subjective, and single species specific management, they are wanting for the maintenance of the bare minimum of available range which is required for any hope of long term survival.



3. FWS and RAM provides insufficient assurance that the necessary fire regime will be carried out:

South Florida pine rocklands are highly dependent upon regular fire regimes in order to remain healthy. Any alternatives to burning such as mechanical or chemical control of invasive species and brush are insufficient and incapable of producing long-term restoration. The necessity of relatively frequent burning is both attested in the HCP itself and borne out by research, which shows that when not paired with burning, mechanical and chemical controls may elicit soil disturbances, weedy species increases, and rapid hardwood re-sprouting¹. Thus, it is clear that in order to truly achieve any measure of success an appropriate fire regime must be not only be established, but also strictly adhered to.

While the Habitat Conservation Plan does outline a proposed fire regime, the claim that they will truly be able to carry out these burns is highly suspect. The ability to conduct controlled burns is heavily constrained by the needs and sensitivities of the local population.

The smoke produced by controlled burns impairs lung functions and can cause numerous health impacts to the surrounding population². This risk is exacerbated in children, the elderly, and those with respiratory conditions. Considering the massive scope and residential capacity of the proposed development (not to mention the possible development of a public school upon the property as well) it seems virtually inevitable that many of these sensitive individuals will be present on the property.

Under the best management practices outlined in the Miami Dade County Natural Areas Management Plan, new projects should always “account for fire management needs of pine rockland sites”³. This development clearly fails that criterion by placing such a high density of settlement and use directly adjacent to the pine rockland habitat. Should this project reach fruition, upwards of 2,000 permanent residents may occupy the site, as well as many shoppers and potentially a large number of children (should the plans to build the school go through). With this high density of individuals on the property, it is inevitable that many may be particularly sensitive to the

¹Menges, Gordon, ‘SHOULD MECHANICAL TREATMENTS AND HERBICIDES BE USED AS FIRE SURROGATES TOMANAGE FLORIDA’S UPLANDS? A REVIEW’, Archbold Biological Station, [REDACTED] (2)The Nature Conservancy, Department of Biology, [REDACTED] Florida Scientist, Volume 73.

² Slaughter, et al. Association Between Lung Function and Exposure to Smoke Among Firefighters at Prescribed Burns. Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene. August 17, 2010.

³ <http://www.miamidade.gov/environment/library/reports/natural-areas-mgmt-plan.pdf>



health impacts of burning, invariably compromising any attempts to adhere to a necessary and appropriate fire regime. In fact, the best available research shows that development near potential burn sites constitutes the greatest constraint on prescribed burning, and that in those landscapes which contain a mixture of protected, residential, and commodity producing lands, fire use is particularly constrained because of the “wildland-urban interface”⁴.

When one combines the inherent difficulties of carrying out a consistent controlled burn regime in a heavily settled area with the fact that the plan bears no actual repercussions for failure to adhere to said regime (a matter which will be addressed later in this document) the claims begin to look quite dubious. Before this plan can proceed, more certain measures must be implemented to ensure that Ram will be impelled to and capable of operating an appropriate controlled burn regime.

4. The plan provides insufficient management of the ecologically deleterious impacts of large scale commercial/residential development adjacent to an environmentally sensitive pine rockland ecosystem

The proposed development would construct 900 single-unit apartments, a Wal-Mart retail center alongside several other commercial establishments, and leave the potential for a school to be built on the property as well. In total, over 2000 individuals may be living and operating in this area on a daily basis should the plan go through. Large scale commercial and residential development of this type inherently inflicts a colossal disturbing force on native ecosystems to which they are adjacent. This goes double for ecosystems as fragile and rare as the South Florida pine rocklands.

As it stands, Ram Realty’s HCP does not sufficiently take into account the impacts of dense human settlement directly adjacent to the sensitive pine rockland ecosystem. The effects of large-scale human settlement which the plan fails to properly address include but are not limited to:

A. The introduction of invasive ornamental plants and the potential establishment of a perpetual source of invasive species seeds/spores.

⁴ Costanza, J. K., and A. Moody. 2011. Deciding where to burn: stakeholder priorities for prescribed burning of a fire-dependent ecosystem. *Ecology and Society* 16(1): 14. [online] URL: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol16/iss1/art14/>



Across various regions in the US and abroad, incidence of residential housing is positively associated with invasive exotic plant species richness^{5,6}. This is due to the tendency of residential developments to disturb land cover, introduce nonnative landscaping plants, and facilitate dispersal of propagules along roads. Many ornamental plants used in Florida are of an invasive exotic nature, and so it may be presumed that the risk would be especially great in regards to this development. Without some sort of measure to mandate use of native landscaping alongside other measures to reduce the incursion of nonnative species from both the proposed Wal-mart and the residential units, this HCP should not be considered fully complete. This requirement is fully in line with the Miami Dade County best practices for development adjacent to pine rockland sites⁷.

B. The introduction of invasive predators (felines specifically) which may significantly impact the populations of both migratory birds and endangered endemic fauna.

With the introduction of human residents into the midst of the sensitive environment which is the Richmond Pine Rocklands, so too will come other species. These include the aforementioned invasive exotic plant species, as well as another type of ecologically dangerous exotic species: the house cat. On average, house cats can depredate upwards of 0.7-1.6 birds per week, and play a major role in human induced decline in bird populations⁸. The influx of housecats into the area will significant damage to the populations of native and migratory birds, and measures must be taken to limit their population within the area.

C. Noise and light pollution.

Both noise and light pollution associated with commercial/residential development may elicit significant deleterious effects on native and migratory species. It is common practice for Wal-marts to flood their parking lots with bright LED light

⁵ Gavier-Pizarro, et al. Housing is positively associated with invasive exotic plant species richness in New England, USA. 1 October 2010. DOI: 10.1890/09-2168.1

⁶Hansen, et al.. EFFECTS OF EXURBAN DEVELOPMENT ON BIODIVERSITY: PATTERNS, MECHANISMS, AND RESEARCH NEEDS. 1 December 2005. DOI: 10.1890/05-5221

⁷ <http://www.miamidade.gov/environment/library/reports/natural-areas-mgmt-plan.pdf>

⁸ Lepczyk, Mertig, Liu. Landowners and cat predation across rural-to-urban landscapes. Biological Conservation Volume 115, Issue 2, February 2004, Pages 191–201. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0006-3207\(03\)00107-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0006-3207(03)00107-1)



throughout the night. Furthermore, residential units often leave on lights throughout the night as well. This can create a great and unpredictable disturbing influence on the native ecosystem which can be quite difficult to predict.

The noise of trucks, cars, operation of machinery, and other practices that are to be expected should this development commence should also prove quite stressful to native species. As it stands, the HCP contains no plans or strategies to address either of these ecologically damaging influences of the proposed development.

D. Introduction of fertilizers and pesticides

The all but guaranteed use of pesticides which would take place throughout large swaths of the project area poses a particular threat to one of the pine rockland ecosystem's most endangered native species, the Miami Tiger Beetle. As an insect which feeds primarily on other insects, the Miami Tiger Beetle is at particular risk from the impacts of pesticide application. Any HCP which does not take the necessary limitation and management of pesticides into account should be deemed insufficient. The continued existence of this species, which exists only in the pine rocklands of the upper Atlantic Coastal Ridge (of which this is the largest remaining parcel) is too vulnerable to proceed without due caution and consideration.

As it stands, the only means by which this HCP attempts to limit the potential damage done by residents and other individuals during daily activities is via "Promote public education and awareness of pine rockland habitat and Goal 4: associated species" and through the use of vague and undefined "Best Management Practices for commercial and residential development" which go unspecified and have not assurance of truly being implemented. While education is an important and valuable tool, on its own it is fully insufficient as a means of avoiding the potential negative effects of human habitation. Further considerations must be taken into consideration that might better manage and mitigate the risks of noise, light, and exotic species introduction as well as encourage or mandate use of native species in landscaping throughout the area. Furthermore,

5. The project provides insufficient mitigation and misleading claims regarding off-site mitigation

The HCP in question makes several questionable claims related to its use of offsite Mitigation. The authors of the plan claim that "the Project will result in



prescribed burning on 50.96 acres of Off-site Mitigation Area”, amongst other claims of increased net habitat function as a result of offsite mitigation

However, the land which the HCP attempts to utilize for off-site mitigation is in fact already under a conservation easement. The management regime which the University is currently required to uphold includes the implementation of controlled burns on the property. Thus, many of the claims made in regard to the actual ecological improvement of this land should be considered fallacious.

Furthermore, even in the absence of these misleading claims regarding their off-site mitigation, the off-site mitigation regime outlined would still be insufficient. Off-site mitigation of this variety should bear a 5-1 ratio of lands developed over to lands protected. This project abjectly fails to meet this criterion and manages (even under their dubious claims) to protect 1.23 acres of land for every one developed over at best. The fact that this ecosystem is globally imperiled further pushes this ratio outside the reasonable range for off-site mitigation.

The simple fact of the matter is that there is not enough South Florida pine rockland habitat in existence for off-site mitigation to serve as a viable strategy. The ecosystem has been whittled down to its last 1.5% and simply cannot weather any more destruction.

6. Overall, there is insufficient surveying and scientific understanding of the requirements of endangered species affected by the plan

As the largest contiguous stretch of pine rockland Habitat remaining outside of Everglades National Park, the Richmond pine rocklands hosts a bevy of highly endangered endemic species. These include the Miami Tiger Beetle, the Florida Bonneted Bat, the Rim-Rock Crown Snake, the Bartram’s Hairstreak Butterfly, the Florida Leaf-wing Butterfly, and many others.

It is quite possible and in fact likely that many other highly endangered flora and fauna species inhabit this area. Multiple individuals have made claims of sighting endangered species in the area such as the Rim-rock crown snake and others. However, Ram has consistently barred researchers from surveying the property, and imposed restrictive non-disclosure agreements upon all those allowed in. This creates a blackout of knowledge that might prove deadly to those endangered species whose presence is being obscured. The project should not proceed until a far more thorough course of surveying is completed.

There is great reason to believe that the pine rockland habitat in question is far more healthy and contains a far greater variety of rare native species than Ram would



have us believe. One recent count conducted in
Furthermore, many of the species which inhabit this parcel are quite rare, and as such little information and research exists which might offer us a better understanding of the specific habitat needs which they require. As such, any project upon this parcel should proceed with an especially grand abundance of caution. As it stands, the Habitat Conservation Plan put forth by Ram fails to meet this criterion.

7. The plan relies on known bad-actors

During the University of Miami's stewardship of the property in question the university consistently failed to provide any necessary upkeep of the property, going so far as to deny the habitat of the controlled burns upon which it relies. The management strategy of the University of Miami (and Ram Realty for that matter) can be characterized as purposeful neglect and abuse, meant to degrade the habitat to the
Neither actor should be

8. No Penalty Exists for Failure

This Habitat Conservation plan is unreliable merely by virtue of the fact that there is no penalty outlined for failure to adhere to any of the measures for preservation laid out. This fact is particularly egregious when it comes to the burn regime, a burn regime which will become infeasible upon the projects development.

9. Faulty Alternative System

The alternatives to the plan listed in the HCP do not truly reflect the range of potential alternatives. No effort was taken to determine the impacts and effects of environmental restoration without adjacent development or of environmental restoration alongside a scaled-down version of the project.

In conclusion, the Model that the HCP relies upon is flawed. It was developed for the purpose of assessing management needs, not to evaluate habitat value. Under Federal Law one must determine if the take in this case is accidental and without a more extensive survey as required in a full EIS that would be impossible. There is no conclusion section in this report or science to support alternative 6 and the habitat valuation model relied upon does not use sound science. More proof is required to show there is no significant impact, this would not hold up in a challenge and it is up to the FWS to do its due diligence here to protect endangered species and the critical habitat that has been identified for that purpose.



Recommendations:

We at Conservation Concepts LLC recommend the following:

1. A full Environmental Impact Statement should be prepared for this project. The sensitivity and ecological significance of this habitat is simply too great for safety and precaution to be taken lightly.
2. The HCP as it currently stands is insufficient in its measures to protect the numerous endangered endemic species of the Richmond Pine Rocklands, and should be thrown out in favor of an improved version based on more extensive surveys.
3. The flawed model that is relied upon here should be thrown out and only allowed to be used for the originally intended purpose the authors intended. As stated earlier this model was developed for the sole purpose of assessing management needs, not evaluating habitat value.
4. A public hearing should be conducted where the public is allowed to participate with experts and have their questions answered directly.

Please contact us with any questions you may have regarding these comments,

Laura Reynolds

Founding and Managing Member

Zac Cosner

Environmental Analyst

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov; [REDACTED]
Subject: Comments on Draft HCP for Coral Reef Commons to be included in public comment
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 2:39:14 PM
Attachments: [Letter to FWC re Coral Reef Commons HCP.pdf](#)

Good afternoon,

On behalf of Commissioner Daniella Levine Cava, I would ask that you please include the attached letter as a public comment on the Habitat Conservation Plan for Coral Reef Commons.

Thank you,

Sean McCrackine, MPA

Chief of Policy & Planning

Commissioner Daniella Levine Cava, District 8

Downtown Office | Phone [REDACTED]

[Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)



DANIELLA LEVINE CAVA
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSIONER
DISTRICT 8

May 22, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office, Ecological Services
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345

Ashleigh Blackford
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
South Florida Ecological Services
1339 20th St.
Vero Beach, FL 32960

RE: Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan – Feb. 2017 revision

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford:

I am writing this letter to express significant concerns about the Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) submitted for your review. The intent of this HCP, submitted by Ram Development, is to show that a large shopping mall and housing complex can be built upon some of the rarest and most biologically critical habitat for some of the nation's most endangered species without harm.

Because there are few remaining pine rockland tracts left anywhere in the world, and these are separated by significant distances, each one has become a biological island with plants and animals found only on those specific tracts. The Institute for Regional Conservation identified 55 species of plants and animals not even found within the larger pine rocklands preserved in Everglades National Park.

The HCP prepared by the applicant identifies 8 endangered and threatened species covered by the Incidental Take Authorization, and asserts that only four have been documented on the site – the Florida Bonneted Bat, the Bartram's Hairstreak Butterfly, the Tiny polygala, and Deltoid spurge. The recently listed Miami Tiger Beetle had been thought to be extinct yet was "rediscovered" recently on this very Richmond Pine Rockland habitat. The re-emergence of the species previously declared extinct shows the significant challenges faced in demonstrably confirming the absence of a specific endangered species. It underscores the need to preserve maximal habitat potential for species endemic to pine rocklands for future recovery and to prevent their permanent extermination through habitat loss, which the FWS has identified as the main reason for species loss in Pine Rockland.

Miami-Dade County has long considered the Richmond Pineland one of the most ecologically important natural pine rockland habitats outside of Everglades National Park and sought to purchase this property from the University of Miami many years ago. Unfortunately, the University was unwilling to consider preservation through the County's land purchase program, and the property was instead sold to the developers proposing the Coral Reef Commons project.



DANIELLA LEVINE CAVA
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSIONER
DISTRICT 8

A significant component of this plan hinges on the University of Miami providing additional protections on lands they control within the Richmond Pineland; a property known now as CSTARS in the southeastern portion of the Richmond tract. Unfortunately, the University of Miami's conduct in its ownership of the Coral Reef Commons (CRC) Property should give the FWS pause. The CRC property, while in the possession of UM, was allowed to be overrun with invasive plants that have degraded the quality of the pineland habitat as described in the applicant's own HCP. The degree of neglect demonstrated historically by the University must be taken into account when considering their capacity or interest in preserving and enhancing the remaining habitat under their control at CSTARS.

Additionally, I believe it is unreasonable for FWS to allow permanent significant impacts to recoverable and intact endangered Pine Rockland and the species that depend upon that habitat. The proposed HCP would destroy pineland habitat with no true offsite preservation of remnant pinelands, and no effort to constrain development on the footprint to the area already developed when the land was used by UM for primate research.

I would respectfully ask that the FWS reject this HCP for the following reasons:

- The proposed HCP does not contemplate significant restoration and addition of pine rockland habitat, within the Richmond tract which would allow for the recovery and expansion of the endangered and threatened species present in other parts of the Richmond pineland.
- The proposed HCP does not provide off-site mitigation through the preservation of other privately held pineland "islands" elsewhere in the County nor attempt to connect wildlife corridors.
- The proposed HCP fractures existing habitat on the subject property into two separated units which will degrade the ability to protect the habitat and species dependent on these pine rocklands.
- The past neglect and lack of capacity to protect or improve the pine rockland under its control makes it risky to accept that habitat preservation will be a priority.

Instead, I would suggest that this development plan only be permitted to proceed if:

- The development footprint comports to the already developed lands within the Coral Reef Commons property, in order to create a habitat parcel with greater likelihood for responsible management.
- Mitigation strategies significantly contribute to the growth of pineland habitat within the Richmond tract, rather than the proposed and risky split parcel and split responsibility management plan.
- A revised HCP does not allow for fracturing of pineland habitat but instead provides for a single and contiguous management parcel.
- Any revised plan does not rely on the University of Miami's southern property for "better" management of the CSTARS property as a mitigation strategy.

Sincerely,

Daniella Levine Cava
Daniella Levine Cava

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Comments on hcp
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:23:03 AM

I'm commenting against permitting any further destruction of critically endangered Pine Rockland habitat or restorable Rockland. There are only a few scraps left. This area is in the largest remaining contiguous remaining habitat of the eastern pine rocklands. Destruction in this area cannot be replaced or mitigated.

Michael Adler
[REDACTED]

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S7, an AT&T 4G LTE smartphone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Comments on the HCP for the Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 6:10:42 PM
Attachments: [2017_05_22 Center et al comments CRC HCP \(2\).pdf](#)

Greetings:

South Florida Wildlands incorporates by reference the totality of the attached comments prepared by the Center for Biological Diversity and affiliated organizations.

In addition, we wish to particularly draw the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's attention to the need for the agency to produce an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in its evaluation of this project. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) discusses the need for an EIS in situations where a federal action - in this case the service's review and ultimate approval or denial of this HCP - has the potential to "significantly" affect the quality of the human environment.

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) further clarifies that requirement in this discussion of the term "significantly" (see - <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/40/1508.27>). We believe this project on one of the last sizable remnants of the once extensive pine rocklands of Miami-Dade County - and home to numerous species of federally listed plants and animals - clearly meets the threshold for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. In particular, please note the following three numbered items from the CFR:

4 - Years of objections to this project from the South Florida community (including a "Rally for the Rocklands" which drew nearly 1,000 local participants), in addition to constant attention and scrutiny in the local press, underscores the "highly controversial" nature of the proposed project. Thousands of local south Florida residents have submitted comments to the service objecting to this project in its current configuration moving forward.

5 - There are numerous aspects of this project which are "highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks." These include the impacts of significantly more traffic in the project area; the impacts of noise, lighting, pollution, and other factors on the listed species that are the subject of this HCP (as well as the quality of the on-site preserve areas should the project go forward), unknowns as to how the on-site burning will be able to take place due to a huge increase in commercial and residential activity on the site; how habitat loss is going to impact the recovery of species found on the site - e.g. the foraging activities of the Florida bonneted bat; and the extent to which the developed areas are going to fragment habitat and decrease genetic diversity and gene flow. The absolute uniqueness of

this HCP in pine rockland habitat (a completely unique environment) of South Florida should also be a major factor in the service's decision to undertake and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

9 - The HCP has identified the following federally listed species as the subject of this HCP: the Florida bonneted bat, Bartram's scrub hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Miami tiger beetle, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, deltoid spurge, and Florida brickell-bush. This is clearly a large number of listed species for such a small piece of habitat. The CFR identifies this as a significance factor. Both species and habitat will be significantly impacted by this proposed project - possibly to the point of making recovery (a major goal of the Endangered Species Act) completely impossible. For some of these species, jeopardy is a distinct possibility. There is therefore an absolute need to conduct a full EIS to further qualify - in advance of the action - what the impacts to these species and their habitat (in many cases "critical habitat") will be.

Relevant section of the Code of Federal Regulations is below:

40 CFR 1508.27 - Significantly

§ 1508.27 Significantly.

Significantly as used in NEPA requires considerations of both context and intensity:

(a) Context. This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant.

(b) Intensity. This refers to the severity of impact. Responsible officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action. The following should be considered in evaluating intensity:

- (1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.
- (2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.
- (3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity

to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

(4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

(5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

(6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

(7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.

(8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

(9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species [Act](#) of 1973.

(10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

[[43 FR 56003](#), Nov. 29, 1978; [44 FR 874](#), Jan. 3, 1979]

Best regards,

Matthew Schwartz
Executive Director





Sent via electronic mail

May 22, 2017

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
David_dell@fws.gov
Crc_hcp@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
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Re: Comments on Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford:

On behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity, Everglades Law Center, South Florida Wildlands Association, Sierra Club Miami Group, Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition, Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association, and Tropical Audubon, thank you for your consideration of these comments on the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA). Due to the vulnerability of the species addressed in the HCP – the Florida bonneted bat, Bartram’s scrub hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Miami tiger beetle, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, deltoid spurge, and Florida brickell-bush – and the inadequacies of the proposed HCP as outlined below, we respectfully request that the application for the Coral Reef Commons HCP be denied, as it fails to provide sufficient information to evaluate the project’s impact on listed species and their habitat and it would further fragment and degrade vital habitat for listed species. We also request that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) find that Coral Reef Commons will have significant effects and evaluate the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the project in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

I. Project Background

The Richmond pine rocklands are characterized by limestone outcrops, Florida slash pine as the sole canopy species, and a diverse understory of scrubs and herbs. They are also the site of the proposed Coral Reef Commons, a mixed-use development with 900 apartments, a large anchor store, additional retail, and a school.¹ On July 15, 2014 the Service notified the developer of Coral Reef Commons that such a project could result in the “take” of species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and thus, that the developer could be liable for violating federal

¹ Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan (*hereinafter* HCP) at 10.

law.² In November 2014, the developer announced it would submit a Section 10 incidental take permit (ITP) and HCP application to the Vero Beach office of the Service to authorize the take of ESA-listed species, potentially including the Florida bonneted bat (*Eumops floridanus*), Florida leafwing butterfly (*Anaea troglodyta*), Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak butterfly (*Strymon acis bartrami*), Florida brickell-bush (*Brickellia mosieri*), Carter’s small-flowered flax (*Linum carteri* var. *carteri*), deltoid spurge (*Chamaesyce deltoidea* ssp. *deltoidea*), and tiny polygala (*Polygala smallii*) associated with the destruction of irreplaceable and endangered pine rockland habitat.³

In 2015, Coral Reef Retail LLC, Coral Reef Resi PH I LLC, and Ramdev (collectively “RAM Coral Reef”), and the University of Miami (collectively “Applicants”) applied for an ITP for 30 years to take the Florida bonneted bat, Bartram’s hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Miami tiger beetle, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, and white-crowned pigeon in order to develop and operate Coral Reef Commons. The project includes 137.90 acres (including 55.29 acres of on-site mitigation), plus 50.96 acres of off-site mitigation.⁴ The on-site mitigation or “conservation areas” are owned by RAM Coral Reef and include 23.92 acres in what is being called the “west preserve”, 21.61 acres in the “east preserve”, 2.16 acres in the “southern corridor”, 3.72 acres of rockland hammock, and 3.88 acres of “stepping stones”. RAM Coral Reef intends to destroy 82.61 acres on the project site. RAM Coral Reef proposes to place the 51.41 acres (on-site mitigation, minus the stepping stones) under a “conservation encumbrance.”⁵

The Applicants’ proposed off-site mitigation area is ½ mile southeast of the Coral Reef Commons project and is owned by University of Miami. This land is currently under a deed restriction to protect the deltoid spurge.⁶ The Applicants propose to record a deed restriction on the off-site mitigation area to allow for further protections.⁷ Other than to help RAM Coral Reef mitigate for Coral Reef Commons, it is not clear why University Miami has applied for an incidental take permit for this project. It is the Applicants’ position that the on-site preserve will offset the incidental take impacts,⁸ and that the off-site mitigation provides “additional substantial conservation benefits.”⁹

Applicants have submitted a draft EA for the HCP and ITP that purports to provide a net benefit to the listed species in the area. The following comments detail the legal inadequacies of the EA and HCP and request that the Service reject the application and/or find that it will have significant impacts and initiate an EIS.

² Service Letter of Concern, July 15, 2014, HCP App. A.

³ Bach, T. Nov. 28, 2014, Developer to Submit Habitat Conservation Plan for Controversial Walmart Project, http://blogs.miaminewtimes.com/riptide/2014/11/developer_to_submit_habitat_conservation_plan_in_order_to_proceed_with_cont.php.

⁴ HCP at 1.

⁵ HCP at 2.

⁶ HCP at 3.

⁷ HCP at 3.

⁸ HCP at 3.

⁹ HCP at 3.

II. Regulatory Background

The ESA, by way of its “language, history, and structure . . . indicates beyond doubt that Congress intended endangered species to be afforded the highest of priorities” for protection under the law.¹⁰ Thus, the ESA prohibits the “take” of a listed species.¹¹ Section 10 of the ESA provides an exception to the take prohibition by allowing the incidental take of a listed species where, “such taking is incidental to, and not the purpose of, the carrying out of an otherwise lawful activity.”¹² An ITP will not be granted unless the applicant submits a conservation plan to the Service, who receives delegated authority from the Secretary of the Department of Interior. The Service then makes a determination that the “impact which will likely result from such taking” and the “steps the applicant will take to minimize and mitigate such impacts . . . will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild.”¹³ Before issuing an ITP, the Service must make a finding that the application and conservation plan provide:

1. the taking will be incidental;
2. the applicant will, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize and mitigate the impacts of such taking;
3. the applicant will ensure that adequate funding for the plan will be provided;
4. the taking will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild; and
5. the measures, if any, required under subparagraph (A)(iv) will be met...¹⁴

Prior to granting an ITP application, the Service must also undergo the consultation process with itself, as outlined in Section 7 of the ESA, to assure that granting the permit “is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of habitat of such species.”¹⁵ To jeopardize the continued existence of the species is to engage in an activity that either, “directly or indirectly . . . reduces appreciably the likelihood of both the survival and recovery of a listed species in the wild by reducing the reproduction, numbers, or distribution of that species.”¹⁶

When engaging in Section 7 consultation to determine whether the approval of an ITP will cause jeopardy, the Service is required to render its decision by evaluating the “best scientific and commercial data available.”¹⁷ If the Service determines the project is unlikely to cause jeopardy to the species or adverse modification of its habitat, the agency must provide a statement specifying the impact of the incidental take on the listed species, outlining “reasonable and

¹⁰ *Tennessee Valley Authority v. Hill*, 437 U.S. 153, 174 (1978).

¹¹ To “take” a species is to “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any conduct. 16 U.S.C. § 1532(19).

¹² 16 U.S.C. § 1539(a)(1)(B).

¹³ 16 U.S.C. § 1539(a)(2)(A)(i–iv).

¹⁴ 16 U.S.C. § 1539(a)(2)(B). The term “measures” in subsection (v) refers to “any additional measures the Secretary may require as being necessary or appropriate for the purposes of the plan.” *Id.* at § 1539 (a)(2)(A)(iv).

¹⁵ *Id.* at § 1536(a)(2).

¹⁶ *Florida Key Deer v. Brown*, 364 F.Supp.2d 1345, 1359 (U.S. Dist. Ct. S.D. Fla. 2005) (*citing* 50 C.F.C. § 402.02).

¹⁷ 16 U.S.C. § 1536(a)(2).

prudent measures” to minimize the impact from incidental take, and setting forth any conditions the agency and applicant must follow in accordance with the ITP.¹⁸

In addition to its obligations under the ESA, the Service also must satisfy its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) before it may issue an ITP. NEPA requires that all federal agencies carrying out “major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment” produce a “detailed statement” that specifies the impact the proposed action will have on the environment, the adverse effects resulting from the proposed action that cannot be avoided, and any alternative actions.¹⁹ Under NEPA, the agency must also consider “any irreversible . . . commitments of resources,” such as the loss of a protected species caused by the proposed action.²⁰

Federal agencies, like the Service here, must prepare an EIS prior to engaging in “major Federal actions” that significantly affects the environment.²¹ An agency’s decision to grant a permit may constitute “major federal action,” triggering the need for an EIS.²²

III. Coral Reef Commons Will Negatively Impact Pine Rocklands

The Coral Reef Commons HCP is legally and scientifically deficient because it does not adequately evaluate the loss of habitat the project will cause; it does not evaluate at all human population growth in the area or other regional developments; and it does not adequately evaluate the impact of climate change on the species. If the Service fully evaluated these impacts, it would not be able to authorize take of the listed species without determining that the take, in light of the cumulative and synergistic threats, will jeopardize some of those species.

A. Coral Reef Commons Will Destroy and Fragment Habitat

The pine rockland community is one of the most endangered habitats in North America.²³ Pine rocklands provide critical foraging and nesting habitat for a diverse array of wildlife, including federally listed species.²⁴ They also provide cover and roosting sites to a variety of wildlife species.²⁵ Pine rockland ecosystems contain a rich herbaceous flora with many narrowly endemic animal species.²⁶ These once-extensive communities have been plagued by development in the region, and are now greatly reduced and have been divided into many smaller fragments.²⁷

¹⁸ *Id.* at § 1536(b)(4)(A–C).

¹⁹ 42 U.S.C. § 4332(C)(i–iii).

²⁰ *Id.* at § 4332(c)(iv–v).

²¹ 42 U.S.C. § 4332(c).

²² *Sierra Club v. Van Antwerp*, 526 F.3d 1353, 1361 (11th Cir. 2008).

²³ Williams, D.A., Y. Wang, M. Borchetta, and M.S. Gaines, *Genetic diversity and spatial structure of a keystone species in fragmented pine rockland habitat*, *Biological Conservation*, April 2007, at 256, 257.

²⁴ Service, *Multi-Species Recovery Plan – Pine Rocklands*, 3-161, July 23, 2014.

²⁵ *Id.* at 3-167.

²⁶ Snyder, J.R., M.S. Ross, S. Koptur, and J.P. Sah, *Developing Ecological Criteria for Prescribed Fire in South Florida Pine Rockland Ecosystems*, Se. Env'tl. Research Ctr., July 2005, at 1.

²⁷ *Id.*; URS Corporation Southern. 2007. EEL Program, Management Plan, Part II – Pine Rockland (DRAFT) Chapter 1: The Pine Rockland Habitat, http://regionalconservation.org/ircs/pdf/publications/2007_09.pdf; FNAI – Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida: 2010 Edition, http://www.fnai.org/PDF/NC/Pine_Rockland_Final_2010.pdf.

Pine rocklands are found in three areas of southern Florida: the Miami Rock Ridge of southeastern peninsular Florida, the Lower Florida Keys, and the southern Big Cypress pinelands.²⁸ The Miami Rock Ridge is characterized by a very diverse shrub layer dominated by hardwoods, and an equally diverse herb layer containing 35 taxa endemic to southern Florida, including several species listed by the federal government as threatened or endangered.²⁹ This area has been fragmented and degraded by past land use practices.³⁰

The north-south distribution of pine rocklands along the Miami Rock Ridge has already been reduced by over 12 miles.³¹ According to the Pine Rocklands Multispecies Recovery Plan (Recovery Plan) for South Florida, the Service's ultimate goal is to restore the pine rocklands by maintaining the function, structure, and ecological processes of pine rocklands, and preventing any further loss, degradation, or fragmentation, of this imperiled South Florida community.³²

In Miami-Dade County, the remaining pine rockland habitat is highly fragmented, with the majority of fragments being less than 50 ha in size and embedded in an urban landscape.³³ The Richmond tract of pine rocklands in Miami-Dade County, where Coral Reef Commons is proposed, contains 260 taxa of native plants.³⁴ Imperiled species that may utilize or depend upon pine rocklands in this area include: Florida bonneted bat, Florida leafwing butterfly, Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly, Miami tiger beetle, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, white-crowned pigeon, Everglades bully, Florida brickell-bush, Carter's small-flowered flax, deltoid spurge, and tiny polygala.³⁵ In addition, the native southeast Florida slash pine endemic to the rockland ecosystem, Dade County pine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*), is redlisted by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.³⁶ The Service identifies acquiring lands that are threatened with development, such as the pine rocklands of the proposed Coral Reef Commons, as the main tool in preventing further destruction or degradation of existing pine rocklands.³⁷

The Coral Reef Commons development threatens to undo the important work the Recovery Plan has prioritized for South Florida, threatens already listed species, and could push many other species to extinction just by this loss of habitat.³⁸ The leading cause of extinction is habitat loss,³⁹

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ Abandoned & Little Known Airfields: Florida – Southern Miami Area. June 11, 2013; 1945 Richmond/South Dade Hurricane Presented by Robert Molleda at 2007 Florida Governor's Hurricane Conference; Macfie, D. Richmond Naval Air Station, 1942-1961, Tequesta.

³¹ Service, *Multi-Species Recovery Plan – Pine Rocklands*, 3-173, July 23, 2014.

³² *Id.* at 3-191.

³³ Williams at 256, 257.

³⁴ FWS, at 3-162.

³⁵ EA at 22-24.

³⁶ <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/18153818/0>.

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ RAM, through University of Miami has already obtained an After-the-Fact Natural Forest Community permit and Covenant to clear vegetation. See DRER letter to Altshul, July 23, 2013.

³⁹ Harris, L. 1984. *The fragmented forest: Island biogeography theory and the preservation of biotic diversity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; Meffe, G.K. 1997. *Principles of conservation biology*. Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, Inc.

and native habitats in Florida are rapidly disappearing.⁴⁰ This has resulted in the extirpation or extinction of 13 vertebrates over the last 150 years.⁴¹ Habitat loss and fragmentation can lead to increased mortality;⁴² reduced abundance;⁴³ disruption of the social structure of populations;⁴⁴ reduced population viability;⁴⁵ isolated populations with reduced population sizes and decreased genetic variation.⁴⁶ Loss of genetic variation may reduce the ability of individuals to adapt to a changing environment; cause inbreeding depression;⁴⁷ reduce survival and reproduction;⁴⁸ and increase the probability of extinction.⁴⁹

Despite the efforts of the Applicants to portray the conservation measures as providing a net benefit for the species on the project site, it is evident and undisputed that the project will result in the loss of more than 80 acres of habitat, including critical habitat for several species, and that the lost habitat would further fragment remaining habitat in the Richmond area.⁵⁰ The draft EA states that Coral Reef Commons would “inhibit connectivity and dispersal of species” across the project site, and would lead to impacts from pesticides, noise, lighting, and traffic.⁵¹ Further loss of habitat for some of these species could push them to the brink of extinction, especially in light of population growth, other nearby development, and the impacts of climate change.

⁴⁰ Kautz, R.S. and J.A. Cox. 2001. Strategic Habitats for Biodiversity Conservation in Florida. *Conservation Biology*, 15(1): 55-77, at 56.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² Jules, E.S. 1998. Habitat fragmentation and demographic change for a common plant trillium in old-growth forest. *Ecology*, 79(5): 1645-1656.

⁴³ Flather, C.H and M. Bevers. 2002. Patchy reaction-diffusion and population abundance: the relative importance of habitat amount and arrangement. *Am Nat*, 159(1): 40-56.

⁴⁴ Ims, R.A. and H.P. Andeassen. 1999. Effects of experimental habitat fragmentation and connectivity on root vole demography. *J. Anim Ecol*, 68(5): 839-852, at 839-49; Cale, P. 2003. The influence of social behavior, dispersal and landscape fragmentation on population structure in a sedentary bird. *Biol Conserv*, 109: 237-248.

⁴⁵ Harrison, S. and E. Bruna. 1999. Habitat fragmentation and large scale conservation: what do we know for sure? *Ecography*, 22(3): 225-232, at 225-30; Srikwan, S. and D.S. Woodruff. 2000. Genetic erosion in isolated small-mammal populations following rainforest fragmentation. In A. a. Young, *Genetics, Demography, and Viability of Fragmented Populations*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 149-172; Cale 2003; Lindenmayer, D. and J. Fisher. 2006. *Habitat Fragmentation and Landscape Change: An Ecological and Conservation Synthesis*. Washington, D.C. Island Press.

⁴⁶ Frankham, R. 1996. Relationship of genetic variation to population size in wildlife. *Conserv Biol*, 10: 1500-1508.

⁴⁷ Ebert, D. C. 2002. A selective advantage to immigrant genes in a *Daphnia* metapopulation. *Science*, 295, 485-488.

⁴⁸ Frankham, R. 1995. Inbreeding and extinction a threshold effect. *Conserv Biol*, 9: 792-799; Reed, D.H. and R. Frankham. 2003. Correlation between fitness and genetic diversity. *Conserv Biol*, 17, 230-237.

⁴⁹ Saacheri, I., M. Kuussaari, M. Kankare, P. Vikman, W. Fortelliu, and I. Hanski. 1998. Inbreeding and extinction in a butterfly metapopulation. *Nature*, 392: 491-494; Westemeier, R.L., J.D. Brawn, S.A. Simpson, T.L. Esker, R.W. Jansen, J.W. Walk, E.L. Kershner, J.L. Bouzat, and K.N. Paige. 1998. Tracking the long-term decline and recovery of an isolated population. *Science*, 282, 1695-1698; Kramer-Schadt, S., E. Revilla, T. Wiegand, and U. Breitenmoser. 2004. Fragmented landscapes, road mortality and patch connectivity: modeling influences on the dispersal of Eurasian lynx. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 41: 711-723; Letcher, B.H., K.H. Nislow, J.A. Coombs, M.J. O'Donnell, and T.L. Dubreuil. 2007. Population response to habitat fragmentation in a stream-dwelling brook trout population. *PLoS ONE* 2(11): e1139; Ruiz-Gutierrez, V., T.A. Gavin, and A.A. Dhondt. 2008. Habitat fragmentation lowers survival of a tropical forest bird. *Ecological Application*, 18(4): 838-846; Sherwin, W.B. and C. Moritz. 2000. Managing and monitoring genetic erosion. In A. a. Young, *Genetics, demography, and viability of fragmented populations*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 9-34.

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Id.*

B. Population Growth and Other Nearby Development Will Contribute to the Loss of Pine Rockland Habitat

A leading cause of habitat loss is human population growth and corresponding land uses. A 2000 analysis of potential ecological connectivity in Florida found that only about half the land identified for habitat connectivity was publically owned and managed.⁵² Meanwhile, *Florida 2060: A Population Distribution Scenario for the State of Florida* predicts Florida's population will grow by 49 percent by 2060. The FWC's *Wildlife 2060: What's at stake for Florida?* estimates that such population increases could result in the conversion of 7 million acres from rural and natural to urban uses.⁵³ It predicts that nearly 3 million acres of existing agricultural lands and 2.7 million acres of native habitat will be claimed by roads, shopping malls and subdivisions; 1.6 million acres of woodland habitat may be lost; wetland habitat may become more isolated and degraded; and gopher tortoises may lose a fifth of their existing range.⁵⁴ While Florida is projected to increase its population statewide by 50% by 2060, Miami-Dade County is projected to grow from 2,253,362 residents in 2000 to 4,046,698 in 2060 – outpacing the expected statewide average at 56%.⁵⁵

Human population nearly doubled in the southeast from 1970-2000.⁵⁶ Florida's population is expected to continue to grow,⁵⁷ and Miami is experiencing a population growth rate of eight percent.⁵⁸ Population growth threatens biodiversity due to increased demand for land, water, and other resources. Metropolitan areas in the southeast United States are adding urbanized land at an even faster rate than population is increasing, with developed land increasing by 47 percent from 1982-1997.⁵⁹ Habitat loss and degradation due to development is generally permanent and poses an increasing threat to imperiled species. In addition to population growth in the region, the Service must also consider the synergistic and cumulative effects of these planned nearby projects, along with all past land use projects.

As the Service is aware, Miami Wilds, a theme park on Miami-Dade County property, is adjacent to the proposed site of Coral Reef Commons and Zoo Miami. The county recently approved \$13.5 million to 20th Century Fox, however, it is unclear how soon work would

⁵² Hctor, T.S., M.H. Carr, and P.D. Zwick. 2000. Identifying a Linked Reserve System Using a Regional Landscape Approach: the Florida Ecological Network. *Conservation Biology*, 14: 984-1000 at 984-99.

⁵³ Cerulean, S. 2008. *Wildlife 2060: What's at stake for Florida?* Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 2.

⁵⁴ *Id.* at 4.

⁵⁵ Zwick, P.D. and M.H. Carr. 2006. *Florida 2060: a population distribution scenario for the state of Florida*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, GeoPlan Center.

⁵⁶ Folkerts, G.W. 1997. State and fate of the world's aquatic fauna. p. 1-16 In: Benz, G.W. and D.E. Collins (editors). 1997. *Aquatic Fauna in Peril: The Southeastern Perspective*. Southeast Aquatic Research Institute Special Publication 1, Lenz Design and Communications, Decatur, GA. 553 pp.

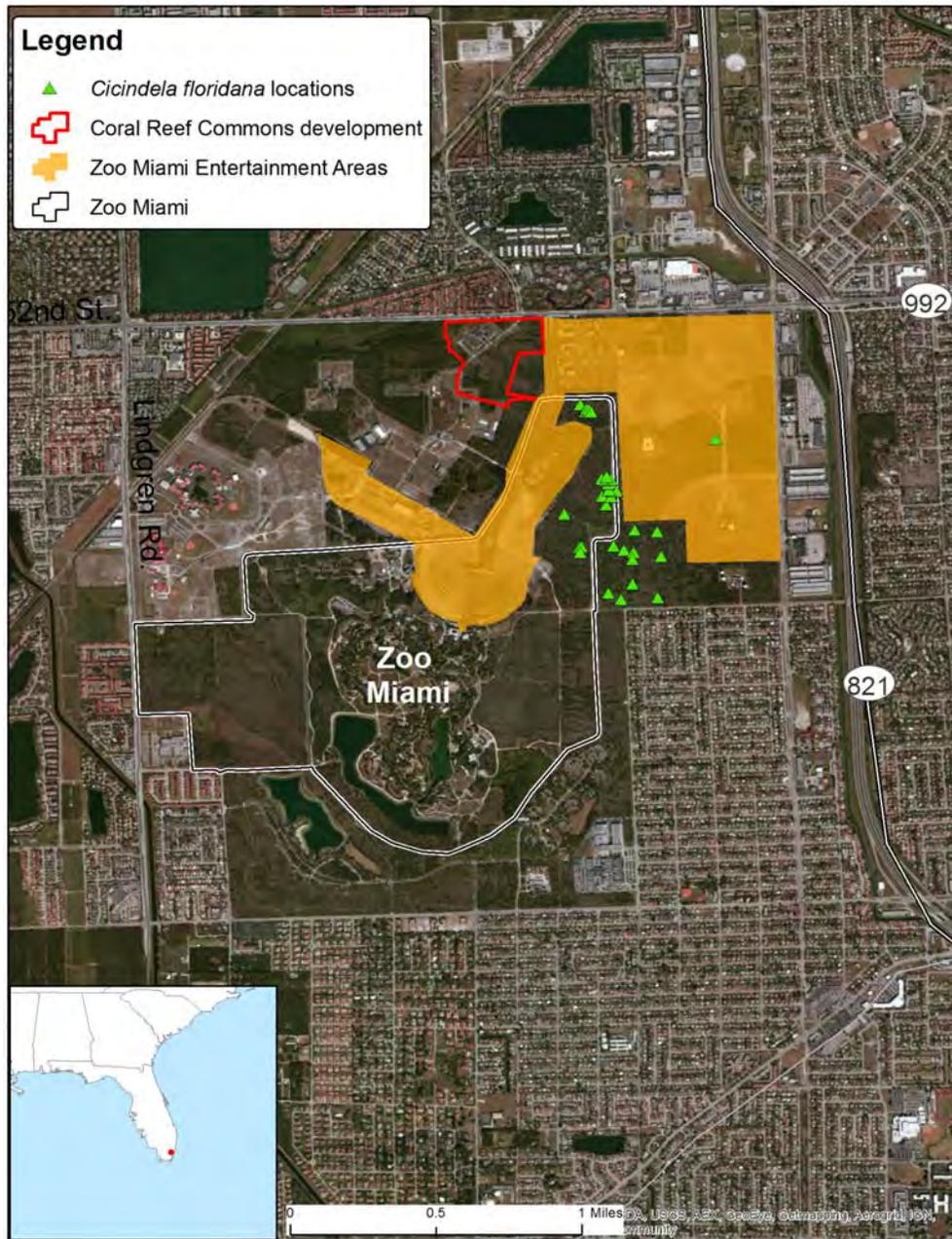
⁵⁷ U.S. Census Bureau 2009.

⁵⁸ U.S. Census Bureau 2009.

⁵⁹ Buckner, M.M., W. Smith, J.A. Takats. 2002. Tennessee, Cumberland, and Mobile River Basins at Risk. A Biological Assessment and Vision for the World Wildlife Fund's Southeast Rivers and Streams Project. Nashville, TN. 52 pp. :

www.worldwildlife.org/what/wherewework/sers/WWFBinaryitem2738.pdf.

begin.⁶⁰ The first phase of Miami Wilds would be a water park, hotel, retail, dining, event complex, and 52 acre parking lot, in direct contact with pine rockland. The second phase of the project would be a theme park on U.S. Coast Guard land. Many of the same species impacted by Coral Reef Commons would be impacted by Miami Wilds.



⁶⁰ Munzenrieder, K. Oct. 23, 2014. Fox Theme Park, Miami Wilds, Wants \$13.5 Million in County Money, http://blogs.miaminewtimes.com/riptide/2014/10/fox_theme_park_miami_wilds_wants_135_million_in_county_money.php; <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=1474675&page=2>.

C. Coral Reef Commons will Exacerbate the Effects of Climate Change

The EA and HCP acknowledge the high vulnerability of pine rockland habitat in Southeast Florida to the “adverse effects” of climate change,⁶¹ but then conclude through a flawed and incomplete analysis that climate change will have no impacts in the proposed project area. As detailed below, the best available science clearly shows that sea level rise, increasing storm surge and tidal flooding, more intense hurricanes, changes in precipitation, and rising temperatures and increases in extreme weather events will have adverse effects on the project area and the species inhabiting the pine rockland ecosystem. The Service must use the best available science and properly evaluate the loss and degradation of habitat that will result from sea level rise and climate change, the pressure this will place on human and non-human populations and habitat, and how these impacts will be compounded by the proposed project.

1. The sea-level rise impacts analysis is fundamentally flawed

The EA and HCP acknowledge that southeast Florida is highly vulnerable to the direct and indirect impacts of sea level rise, but then conclude through a flawed analysis that the proposed project area “would not be expected to be impacted by sea level rise,” including no effects from inundation or saltwater intrusion into groundwater.⁶² The Richmond pine rocklands are less than five miles from the Atlantic Ocean, and sea level rise will clearly adversely impact this low-lying habitat in the near-term. The EA and HCP sea level rise analyses are fundamentally flawed in several key regards, as detailed below.

First, in its cursory sea level rise analysis, the HCP uses a projection of approximately two feet of sea level rise citing the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact (“Compact”)⁶³ Unified Sea Level Rise Projection for 2060.⁶⁴ However, the best available science, including the science cited in the Compact, indicates that sea level rise could plausibly exceed two feet by 2060, and the Service must consider higher sea level rise scenarios over the project lifetime.

⁶¹ EA at 7 (“The inevitable consequences of climate change throughout the 21st century will impact pine rocklands as sea level rise (SLR) and increased precipitation, storm intensity, and annual average temperatures proceed to transform the hydrology and subsequently, the vegetative communities in South Florida, the Florida Keys and Bahamas.”); EA at 118 (“Climate change information summarized by the Service (Attachment 16) strongly suggests that SLR could cause adverse effects throughout MDC, including the Richmond Area and the HCP Plan Area within this century.”); HCP at 151 (“Florida is considered one of the most vulnerable areas to climate change, with Southeast Florida especially susceptible to impacts such as rising sea levels. MDC’s elevation and porous substrate make the region vulnerable to the many potential effects of sea level rise.”).

⁶² EA at 118 (“This effort established a Unified Sea Level Rise Projection that estimates a 14 to 26 in rise in sea level by 2060 for the Southeast Florida region (Compact 2015). Considering this prediction, the property proposed for the development of CRC would not be expected to be impacted by sea level rise.”); EA at 118 (“Consequently, during the life of the permit, adverse effects from the Salt Front to the HCP Plan Area would not be expected to occur.”); HCP at 152 (“All of the On-site Preserves are above the Projected 2060 approximately two foot rise in sea level, thus the Conservation Program is not expected to be impacted by sea level rise.”); HCP at 153 (“Based on these data and model Projections, potential for saltwater intrusion from sea level rise in the next 30 years will not affect the ability to implement the Conservation Program and reach the desired success criteria.”).

⁶³ Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact Sea Level Rise Work Group (Compact). 2015. Unified Sea Level Rise Projection for Southeast Florida. A Document Prepared for the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact Steering Committee. 35 p. (*hereinafter* Compact).

⁶⁴ HCP at 152.

As noted by the Compact, recent regional sea level rise in Miami-Dade County has significantly exceeded global average sea level rise.⁶⁵ Specifically, Wdowinski et al. (2016) found that the average rate of regional sea level rise off Virginia Key since 2006 is 9 ± 4 mm per year, which is much higher than the global average rate between 1993 and 2012 of 3.2 ± 0.4 mm per year based on satellite data and 2.8 ± 0.4 mm per year based on in-situ data.⁶⁶ This is consistent with research that has detected a rapid acceleration in the rate of sea level rise along the US Atlantic Coast since 2000, attributed to the weakening of the entire Gulf Stream system.⁶⁷ Based on evidence of higher regional sea level rise in the Miami region, Wdowinski et al. (2016) concluded that planners “should rely on regional SLR rate projections and not only on the commonly used global SLR projections.”

Second, the Compact provides guidance on the sea level rise projections that planners should use for different time horizons, including short term (2030), medium term (2060) and long term (2100):

- 1) short term, by 2030, sea level is projected to rise 6 to 10 inches above 1992 mean sea level,
- 2) medium term, by 2060, sea level is projected to rise 14 to 34 inches above 1992 mean sea level,
- 3) long term, by 2100, sea level is projected to rise 31 to 81 inches above 1992 mean sea level.⁶⁸

The Compact recommends using the upper curve estimates from its Unified Sea Level Rise Projection for projects which are “not easily replaceable or removable, have a long design life (more than 50 years) or are critically interdependent with other infrastructure or services.”⁶⁹ The proposed project falls squarely into this category because it is not easily removable, has a long design life, and is interdependent since it entails extensive residential and commercial construction intended for long-term operation, as described in the HCP: “Development activities include construction and long-term operation of residential units, retail/commercial uses, a school, and infrastructure improvements, including improvements to the existing main spine road, within approximately 86.49 acres of the CRC Property.”⁷⁰

Therefore, the HCP and EA should conduct the sea level rise analysis using the Compact’s recommended upper curve projection of 34 inches (almost 3 feet) by 2060 and 81 inches (6.75 feet) by 2100.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Compact at 9.

⁶⁶ Wdowinski, S. et al. 2016. Increasing flooding hazard in coastal communities due to rising sea level: Case study of Miami Beach, Florida. *Ocean & Coastal Management* 126: 1-8.

⁶⁷ Sallenger, A.H. et al. 2012. Hotspot of accelerated sea-level rise on the Atlantic coast of North America. *Nature Climate Change* 2: 884-888; Ezer, T. et al. 2013. Gulf Stream’s induced sea level rise and variability along the U.S. mid-Atlantic coast. *Journal of Geophysical Research: Oceans* 118: 685-697; Compact 2015; Park, J. and W. Sweet. 2015. Accelerated sea level rise and Florida Current transport. *Ocean Science* 11: 607-615.

⁶⁸ Compact at 4.

⁶⁹ Compact at 4 (“The upper curve of the Projection should be utilized for planning of high risk Projects to be constructed after 2060 or Projects which are not easily replaceable or removable, have a long design life (more than 50 years) or are critically interdependent with other infrastructure or services.”).

⁷⁰ HCP at 10.

⁷¹ Compact at 5.

Third, the HCP and EA should analyze a time horizon for sea level rise and other climate impacts beyond 30 years since the project's commercial and residential components are clearly intended to be long-lived and operational beyond 30 years. As noted in the HCP, the applicant requested an ITP duration of 30 years, but also requested options for extending the permit in 25-year increments,⁷² which reflects the intention for a long project lifetime. The best available science makes clear that sea level rise will only worsen and accelerate over time under all IPCC emissions scenarios, and that the effects of sea level rise will be long-lived. Scientists estimate that we lock in 8 feet of sea-level rise over the long term for every degree Celsius of warming.⁷³ Thus, the Service should consider sea level rise and other climate impacts over the longer intended lifetime of the project, for the time period through 2100, for which IPCC climate change projections are available.

2. The saltwater intrusion impacts analysis is fundamentally flawed

The HCP and EA must redo the flawed analysis of the potential for saltwater intrusion in the Biscayne Aquifer, which could adversely harm fresh groundwater in the project area. The HCP and EA rely on two USGS reports to evaluate the potential for sea level rise to cause saltwater intrusion in the Biscayne Aquifer. The USGS reports use an unrealistically low scenario of 9 inches (0.73 feet) of sea level rise after 30 years, based on a 1987 National Research Council increased sea level scenario.⁷⁴ However, as discussed above, the Compact estimates 14 to 34 inches of sea level rise by 2060, and the National Research Council and National Climate Assessment similarly estimates much higher sea level rise by mid-century.⁷⁵ Therefore, the HCP and EA cannot reasonably conclude, based on the USGS reports, that sea level rise will not cause adverse effects to fresh groundwater in the project area. The Service should redo the analysis using the sea level rise estimates recommended by the Compact of 34 inches by 2060 and 81 inches by 2100.

3. The analysis of flooding impacts resulting from climate change is inadequate

The EA and HCP must conduct an adequate analysis of the effects of climate-change-related flooding resulting from increasing storm surge and storm intensity, increasing tidal flooding, and precipitation change. Southeast Florida, with its low elevation and dense population, is considered highly vulnerable to flooding.⁷⁶ However, the HCP fails to conduct any analysis of

⁷² HCP at 8.

⁷³ Levermann, A. et al. 2013. The multimillennial sea-level commitment of global warming. PNAS 110:13745-13750.

⁷⁴ Hughes, J.D. J.T. White. 2016, Hydrologic conditions in urban Miami-Dade County, Florida, and the effect of groundwater pumpage and increased sea level on canal leakage and regional groundwater flow (ver. 1.2, July 2016): U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report 2014-5162, 175 p., at 98, 100.

⁷⁵ In its 2012 sea level rise assessment, the National Research Council estimated global sea-level rise at 18 to 48 cm by 2050, and 0.5 m to 1.4 m by 2100. See National Research Council [NRC]. 2012. Sea level Rise for the Coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington: Past, Present, and Future, National Research Council of the National Academies.

⁷⁶ Weiss, J.L. et al. 2011. Implications of recent sea level rise science for low-elevation areas in coastal cities of the coterminous U.S.A. Climatic Change 105:635-645; Strauss, B.H., et al. 2012. Tidally adjusted estimates of topographic vulnerability to sea level rise and flooding for the contiguous United States. Environmental Research Letters 7: 014033; Melillo, Jerry M., Terese (T.C.) Richmond, and Gary W. Yohe, Eds., 2014: Climate Change

climate-related flooding. The EA includes a two-sentence analysis of the potential impacts of increased flooding resulting from more intense storms, which concludes that increased exposure to inundation and salt/brackish water would increase stress to the pine rockland ecosystem.⁷⁷ Despite this acknowledgement, the EA and HCP fail to propose any mitigation for this adverse impact.

As detailed below, the best available science indicates that climate change will impose an increasing flooding risk in the project area by heightening exposure to high-tide flooding and increasing storm surge, compounded by sea level rise. Clearly, the project area is vulnerable to climate-change-induced flooding and the EA and HCP must adequately assess this risk.

Nuisance flooding, also called “sunny day flooding,” occurs when high tide conditions are exacerbated by sea level rise. Nuisance flooding has increased substantially on the East, Gulf and West coasts by 300 to 925 percent since the 1960s, primarily due to sea level rise.⁷⁸ In Miami-Dade County, the significant increase in nuisance flooding due to sea level rise has already resulted in severe property damage. According to a detailed flooding analysis for Miami Beach between 1998 and 2013, flooding frequency significantly increased after 2006, with a 33 percent increase in rain-induced flooding and a more than 400 percent increase in tide-induced flooding, jumping from 2 events during 1998-2005 to 8 to 16 events during 2006-2013.⁷⁹ The post-2006 increased flooding frequency in Miami Beach correlates well with rapid acceleration of sea level rise in Southeast Florida.

Scientific studies project that nuisance flooding will become much more frequent and severe in the next few decades.⁸⁰ For example, an analysis by Dahl et al. (2017) projected that tidal flooding in Virginia Key off Miami will increase significantly in the near-term, from 5.1 flood events per year during 2001-2015 to 46 flood events per year by 2030 and 206 events per year by 2045.⁸¹

Increasingly intense storms and storm surge due to climate change pose additional climate threats to species in the project area. As sea levels rise, storm surge rides on a higher sea surface

Impacts in the United States: The Third National Climate Assessment. U.S. Global Change Research Program, 841 pp; Parkinson, R.W. et al. 2015. Managing the Anthropocene marine transgression to the year 2100 and beyond in the State of Florida U.S.A. *Climatic Change* 128: 85-98.

⁷⁷ EA at 117-118 (“Although tropical storms are Projected to decrease in number, their intensity is conversely Projected to increase which could expose the HCP Plan Area to long duration disturbances from prolonged backwater flooding following each storm. This increased exposure to both inundation and salt/brackish water would further stress the ecosystem’s resiliency to restore ecological services following these disturbances (Attachment 16).”).

⁷⁸ NOAA. 2014. Sea Level Rise and Nuisance Flood Frequency Changes around the United States. NOAA Technical Report NOS CO-OPS 073; Sweet, W.V. and J. Park. 2014. From the extreme to the mean: Acceleration and tipping points of coastal inundation from sea level rise. *Earth’s Future* 2: 579-600; NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration], What is nuisance flooding (2016), <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/nuisance-flooding.html>.

⁷⁹ Wdowinski, S. et al. 2016.

⁸⁰ Moftakhari, H.R. et al. 2015. Increased nuisance flooding along the coasts of the United States due to sea level rise: Past and future, *Geophysical Research Letters* 42: 9846–9852.

⁸¹ Dahl, K.A. et al. 2017. Sea level rise drives increased tidal flooding frequency at tide gauges along the U.S. East and Gulf Coasts: Projections for 2030 and 2045. *PLoS ONE* 12(2): e0170949.

which pushes water further inland and creates more flooding of coastal habitats.⁸² The frequency of high-severity Atlantic hurricanes is increasing,⁸³ which results in more frequent and severe hurricane-generated surge events and wave heights.⁸⁴ Large storm surge events of Hurricane Katrina magnitude have already doubled in response to warming during the 20th century.⁸⁵ A recent study projected a twofold to sevenfold increase in the frequency of Atlantic hurricane surge events for each 1°C in temperature rise.⁸⁶ A separate study projected that, under the RCP 4.5 emissions scenario which the world is exceeding, the intensity of Atlantic hurricanes will increase, accompanied by a median increase in storm surge of 25 percent to 47 percent.⁸⁷ The study highlighted that the risks to coastal populations are highly non-linear, with the population at risk from storm surge flooding increasing by a median of 30 to 154 percent, and up to 434 percent.

4. The conclusion that climate change will not affect the project area is myopic and unsupported

The conclusion by the HCP and EA that that climate change will not affect the project area fails to consider the massive loss and degradation of habitat that will result from sea level rise and other climate change impacts, the pressure this will place on human and non-human populations and habitat, and how those impacts will be compounded by the proposed project. As illustrated in the figures below, even with two feet of sea level rise, many surrounding areas in Southeast Florida will be inundated, including coastal areas of Miami, the Florida Keys, the Everglades, and substantial portions of Big Cypress National Preserve. The Compact's scenario of 34 inches (~three feet) of sea level rise by 2060 worsens inundation of nearby areas. Under the Compact's scenario of five feet to seven feet of sea level rise by 2100, the project region is inundated on all sides, making it an inland island. *See* figures below, created using the Climate Central mapping tool cited by the HCP.⁸⁸ Notably, these projections do not include the added impacts from increases in climate-related flooding.

The extreme level of inland inundation, even under two feet of sea level rise, would create massive habitat loss, mass population migration, and social crisis, which would have significant direct and indirect effects on the project area, species, and habitats. As noted above, endangered pine rockland forests are found in three areas of southern Florida: the Miami Rock Ridge of southeastern peninsular Florida, the Lower Florida Keys, and the southern Big Cypress pinelands. With just two to three feet of sea level rise, the pine rockland forests in the Lower

⁸² Tebaldi, C. et al. 2012. Modelling sea level rise impacts on storm surges along US coasts. *Environmental Research Letters* 7: 014032.

⁸³ Elsner, J.B. et al. 2008. The increasing intensity of the strongest tropical cyclones. *Nature* 455: 92-95; Bender, M.A. et al. 2010. Modeled impact of anthropogenic warming on the frequency of intense Atlantic hurricanes. *Science* 327: 454-458; Kishtawal, C.M. et al. 2012. Tropical cyclone intensification trends during satellite era (1986–2010). *Geophysical Research Letters* 39:L10810.

⁸⁴ Grinsted, A. et al. 2012. Homogeneous record of Atlantic hurricane surge threat since 1923. *PNAS* 109:19601-19605; Komar, P.D. and J.C. Allan. 2008. Increasing hurricane-generated wave heights along the U.S. east coast and their climate controls. *Journal of Coastal Research* 24: 479-488.

⁸⁵ Grinsted, A. et al. 2013. Projected hurricane surge threat from rising temperatures. *PNAS* 110: 5369-5373.

⁸⁶ *Id.*

⁸⁷ Balaguru, K. et al. 2016. Future hurricane storm surge risk for the U.S. gulf and Florida coasts based on projections of thermodynamic potential intensity. *Climatic Change* 138: 99-110.

⁸⁸ HCP at 152.

Florida Keys and southern Big Cypress pinelands would be jeopardized, making it even more critical to protect all remaining habitat in the Miami Rock Ridge region as a refuge for pine rockland species, including the rock pineland habitat in the proposed project area.

The EA and HCP must also consider the effects of coastal squeeze that will result from sea level rise. Coastal species face significant risks from coastal squeeze that occurs when habitat is pressed between rising sea levels and coastal development that prevents landward movement.⁸⁹ Human responses to sea level rise including landward migration and the construction of hard barriers pose significant risks to the ability of species threatened by sea-level rise to move inland, even if other suitable habitats are available.⁹⁰ Notably, a recent study forecast mass migration of human populations in Miami-Dade County in response to future sea level rise.⁹¹ At three feet of sea level rise, 231,336 residents of Miami-Dade County were categorized as vulnerable to inundation, while 1,967,018 residents were vulnerable at six feet of sea level rise. With six feet of sea level rise, Florida is projected to account for nearly half of the total at-risk population in the US, and Miami-Dade County would be most vulnerable coastal county in the US to population displacement from sea level rise. Therefore, development, projected human population growth⁹² and sea level rise threaten pine rocklands species with coastal squeeze, which must be addressed by the Service.

⁸⁹ Scavia, D. et al. 2002. Climate change impacts on US coastal and marine ecosystems. *Estuaries* 25: 149-164; Fitzgerald, D.M. et al. 2008. Coastal impacts due to sea level rise. *Annual Review of Earth and Planetary Science* 36: 601-647; Defeo, O. et al. 2009. Threats to sandy beach ecosystems: a review. *Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science* 81: 1-12; LeDee, O.E. et al. 2010. The challenge of threatened and endangered species management in coastal areas. *Coastal Management* 38: 337-353; Menon, S. et al. 2010. Preliminary global assessment of terrestrial biodiversity consequences of sea level rise mediated by climate change. *Biodiversity and Conservation* 19: 1599-1609; Noss, R.F. 2011. Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Florida's unenviable position with respect to sea level rise. *Climatic Change* 107:1-16.

⁹⁰ Defeo, O. et al. 2009.

⁹¹ Hauer, M.E. et al. 2016. Millions projected to be at risk from sea-level rise in the continental United States. *Nature Climate Change* 6: 691-695.

⁹² Zwick, P. D., and M. H. Carr. 2006. Florida 2060: A Population Distribution Scenario for the State of Florida; available at www.1000fof.org/PUBS/2060/Florida-2060-Report-Final.pdf.

Figure 1. Projected inundation at two feet of sea-level rise.

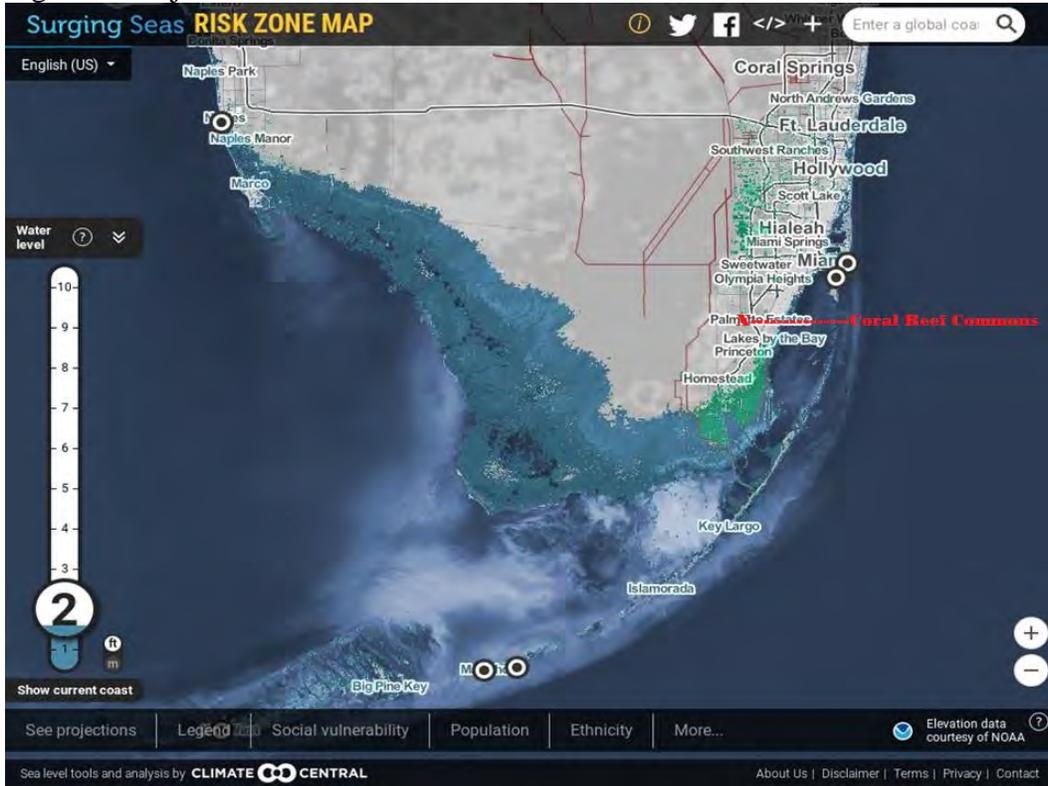


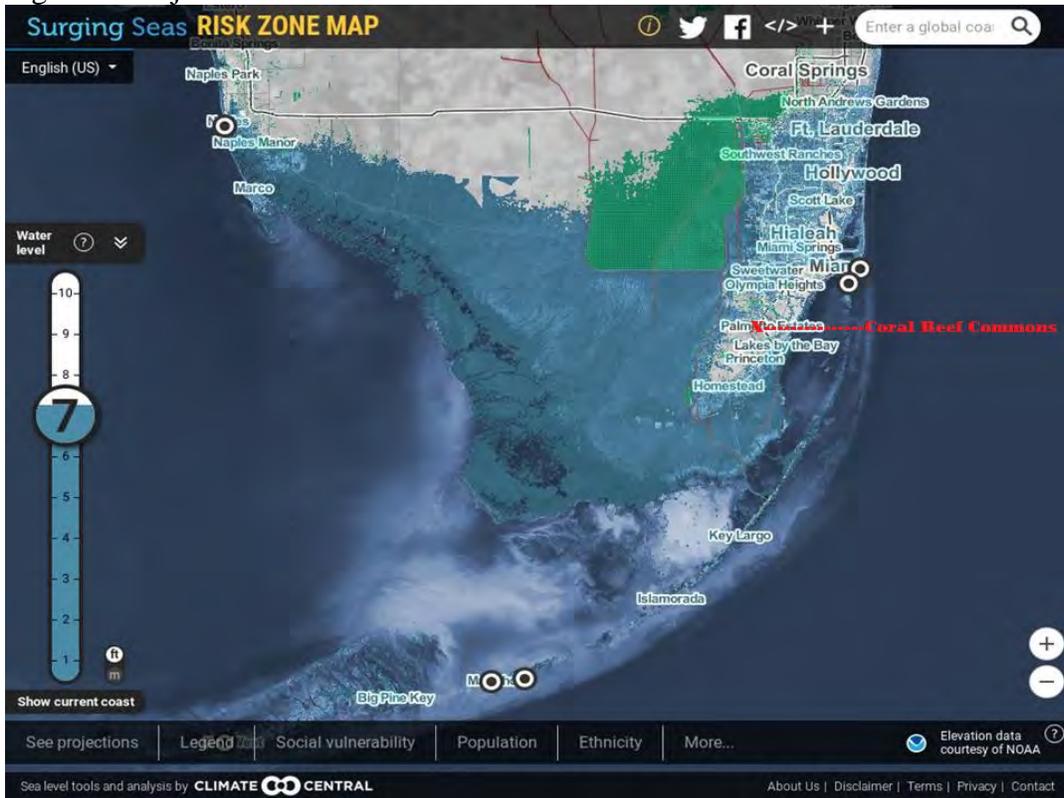
Figure 2. Projected inundation at three feet of sea-level rise.



Figure 3. Projected inundation at five feet of sea-level rise.



Figure 4. Projected inundation at seven feet of sea-level rise.



5. *The EA and HCP must use the best available science on species and ecosystem harms from climate change*

The EA and HCP's analysis of potential ecological harms from climate change is completely inadequate and must include the best available science, including the studies detailed below.

A growing body of studies demonstrates that climate change is causing serious harm to life on the planet at all scales from genes to entire ecosystems, including a shocking number of climate-related local extinctions. A recent analysis found that climate-related local extinctions are already widespread and have occurred in hundreds of species, including almost half of the 976 species surveyed, across climatic zones, clades, and habitats.⁹³ A separate study estimated that nearly half (47%) of terrestrial non-volant threatened mammals (out of 873 species) and nearly one-quarter (23.4%) of threatened birds (out of 1,272 species) may have already been negatively impacted by climate change in at least part of their distribution.⁹⁴ The study concluded that “populations of large numbers of threatened species are likely to be already affected by climate change, and that conservation managers, planners and policy makers must take this into account in efforts to safeguard the future of biodiversity.” A recent meta-analysis concluded that climate change is already impacting 82 percent of key ecological processes that form the foundation of healthy ecosystems and which humans depend on for basic needs.⁹⁵ Genes are changing, species' physiology and physical features such as body size are changing, species are rapidly moving to keep track of suitable climate space, and entire ecosystems are under stress.

Concerning the effects climate change is expected to have on southeastern environments, the Global Change Research Program stated, “[e]cological thresholds are expected to be crossed throughout the region, causing major disruptions to ecosystems and to the benefits they provide to people.”⁹⁶ Climate models project both continued warming in all seasons across the southeast United States, and an increase in the rate of warming, and an increased frequency, intensity, and duration of extreme heat events.⁹⁷ The warming in air and water temperatures projected for the southeast will create heat-related stress for fish and wildlife. Climate change will alter the distribution of native plants and animals and will lead to the local loss of imperiled species and the displacement of native species by invasives.⁹⁸

Climate change will increase the incidence and severity of both drought and major storm events in the southeast.⁹⁹ The percentage of the southeast region experiencing moderate to severe drought has already increased over the past three decades. Since the mid- 1970s, the area of

⁹³ J.J. Wiens. 2016. Climate-related local extinctions are already widespread among plant and animal species. *PLoS Biol* 14: e2001104.

⁹⁴ Pacifici, M. et al. 2017. Species' traits influenced their response to recent climate change. *Nature Climate Change* doi: 10.1038/NCLIMATE3223.

⁹⁵ Scheffers, B.R. et al. 2016. The broad footprint of climate change from genes to biomes to people. *Science* 354: 719.

⁹⁶ Karl, T.R. et al. (eds.). 2009. *Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States*. U.S. Global Change Research Program. Cambridge University Press, at 115.

⁹⁷ Carter, L.M. et al. 2014: Ch. 17: Southeast and the Caribbean. *Climate Change Impacts in the United States: The Third National Climate Assessment*, J. M. Melillo, Terese (T.C.) Richmond, and G. W. Yohe, Eds., U.S. Global Change Research Program, 396-417.

⁹⁸ Karl, T.R. et al. (eds.). 2009.

⁹⁹ *Id.*

moderate to severe spring and summer drought has increased by 12 percent and 14 percent, respectively.¹⁰⁰ Fall precipitation tended to increase in most of the southeast, but the extent of region-wide drought still increased by nine percent.¹⁰¹ Both drought and severe storms could threaten many of the endemic pine rocklands species with direct mortality and with habitat alteration, altered vegetation, and altered prey base. The warming climate will likely cause ecological zones to shift upward in latitude and altitude and species' persistence will depend upon, among other factors, the protection of current and future suitable habitat climate refugia, and habitat connectivity to allow species to disperse to suitable habitat.¹⁰²

IV. Coral Reef Commons will negatively impact imperiled species

The HCP intends to address impacts to 8 animals, including 5 federally listed species, one candidate species, one federally proposed species, and one state threatened species. It also purports to provide conservation measures for 14 plant species.

Table 1-1. CRC HCP Covered Species Assessed for Incidental Take Authorization (ITA Species).

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	Group	Documented on the CRC Property ²
Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly	<i>Strymon acis bartrami</i>	FE	Insect	Yes
Florida bonneted bat	<i>Eumops floridanus</i>	FE	Mammal	No
Eastern indigo snake	<i>Drymarchon couperi</i>	FT	Reptile	No
Rim rock crowned snake	<i>Tantilla oolitica</i>	ST	Reptile	No
Gopher tortoise	<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	ST, FC	Reptile	No
Florida leafwing butterfly	<i>Anaea troglodyta floridalis</i>	FE	Insect	No
Miami tiger beetle	<i>Cicindelidia floridana</i>	FE	Insect	No
White-crowned pigeon	<i>Patagioenas leucocephala</i>	ST	Bird	No

FE - Federally endangered

FT - Federally threatened

FC - Federal candidate

ST - State threatened

¹⁰⁰ *Id.* at 111.

¹⁰¹ *Id.*

¹⁰² Jones, K.R. et al. 2016. Incorporating climate change into spatial conservation prioritisation: A review. *Biological Conservation* 194: 121-130.

Table 1-2. CRC HCP Plant Species for which Conservation Benefit Is Provided (Plant Species Subject to the “No Surprises” Policy).

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	Group	Documented on the CRC Property ³
Tiny polygala	<i>Polygala smallii</i>	FE	Plant	Yes
Deltoid spurge	<i>Chamaesyce deltoidea</i>	FE	Plant	Yes
Crenulate lead-plant	<i>Amorpha crenulata</i>	FE	Plant	No
Florida brickell bush	<i>Brickelia mosieri</i>	FE	Plant	No
Garber’s spurge	<i>Chamaesyce garberi</i>	FT	Plant	No
Small’s milkpea	<i>Galactia smallii</i>	FE	Plant	No
Sand flax	<i>Linum arenicola</i>	FE	Plant	No
Carter’s small-flowered flax	<i>Linum carteri var. carteri</i>	FE	Plant	No
Blodgett’s silver bush	<i>Argythammia blodgettii</i>	FT	Plant	No
Florida prairie clover	<i>Dalea carthagenensis var. floridana</i>	FC, PL	Plant	No
Florida pineland crabgrass	<i>Digitaria pauciflora</i>	FC, PL	Plant	No
Everglades bully	<i>Sideroxylon reclinatum ssp. austrofloridense</i>	FC, PL	Plant	No
Florida bristle fern	<i>Trichomanes punctatum ssp. floridanum</i>	FC	Plant	No
Clamshell orchid	<i>Encyclia cochleata var. triandra</i>	SE	Plant	No

FE - Federally endangered

FT - Federally threatened

FC - Federal candidate

ST - State threatened

SE - State endangered

PL – Federal proposed listing

When analyzing the impacts of a proposed project on listed species, the Service must consider the direct and indirect impacts added to the environmental baseline.¹⁰³ The environmental baseline includes “past and present impacts of all proposed Federal projects in the action area, the anticipated impacts of all proposed Federal projects in the action area that have already undergone formal consultation, and the impact of State or private actions which are contemporaneous with the consultation in process.”¹⁰⁴ “Action area” means “all areas to be

¹⁰³ 50 C.F.R. § 402.14(g)(3).

¹⁰⁴ *Id.* § 402.04.

affected directly or indirectly by the Federal action and not merely the immediate area involved in the action.”¹⁰⁵

The draft EA states:¹⁰⁶

Alternative 6 is expected to improve the functional value of the pine rockland habitat that is preserved after development and result in a net benefit to the vegetative communities considering development and conservation activities. Consequently, resident wildlife populations, particularly pine rockland dependent species would also be expected to experience an overall beneficial effect. Regardless, adverse effects would also be expected...

The draft EA further details that the preferred alternative 6 would result in the loss of 82.61 acres of habitat, and that the lost habitat would further fragment remaining habitat in the Richmond area.¹⁰⁷ It states that Coral Reef Commons would “inhibit connectivity and dispersal of species” across the project site, and would lead to impacts from pesticides, noise, lighting, and traffic.¹⁰⁸

The draft EA sites mechanical, chemical, and prescribed fire treatments as having the potential to harm species, but that this should be considered in the context that these land management activities are intended to improve the overall quality of lands for the species; however, it goes on to state that the placement of the project “has the potential to make the implementation of prescribed fire more difficult due to concerns over smoke, health effects, and loss of property” and that it “could further complicate the ability of neighboring land owners to conduct prescribed fire because of the addition of people in the landscape and the need to further manage smoke and property risks”.¹⁰⁹ It also concedes that alternatives to prescribed fire, like mechanical removal are not as ecologically effective as fire.¹¹⁰

Despite these impacts, the draft EA states that because of restoration efforts, perpetual preservation, and management of on-site preserves, the project is expected to result in a net benefit, specifically an overall increase in “habitat function” of +3.10 habitat value units.¹¹¹

Small, isolated populations, like the ones found in the Richmond pine rocklands, are vulnerable to extirpation due to limited gene flow, reduced genetic diversity, and inbreeding depression.¹¹² Population isolation also increases the risk of extinction from stochastic genetic and environmental events including drought, flooding, and toxic spills.¹¹³ Habitat modification and cumulative habitat degradation are also major threats for species, which exist in isolated

¹⁰⁵ *Id.*

¹⁰⁶ EA at 70.

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*

¹⁰⁹ *Id.*

¹¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹¹ EA at 71.

¹¹² Lynch, M. 1996. A quantitative-genetic perspective on conservation issues. In: Avise, J.C. and J.L. Hambrick (eds.). Conservation genetics: case histories from nature. Chapman and Hall, New York. pp. 493-494.

¹¹³ FWS 2009.

populations. Due to blocked avenues of dispersal or limited dispersal ability, isolated populations “gradually and quietly perish” as habitat conditions deteriorate.¹¹⁴ The very limited range and low population size of some of these species exacerbate their risk of extinction.

Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak butterfly & Florida leafwing butterfly

Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak butterfly (Bartram’s) and Florida leafwing butterfly are entirely dependent on pine rockland habitat. This habitat has experienced “substantial destruction, modification, and curtailment” and is now regarded as critically imperiled globally, reduced by economic development by 90 percent on mainland south Florida.¹¹⁵ The Service listed the species in 2014 due to loss of pineland habitat, mismanagement of existing habitat, and pesticides. Future threats include loss of genetic diversity and climate change.

Also in 2014, the Service designated critical habitat for the Bartram’s and Florida leafwing. The Bartram’s and Florida leafwing critical habitat overlaps entirely within the proposed 90.2 acres of the project site.¹¹⁶ The project would result in the loss of 39.47 acres of critical habitat for the butterflies.¹¹⁷ Of the 86.49 acres of habitat that would be lost by the project, 33 acres would be developed that support pineland croton and potentially immature and adult Bartram’s, and this loss of habitat has the potential to kill or injure any immature butterflies that occur within the 33 acres.¹¹⁸ The project would also destroy an additional 53 acres that would support adult Bartram’s by providing nectaring plants.¹¹⁹ Studies state that in order for Bartram’s to recover, further habitat loss from development and fire suppression must be stemmed.¹²⁰

Bartram’s and Florida leafwing are vulnerable to extinction due to their severely reduced range, reduced population size, lack of metapopulation structure, few remaining populations, and relative isolation. While the abundance of the Bartram’s and Florida leafwing is not known, each butterfly is estimated to number in the hundreds, and at times, possibly much lower.¹²¹

Bartram’s is restricted to pine rockland habitat and its only host plant is the pineland croton.¹²² Bartram’s has been observed in the Richmond pine rocklands,¹²³ and across the project site. In one field survey alone, Bartram’s was observed three times on the site of the Coral Reef Commons project on the western and southern central portions, though no detail is given as to

¹¹⁴ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). 2000. Mobile River Basin Aquatic Ecosystem Recovery Plan. Atlanta, GA. 128 pp. Available online: ecos.fws.gov/docs/recovery_plans/2000/001117.pdf.

¹¹⁵ 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47230. “Destruction of pine rocklands for economic development has reduced this habitat in Miami-Dade County...to about 11 percent of its natural extent, from approximately 183,000 acres to 20,100 acres.”

¹¹⁶ EA at 25, 71.

¹¹⁷ EA at 72.

¹¹⁸ EA at 73.

¹¹⁹ EA at 73.

¹²⁰ URS Corporation Southern. 2007. EEL Program, Management Plan, Part II – Pine Rockland (DRAFT) Chapter 1: The Pine Rockland Habitat, http://regionalconservation.org/ircs/pdf/publications/2007_09.pdf; FNAI – Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida: 2010 Edition, http://www.fnai.org/PDF/NC/Pine_Rockland_Final_2010.pdf at 35.

¹²¹ 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47237.

¹²² EA at 73.

¹²³ EA at 25.

which of the units the observations were made.¹²⁴ Another observation of Bartram's was made on the east side of the property.¹²⁵ Additionally, 322 pineland croton locations have been identified on the project site, the exact location has not been made available in the EA or HCP,¹²⁶ except that the HCP notes that 60% of the plants were observed on the preserve portions of the project.¹²⁷ The off-site preserve is designated critical habitat, but no surveys have been conducted to determine whether any Bartram's are present.¹²⁸

The draft EA acknowledges that “[f]ragmentation of pine rockland habitat is a concern for species with low mobility, such as the [Bartram's], and could result in the isolation of populations leading to reduced gene flow between sites, localized population declines, and potentially localized extirpation” and that the project would further fragment habitat.¹²⁹ However, the draft EA discounts those impacts by stating that the southern corridor and the stepping stones would reduce the adverse effects of fragmentation. The stepping stones, 3.88 acres of pine rockland plantings,¹³⁰ were specifically designed for the Bartram's,¹³¹ and the southern corridor would establish 2.16 acres of connectivity between the eastern and western preserves. The draft EA states that it is likely that the stepping stones and corridor would allow the populations to remain connected “at some level” but also acknowledges that “because the connective areas across the proposed CRC would be relatively small and narrow, over time, fragmentation could reduce population viability by decreasing the opportunities for genetic exchange and recruitment between preserves.”¹³² This proposal does not address the fact that Bartram's “is rarely encountered more than” 16 feet from its host plant-pine rockland interface and may have limited dispersal abilities.¹³³

Unlike the Bartram's, the Florida leafwing is thought to be a strong flyer capable of dispersal over large areas,¹³⁴ yet it only has one known hostplant, the pineland croton. It has adapted for life in the pine rockland, and with its wings closed, looks like a dead leaf or bark of South Florida slash pine tree.¹³⁵ The Service designated 359 acres of critical habitat in the Richmond pine rocklands for the Florida leafwing, 309 acres of which are private.¹³⁶ While it has not been documented on the project site, the site contains 90.2 acres of Florida leafwing critical habitat.¹³⁷ So while no Florida leafwing have been documented on the project site, the site comprises a significant portion of privately owned critical habitat for the Florida leafwing with potential for restoration for the species.

¹²⁴ EA at 22.

¹²⁵ *Id.*

¹²⁶ *Id.*

¹²⁷ HCP at 44.

¹²⁸ HCP at 44.

¹²⁹ EA at 74.

¹³⁰ EA at 72.

¹³¹ EA at 71.

¹³² EA at 74.

¹³³ *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Endangered Status for the Florida Leafwing and Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak Butterflies*, 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47227.

¹³⁴ 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47227.

¹³⁵ 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47226.

¹³⁶ *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Designation of Critical Habitat for Florida Leafwing and Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak Butterflies*, 79 Fed. Reg. 47180, 47189, 47193-4.

¹³⁷ EA at 23.

The draft EA states that the increased human residential presence could lead to increased potential for predation from dogs and cats.¹³⁸ Aside from referencing a generic requirement that dogs be leashed, the HCP does not propose any specific measures to mitigate this significant threat. Likewise, the draft EA states that the project will produce a great increase in the amount of vehicle traffic which could harm the butterflies by hitting and killing them, or temporarily obscuring movement across roadways, but then discounts this harm by implying that because the speed limit would be 25 or 15 miles an hour, it would be a rare and unlikely event that butterflies would be killed by a passing vehicle.¹³⁹

Despite the objective habitat loss, the draft EA claims that the on-site and off-site preserves would provide a net +3.10 HVU, despite the plain loss of 39.47 acres of habitat for Bartram's and the fact that only a portion of the on-site and off-site preserve provide habitat that supports the Bartram's, and does not appear to take into account the diminished value of remaining lands due to fragmentation.

Every acre of upland critical habitat is vital to these butterflies whose lower elevation sites are imminently threatened with sea-level rise. For example the population of Bartram's on Big Pine Key is just slightly above mean sea level, and "saturation or increase in salinity of the soil would correspondingly change the vegetation and habitat structure making the butterfly's survival at this location in the Keys very unlikely"¹⁴⁰ The Service itself has found that "[i]n the worst-case scenario, which assumes high sea level rise, low financial resources, a 'business as usual' approach to planning, and a doubling of human population, the habitat at Big Pine Key and Long Pine Key may be lost, with the loss of habitat at Long Pine Key resulting in the complete extirpation of the Florida leafwing. Under the worst-case scenario, pine rockland habitat would remain within both Navy Wells and the Richmond Pine Rocklands, both of which currently retain Bartram's scrub hairstreak populations."¹⁴¹ The Service has also concluded that "the loss of this portion [Big Pine Key] of the Florida leafwing's range will further reduce their overall resiliency to threats and limit their capacity for survival and recovery."¹⁴²

The Service must explain how the permanent loss of 39+ acres of critical habitat, plus the further fragmentation of another 50 acres of critical habitat will not appreciably reduce the continued survival or recovery of the butterflies.

Miami tiger beetle

The Service listed the Miami tiger beetle as endangered in October 2016.¹⁴³ The Miami tiger beetle is found only in pine rockland habitat along the Miami Rock Ridge and Richmond area.¹⁴⁴ It has not been documented on the project site; however, no comprehensive studies have been

¹³⁸ EA at 75.

¹³⁹ EA at 75.

¹⁴⁰ 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47233.

¹⁴¹ 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47234.

¹⁴² 79 Fed. Reg. 47222, 47233.

¹⁴³ 81 Fed. Reg. 68985. We assume the Applicants' statement that "[t]he Miami tiger beetle does not currently receive protection status on either the state or federal level" was an accidental misstatement and not the position of the Applicants given the pending HCP. HCP at 56.

¹⁴⁴ EA at 95; 80 FR 79533.

done of the site, but has been documented on properties north, east, and south of the proposed development. The project site contains suitable habitat for the species and it is expected to occur there.¹⁴⁵ It has been documented on the off-site mitigation area,¹⁴⁶ even on degraded habitat and even paved roads.¹⁴⁷ Detailed and seasonally appropriate surveying should be conducted to document Miami tiger beetle presence throughout the site to better inform pesticide, land clearing, and fire management activities.

Coral Reef Commons would develop 86.49 acres of habitat suitable to the tiger beetle, including 32.91 acres of pine rockland habitat and 53.58 acres of disturbed land.¹⁴⁸ This habitat loss has the potential to injure or kill adults and larvae during construction and lead to further loss through the increased chance for collection. Already there have been multiple instances of the Miami tiger beetle ending up in trade and given that it will use human-made pathways, further exposing them to overexploitation.¹⁴⁹

The HCP and EA also do not appear to provide support for the assumption that the southern corridor will provide habitat connectivity for the tiger beetle between the east and west preserves, therefore the value of that corridor from the perspective of the beetle is questionable. The Service concedes that because the value of degraded land was not taken into account in the habitat value assessment, the project could potentially result in a decrease in not only over all acres of habitat but in habitat value units as well.¹⁵⁰ The Service must explain how this loss and fragmentation of habitat will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of survival or recovery for the Miami tiger beetle.

Florida bonneted bat

The Service listed the Florida bonneted bat as an endangered species under the ESA in 2013.¹⁵¹ It has been detected on the project site, with acoustic equipment detecting clutter, commute, and feeding calls at all 25 stations.¹⁵² Although the off-site mitigation area is within the Service's consultation area and is a focal area for the bat, it has not been surveyed.¹⁵³ It is found in longleaf pine trees and is dependent on forested areas for roosting; however, the species has also been found roosting in palm trees.¹⁵⁴ The greatest threats to the survival of the bonneted bat are mainly anthropogenic threats, such as habitat destruction, fragmentation, and degradation closely linked to various types of development and agriculture.¹⁵⁵ It is anticipated that climate change

¹⁴⁵ EA at 95-96. A limited survey effort on 4.3 acres was conducted on the eastern side of the proposed project in a highly neglected area 80 FR 79533.

¹⁴⁶ HCP at 56.

¹⁴⁷ EA at 95.

¹⁴⁸ EA at 96.

¹⁴⁹ EA at 99-100. See Wirth letter to Service Aug. 9, 2016, Wirth Comment Letter to Service 2015 p. 5-6.

¹⁵⁰ EA at 96.

¹⁵¹ Everglades Nat'l Park, *Florida Bonneted Bat*, NAT'L PARK SERV., <http://www.nps.gov/ever/learn/nature/flbonnetedbat.htm> [hereinafter *Florida Bonneted Bat*].

¹⁵² EA at 23.

¹⁵³ HCP at 49.

¹⁵⁴ *Id.* at 61007.

¹⁵⁵ *Florida Bonneted Bat*.

and sea level rise will both negatively impact the species, which is already suffering from limited suitable habitat.¹⁵⁶

The project would permanently destroy 86.35 acres of land potentially used by the bat, including 73.84 acres of habitat that could be used for bat roosting and foraging.¹⁵⁷ The EA expressly provides for the demolition of bat roost sites and that the removal of a roost site would be harassment and harm.¹⁵⁸ The Service must require that this activity be reported to the Service so that take can be monitor and consultation reinitiated if necessary.

The EA states that the southern corridor and on-site preserves would support the lifecycle of the bat and provide a “more diverse suite of insects and prey items” for the bat.¹⁵⁹ However, it does not provide any support for how a 50-foot wide strip would support the lifecycle of the bat or how it would provide “more diverse” prey or whether that is even helpful to the bat, especially given the EA’s finding that acoustic surveys for the bat in other portions of the Richmond Area where “preferred foraging was found to be in large wide open spaces, which had few obstructions and very little to no artificial lighting.”¹⁶⁰ The EA also acknowledges that not much is known about the effects of light pollution on the Florida bonneted bats,¹⁶¹ but posits that the artificial light could be a benefit to bats because it might attract more prey items.¹⁶² However, the bat has a documented preference for foraging in areas with little or no light in the Richmond area.¹⁶³ More information is needed before the Service permits artificial lights during construction and operation of the project.

Likewise, the EA concedes that no research has been done on the effect of fire management on bats, but suggests that it is expected to benefit from it.¹⁶⁴ We are supportive of fire management, but additional studies should be conducted on the effect of fire management on the bat prior to such activities. The Service must also describe how the loss of habitat for the bat will not appreciably reduce the survival or recover of the species, especially given the importance of upland habitat.

The Service reports that bonneted bat roost sites have been found at 23 to 26 colony sites at 11 locations, as summarized in the table below.

Location of roost sites	Number of colonies
Babcock-Webb WMA	4 to 6
Babcock Ranch	2
North Fort Myers	2
Naples	1
Fakahatchee Strand Preserve SP	2 to 3

¹⁵⁶ *Id.*

¹⁵⁷ EA. at 84.

¹⁵⁸ EA at 85.

¹⁵⁹ EA at 83.

¹⁶⁰ EA at 84.

¹⁶¹ EA at 86.

¹⁶² EA at 86.

¹⁶³ EA at 87.

¹⁶⁴ EA at 84.

Big Cypress National Preserve	3
Everglades City	1
Everglades National Park	1
Ten Thousand Islands	1
Homestead	1
Coral Gables/Miami	4

Seven of the 11 roost site locations are on the Florida coast, and two additional locations (Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve) are extremely low-lying areas that are highly vulnerable to sea-level rise. Based on NOAA’s Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding Impacts Viewer,¹⁶⁵ nine of the 11 roost locations will be either fully or partially inundated under this range of sea-level rise. Four locations would be largely or completely inundated starting at one foot of sea-level rise, threatening the five to six colonies they support within the next few decades: Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, Everglades City, Everglades National Park (Long Pine Key), and Ten Thousand Islands area. Five other locations would be partially inundated at levels of one to six feet, putting 11 more colonies at risk: Homestead, Miami/Coral Gables, Big Cypress National Park, Naples, and North Fort Myers. Only two locations which support six to eight colonies would not be directly affected: Babcock-Webb WMA and Babcock Ranch. This analysis highlights the extreme vulnerability of bonneted bat roosting habitat to sea-level rise.

Additionally, it is likely that the forested areas on which bonneted bats depend may retreat. Florida bonneted bats have been known to roost in longleaf pine flatwoods and in the shafts of royal palms. It is thought that forested areas and old, mature trees are essential roosting habitat for the species, as well. A case study on coastal forest retreat at Withlacoochee Gulf Preserve in Yankeetown, Florida found that the coastal forest is retreating as salt water intrudes freshwater at an estimated rate of seven meters per year over the last 100 years. Therefore, even before coastal forest areas are totally inundated, they can experience significant ecological changes.

The Applicants simply have not provided sufficient data to provide a full picture of environmental impacts to the bonneted bat. Furthermore, the Service is currently considering critical habitat designation for this species. The Service should take no action on the HCP until the critical habitat has been determined for this species.

Eastern indigo snake

The Service listed the eastern indigo snake as threatened under the ESA in 1978.¹⁶⁶ Historically, the species was found throughout Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and portions of Florida; however, the species is now only found within Georgia and Florida.¹⁶⁷ Eastern indigo snakes are more often “found in pinelands, tropical hardwood hammocks, and mangrove forests,” as they

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/slrviewer>.

¹⁶⁶ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, *Multiple Species Recovery Plan for South Florida: Eastern Indigo Snake*, *Drymarchon corasi couperi*, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, 4-567, <http://www.fws.gov/verobeach/msrppdfs/easternindigosnake.pdf> [hereinafter *Eastern Indigo Snake*].

¹⁶⁷ *Id.* at 4-568.

are more inclined to upland habitats and ecosystems.¹⁶⁸ The most frequent types of habitat where the indigo is found includes “pine flatwoods, scrubby flatwoods, dry prairie, tropical hardwood hammocks, edges of freshwater marshes, agricultural fields, coastal dunes, and human-altered habitat”; however, the species needs a variety of these habitats to complete its life cycle.¹⁶⁹ The eastern indigo snake shares a special relationship with the gopher tortoise, which is critical in northern portions of the snake’s range because it will take refuge in the tortoise’s burrows to weather the cold.¹⁷⁰ This relationship is somewhat less critical in the milder south Florida climate where indigo snakes have been documented using manmade refugia and disturbed habitats.¹⁷¹ The snakes are still known to use the underground burrows of these tortoises and other species in the region of the HCP.¹⁷² Thus, the survival of the indigo snake is essentially tied to the health and survival of the gopher tortoise.

The eastern indigo snake was initially listed as threatened as the result of several activities including, habitat destruction and fragmentation, “over-collecting for the pet trade, and mortality from gassing gopher tortoise burrows to collect rattlesnakes.”¹⁷³ Presently, the species is vulnerable to habitat destruction and fragmentation associated with “residential and commercial construction, agriculture, and timbering.”¹⁷⁴ Development will continue to impact the eastern indigo snake because it permits increasing human populations in indigo snake habitat, which leads to an increased risk of snake mortality resulting from vehicular collisions and contact with property owners and domestic animals.¹⁷⁵ The indigo snake is also subject to harm from the bioaccumulation of pesticides in its prey, which results from the use of pesticides in agricultural and silvicultural activities, and from contact with rodenticide used to control rat populations within its range.¹⁷⁶

Although the HCP provides general information about threats to the eastern indigo snake, it fails to provide sufficient information regarding the specific impact the proposed activities will have on indigo snakes. Although habitat destruction is a primary threat to the eastern indigo snake, the HCP fails to address many other important threats. For instance, the HCP fails to provide any measures to address habitat fragmentation, road mortality, and genetic isolation from a growing network of roads and increased traffic; the introduction of environmental pollutants from covered activities, including development, mining, and oil and gas development; and intentional killing of snakes associated with increased interface between developed and natural areas.

The HCP also fails to propose any surveying or monitoring measures. The Service’s recovery plan for the eastern indigo snake highlights monitoring as an essential tool for attaining the snake’s recovery.¹⁷⁷ The project area should be surveyed to determine the relevant locations and

¹⁶⁸ *Id.*

¹⁶⁹ *Id.* at 4-568–4-569.

¹⁷⁰ *Everglades Eastern Indigo Snake.*

¹⁷¹ *Id.*

¹⁷² *Id.* The use of gopher tortoise and other species’ burrows by indigos is often considered taking “refuge.” *Eastern Indigo Snake* at 4-572.

¹⁷³ *Eastern Indigo Snake* at 4-572.

¹⁷⁴ *Id.*

¹⁷⁵ *Id.*

¹⁷⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷⁷ *Eastern Indigo Snake* at 4-579, 4-581.

habitat use of eastern indigo snakes. The plan should also impose a monitoring plan for the life of the permit, which would allow Service to identify take and population declines.

The Service should also consider the impacts of the growing network of roads and increased traffic that will directly and indirectly result from the HCP. Though roads only account for a small area of landscapes, their influence can extend across large areas because they restrict dispersal and gene flow.¹⁷⁸ Transportation infrastructure fragments the landscape, isolating habitat and populations of animals and forcing them to cross roads in an effort to evaluate and access resources, mate with members of other populations, or escape unfavorable circumstances. If snakes cannot successfully move from one “fragment” of habitat to another, the isolation will eventually affect the species’ fundamental population and community dynamics.¹⁷⁹ Further, because snakes are a maligned group of animals, the increased visibility of snakes on roadways will subject them to increased intentional killing by humans.¹⁸⁰

Recognizing “irreparable landscape alteration from the nation’s transportation infrastructure,” Andrews and Gibbons (2005) investigated the behavior of various species of snake near roads.¹⁸¹ The study showed the eastern racer (*Coluber constrictor*), a species of snake that shares the subfamily Colubrinae with the eastern indigo snake, readily crosses roads.¹⁸² Though this information suggests lower risk of habitat fragmentation from road avoidance; it also suggests higher likelihood of road mortality, which would contribute to population reduction and genetic isolation.¹⁸³ The study also concluded that snake species with higher mass-to-length ratios (thick-bodied snakes) are more likely to cross roads at a slower rate of speed, subjecting them to a higher risk of road mortality when they cannot cross quickly enough to avoid collision.¹⁸⁴ The scientists found that even snakes that rely on rapid flight to escape predators (e.g., *Coluber constrictor*) exhibited higher immobilization responses to oncoming vehicles than hypothesized.¹⁸⁵ Because eastern indigo snakes are heavy-bodied snakes of a subfamily that is more likely to cross roads, there is potential for great harm from increased roadways and traffic. Additionally, because eastern indigo snakes range over large areas (as far as 224 hectares), they are more likely to encounter roads and the risk of direct mortality or isolation.¹⁸⁶

Road development and urbanization can also lead to negative population-level impacts, such as skewed population structure via altered sex ratios and composition of age classes and restricted

¹⁷⁸ Clark, R.W., W.S. Brown, R. Stechert & K.R. Zamudio. (2010). Roads, interrupted dispersal, and genetic diversity in timber rattlesnakes. *Conserv. Biol.* 24, 1059–1069.

¹⁷⁹ Andrews, K.M. & J.W. Gibbons. 2005. How Do Highways Influence Snake Movement? Behavioral Responses to Roads and Vehicles. *Copeia* 2005(4): 772–782.

¹⁸⁰ *Id.*

¹⁸¹ *Id.*

¹⁸² *Id.*

¹⁸³ *Id.*

¹⁸⁴ *Id.*

¹⁸⁵ Fahrig, L. & Rytwinski, T. (2009). Effects of roads on animal abundance: an empirical review and synthesis. <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss1/art21> .

¹⁸⁶ *Id.* at 4-571–4-572.

gene flow that results in decreased genetic diversity.¹⁸⁷ The negative impacts of these effects may take decades to become apparent,¹⁸⁸ at which point it may be too late to remedy them.

Breining et al. (2012) have concluded that habitat fragmentation is likely a critical factor for the eastern indigo snake's persistence and that eastern indigo snakes are vulnerable to extinction in conservation areas bordered by roads and developed areas.¹⁸⁹ Though the snake's chances of survival can be quite high in conservation core areas, its survival rates significantly decline in conservation areas along highways and in suburbs.¹⁹⁰ More than half of known snake mortalities documented in the study were caused by humans, directly or indirectly, along roads.¹⁹¹ In light of this study, the Service should consider whether the designated "preservation/plan-wide activities" areas truly provide sufficient refuge for eastern indigo snakes such that they will not be at risk from road-related mortality and human-snake conflict. Many of the areas designated for preservation are small and isolated, which suggests they are not sufficient to appropriately conserve the species. Additionally, the Service should consider whether "corridors" between protected areas are wide enough to provide adequate protection for eastern indigo snakes.¹⁹²

When assessing the HCP's impacts on eastern indigo snake habitat, the Service should not only consider broad habitat types used by the eastern indigo snake (e.g., upland habitat) but also availability of essential microhabitat required by the species. For example, Hyslop et al. (2009) found that "[r]eduction in suitable underground shelters caused by habitat degradation and loss, which reduces or eliminates populations of [gopher tortoise], is likely an important factor in extirpation of the species from areas otherwise perceived as suitable habitat."¹⁹³

Moreover, on July 18, 2016, Krysko et al. published a peer-reviewed article identifying a new, cryptic species of indigo snake in the United States, the Gulf Coast indigo snake (*Drymarchon kolpobasileus*).¹⁹⁴ The study distinguishes the new species from the federally threatened eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon couperi*) using morphological and molecular analyses, and it identifies new distributions for each discrete species based on their observed morphological and genetic differences.¹⁹⁵ This study has several implications for the conservation of the species. On a broad scale, this study takes an already rare and imperiled species of snake and effectively splits it into two separate species that inhabit even smaller ranges. With the apparent increased

¹⁸⁷ Andrews, K.M., J.W. Gibbons & D.M. Jochimsen. 2008. Ecological effects of roads on amphibians and reptiles: a literature review. In *Urban herpetology. Herpetological Conservation*. Vol. 3. Jung, R.E. & Mitchell, J.C. (Eds). Salt Lake City, UT: Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles.

¹⁸⁸ *Id.*

¹⁸⁹ Breining, D.R., M.J. Mazerolle, M.R. Bolt, M.L. Legare, J.H. Drese & J.E. Hines, 2012. Habitat fragmentation effects on annual survival of the federally protected eastern indigo snake. *NASA Publications*. Paper 106.

¹⁹⁰ *Id.*

¹⁹¹ *Id.*

¹⁹² *See Id.*

¹⁹³ Hyslop, N.L., R.J. Cooper & J.M. Meyers. 2009. Seasonal Shifts in Shelter and Microhabitat Use of *Drymarchon couperi* (Eastern Indigo Snake) in Georgia. *Copeia* 3:458–464.

¹⁹⁴ *See* Krysko, K.L., M.C. Granatosky, L.P. Nuñez & D.J. Smith. 2016. A cryptic new species of Indigo Snake (genus *Drymarchon*) from the Florida Platform of the United States. *Zootaxa* 4138(3): 549–569; *see also* Krysko, K.L., L.P. Nunez, C.A. Lippi, D.J. Smith, and M.C. Granatosky. 2016. Pliocene-Pleistocene lineage diversifications in the Eastern Indigo Snake (*Drymarchon couperi*) in the Southeastern United States. *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 98:111-122.

¹⁹⁵ *Id.* (entire).

rarity of these two species, any proposed impact on “eastern indigo snakes” will need to be reassessed based on the ecology and conservation status of each distinct species. Locally, the study reveals that the species in Miami-Dade County is not the eastern indigo snake, as it is identified in the HCP, but rather the cryptic Gulf Coast indigo snake.

Gopher tortoise

The gopher tortoise is a federal candidate species under the ESA and a highly valuable “keystone species” that benefits and ensures the survival of other species in its ecosystem.¹⁹⁶ This tortoise is known to benefit over 300 different species, including eastern indigo snakes, foxes, skunks, and lizards, which use gopher tortoise burrows for shelter and for various parts of their lifecycles.¹⁹⁷ The gopher tortoise is generally found in longleaf pine or oak sandhill ecosystems, but it may also be found in other dry, upland habitats within its historic range.¹⁹⁸ The gopher tortoise has not been documented on site or on the off-site area but is present within the Richmond Area.¹⁹⁹

The greatest threat to the gopher tortoise is habitat destruction, including habitat fragmentation and degradation, caused by urban development, agricultural conversion, forestry, and mining.²⁰⁰ Habitat fragmentation can lead to reproductive isolation, increased predation due to exposed habitat edges, and mortality resulting from vehicular collisions.²⁰¹

When considering the impact of the HCP on the gopher tortoise, the Service must carefully analyze anticipated take and weigh that against the conservation measures proposed by the applicants. First, the Service must determine an accurate accounting of take.

Generally, the Service should consider the special needs of gopher tortoise. Land use and land-management practices are key determinants of gopher tortoise burrows and their abandonment.²⁰² Proximity to farming, urban development, and roads can be detrimental, subjecting gopher tortoises to road kills and death by agricultural machinery.²⁰³ Additionally, the Service should consider the feasibility of prescribed burns, as the covered activities in the HCP will lead to increased interface between urban and suburban areas and natural “preserve” areas. The Service should also consider the potential for introduction of invasive plant species from

¹⁹⁶ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, *Range-Wide Conservation Strategy for the Gopher Tortoise*, U.S. DEPT. OF INTERIOR, 4, <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/candidateconservation/pdf/FinalGopherTortoiseStrategy.pdf> [hereinafter *Conservation Strategy for Gopher Tortoise*].

¹⁹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁹⁸ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: North Florida Ecological Services Office, *Gopher Tortoise (Gopherus polyphemus)*, U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE, http://www.fws.gov/northflorida/gophertortoise/gopher_tortoise_fact_sheet.html.

¹⁹⁹ HCP at 53.

²⁰⁰ *Conservation Strategy for Gopher Tortoise* at 9; NatureServe. 2015. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia, <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.

²⁰¹ *Conservation Strategy for Gopher Tortoise* at 9.

²⁰² Baskaran, L.M., V.H. Dale, R.A. Efroymsen & W. Birkhead. 2006. Habitat Modeling Within a Regional Context: An Example Using Gopher Tortoise. *American Midland Naturalist* 155(2): 335–351.

²⁰³ *Id.*

urban and suburban landscaping and harmful introduced predators, as historically invasive species have had a serious impact on gopher tortoises.²⁰⁴

Finally, the Service should consider the multifaceted impacts of the growing network of roads and increased traffic that will result from the activities proposed in the HCP. Aside from exposing tortoises to increased road kills,²⁰⁵ roads will fragment otherwise suitable gopher tortoise habitat. Additionally, road development facilitates human access into otherwise less accessible gopher tortoise habitat, which will potentially lead to increased gopher tortoise harvest, collection, or direct killing.²⁰⁶

Rim rock crowned snake

Rim rock crowned snakes inhabit pine rockland and tropical hardwood hammocks near fresh water in the Miami area and the Florida keys.²⁰⁷ They can be found in holes and depressions in the oolitic limestone (formed by calcium carbonate) and they have periodically been discovered in rotten logs, under rocks and trash.²⁰⁸ There is little information regarding the population size of this species, however because much of the distinct habitat type this species relies on has been destroyed, it is more than likely the population of this species has declined.²⁰⁹ Habitat fragmentation from development is the biggest threat posed to the snake especially for the population in and around Miami, as its habitat is mixed in with agricultural and residential lands.²¹⁰ In addition, human development and clearing of rockland areas has left it with a very fragmented habitat. In fact, approximately 98% of the original Miami Rock Ridge pinelands have been lost and many rockland hammocks on the Keys and mainland were cleared for agriculture, firewood, and charcoal in the 1800s.²¹¹

The rim rock crowned snake was listed as threatened by the State of Florida in 1975, and it is considered a Species of Management Concern by the Service and is proposed for listing.²¹² The state listing prohibits take but does not protect its habitat. The primary protection need is the preservation of suitable habitat because the current pace of development threatens to eliminate even marginally suitable habitat.²¹³ The snake is found on some protected sites, including Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge, John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, Key Largo Hammocks, and Port Bougainville,²¹⁴ but protection through federal listing and critical habitat designation is necessary to prevent the species' extinction.

²⁰⁴ *Id.*

²⁰⁵ Baskaran, L.M., V.H. Dale, R.A. Efroymson & W. Birkhead. 2006. Habitat Modeling Within a Regional Context: An Example Using Gopher Tortoise. *American Midland Naturalist* 155(2): 335–351.

²⁰⁶ *Id.*

²⁰⁷ Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Rim Rock Crowned Snake Biological Status Review Report. 2 -3 (Nov. 1, 2013) <http://myfwc.com/media/2273373/Rim-Rock-Crowned-Snake-BSR.pdf>.

²⁰⁸ *Id.* at 4-5.

²⁰⁹ *Id.*

²¹⁰ *Id.*

²¹¹ Snyder et al. 1990.

²¹² Scott, C. 2004. *Endangered and Threatened Animals of Florida and their Habitats*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.

²¹³ NatureServe. 2015. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia, available at <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.

²¹⁴ *Id.*

The pine rockland community is one of the most endangered habitats in North America.²¹⁵ Pine rocklands provide critical foraging and nesting habitat for a diverse array of wildlife, including the snake.²¹⁶ They also provide cover and roosting sites to a variety of wildlife species.²¹⁷ Pine rockland ecosystems contain a rich herbaceous flora with many narrowly endemic animal species.²¹⁸ These once-extensive communities have been plagued by development in the region, and are now greatly reduced in area and divided into many smaller fragments.²¹⁹ Pine rocklands are found in three areas of southern Florida: the Miami Rock Ridge of southeastern peninsular Florida, the Lower Florida Keys, and the southern Big Cypress pinelands.²²⁰ A very diverse shrub layer dominated by hardwoods, and an equally diverse herb layer containing 35 taxa endemic to southern Florida, including several species listed by the federal government, characterize the Miami Rock Ridge.²²¹ This area has been fragmented and degraded by past land use practices and hurricanes.²²²

The north-south distribution of pine rocklands along the Miami Rock Ridge has already been reduced by over 12 miles.²²³ According to the Pine Rocklands Multispecies Recovery Plan (“Recovery Plan”) for South Florida, the ultimate goal of the Service is to restore the pine rocklands by maintaining the function, structure, and ecological processes of pine rocklands, and preventing any further loss, degradation, or fragmentation, of this imperiled South Florida community.²²⁴ In Miami-Dade County, the remaining pine rockland habitat is highly fragmented, with the majority of fragments being less than 50 ha in size and embedded in an urban landscape.²²⁵

Unnatural levels of predation from non-native species are another potential threat to the snake. Of greatest concern is the red imported fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta*) because it has invaded South Florida and the Keys.²²⁶ Predation by this non-native species is a reason for declines in some oviparous snake populations in the Southeastern Coastal Plain of Florida, meaning the rim rock crowned snake is also at risk.²²⁷ In addition, over predation by other non-native species to the

²¹⁵ Williams, D.A., Y. Wang, M. Borchetta, and M.S. Gaines, *Genetic diversity and spatial structure of a keystone species in fragmented pine rockland habitat*, *Biological Conservation*, April 2007, at 256, 257.

²¹⁶ FWS, *Multi-Species Recovery Plan – Pine Rocklands*, 3-161, July 23, 2014.

²¹⁷ *Id.* at 3-167.

²¹⁸ Snyder, J.R., M.S. Ross, S. Koptur, and J.P. Sah, *Developing Ecological Criteria for Prescribed Fire in South Florida Pine Rockland Ecosystems*, Se. Envtl. Research Ctr., July 2005, at 1.

²¹⁹ *Id.*; URS Corporation Southern. 2007. EEL Program, Management Plan, Part II – Pine Rockland (DRAFT) Chapter 1: The Pine Rockland Habitat, http://regionalconservation.org/ircs/pdf/publications/2007_09.pdf; FNAI – Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida: 2010 Edition, http://www.fnai.org/PDF/NC/Pine_Rockland_Final_2010.pdf.

²²⁰ *Id.*

²²¹ *Id.*

²²² Abandoned & Little Known Airfields: Florida – Southern Miami Area. June 11, 2013; 1945 Richmond/South Dade Hurricane Presented by Robert Molleda at 2007 Florida Governor’s Hurricane Conference; Macfie, D. Richmond Naval Air Station, 1942-1961, Tequesta.

²²³ FWS, *Multi-Species Recovery Plan – Pine Rocklands*, 3-173, July 23, 2014.

²²⁴ *Id.* at 3-191.

²²⁵ Williams at 256, 257.

²²⁶ Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. *Species Action Plan for the Key Ringneck Snake *Diadophis punctatus acrius**. 3-4 (Nov. 1, 2013) <http://myfwc.com/media/2718849/Key-Ringneck-Snake-Species-Action-Pl.-an-Final-Draft.pdf>.

²²⁷ FWC at 4-5.

Keys, which have growing populations, such as the Cuban tree frog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*), cane toad (*Rhinella marina*), and several introduced lizard species, when coupled with other threats pose a significant risk to the Rim Rock crowned snake.²²⁸ Furthermore, the introduction of other lizard species that also inhabit litter may outcompete the rim rock crowned snake for food.

Florida's diverse native herpetofauna has a history of exploitation to supply the pet trade. The commercial collection of herpetofauna continues today, and many dealers buy, sell, import, and export large numbers of both native and exotic species.²²⁹ Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation list unsustainable exploitation as a primary category of concern leading to herpetofauna population decline.²³⁰ Although the rim rock crowned snake is so rare that humans are very unlikely to encounter it, as with many snake species, humans kill them out of fear or with malice or collect them for pets.

Florida brickell bush & Carter's small-flowered flax

The Service listed the Florida brickell bush and Carter's small-flowered flax as endangered in 2014 and designated 104.06 acres of critical habitat that overlaps entirely within the proposed Coral Reef Commons.²³¹ The plants are only found in Miami-Dade pine rocklands in open, well-lit subcanopy with exposed limestone and minimal organic material.²³² It is estimated there are only 1,550 plants remaining.²³³ The project would result in the loss of 52.85 acres of critical habitat.²³⁴

The plants have not been documented on the project site and the off-site mitigation area appears to not have been surveyed for the species.²³⁵ The Service must analyze and explain how the project will not jeopardize the continued existence of the species or adversely modify critical habitat.

Tiny polygala & deltoid spurge

The Service listed the tiny polygala and deltoid spurge as endangered in 1985 but has never designated critical habitat for them. Surveys conducted by the Applicants report two populations of tiny polygala, including one population of 9 plants within pine rockland slated to be developed.²³⁶ Surveys detected deltoid spurge at three NFC parcels on the Coral Reef Commons site.²³⁷ Surveys have not been done at the off-site mitigation area, but the deed restrictions for the

²²⁸ *Id.*

²²⁹ *Id.*

²³⁰ *Id.*

²³¹ EA at 71-72.

²³² HCP at 63.

²³³ HCP at 63.

²³⁴ EA at 72.

²³⁵ HCP at 66.

²³⁶ App D, Coral Reef Commons Rare Plant and Floristic Inventory and Assessment Report (Woodmansee 2014) at 6.

²³⁷ App D, Coral Reef Commons Rare Plant and Floristic Inventory and Assessment Report (Woodmansee 2014) at 9.

off-site mitigation area indicate that deltoid spurge have been observed there.²³⁸ The Service must analyze and explain how the project will not jeopardize the continued existence of the species.

V. Compliance with the Endangered Species Act

A. The Action Area is Too Narrowly Defined

The HCP and EA do not adequately explain how the HCP plan area was established. Under Section 7 of the ESA, the Service must begin its assessment of the project by determining the environmental baseline. The environmental baseline includes “the past and present impacts of all Federal, State, or private actions and other human activities in the *action area*, the anticipated impacts of all proposed Federal projects in the action area that have already undergone formal or early section 7 consultation, and the impact of State or private actions which are contemporaneous with the consultation in process.”²³⁹ The “action area” includes “all areas to be affected directly or indirectly by the Federal action and not merely the immediate area involved in the action.”²⁴⁰ There must be a correlation between the HCP plan area and the requirements of the action area under the ESA’s implementing regulations.²⁴¹

In this case, the HCP does not adequately explain how the chosen plan area satisfies the definition of “action area.” Some of the species included in the HCP can travel miles from the project site, beyond just the footprint of the defined plan area. For instance, the HCP states that foraging flights of the Florida bonneted bat “can last six hours and may occur at distances of several miles from established roosts.”²⁴² There is no consideration, however, of how the loss of foraging habitat and prey availability and the increase in light, noise, and other disturbances as a result of a multi-use development may shift home ranges or otherwise have behavioral impacts beyond just the project site and offsite mitigation area.

In addition, the HCP recognizes that Bartram’s is “capable of dispersing throughout the landscape as far as three miles from habitat patches”, but there is no discussion of how the loss of habitat as a result of this project could impact dispersal, behavioral foraging responses, and reproduction of these species across the larger landscape.

Despite the far ranging foraging and dispersal characteristics of these species, there is no discussion of the “scientific methodology, relevant facts, or rational connections linking the project’s potential impacts” to the boundaries of the HCP plan area.²⁴³ The Applicants do not discuss or justify their decision to nevertheless restrict their analysis to the project area and offsite mitigation area given these potential impacts. This is a fundamental flaw as the environmental baseline and effects of the action are connected to the action area.²⁴⁴ The lack of

²³⁸ HCP at 61.

²³⁹ 50 CFR 403.02 (emphasis added).

²⁴⁰ 50 CFR 402.02.

²⁴¹ See *Native Ecosystems v. Dombeck*, 304 F.3d 886 (9th Cir. 2002).

²⁴² HCP at 46.

²⁴³ See *Dombeck*, at 902.

²⁴⁴ See *Defenders of Wildlife v. Babbitt*, 130 F. Supp. 2d 121, 129 (D.D.C. 2001).

scientific support for the delineation of the HCP plan area renders it arbitrary and capricious under the law.

B. The Surveys are Inadequate

The Applicants state that they conducted 16 surveys Sept. 2014-Jan. 2015.²⁴⁵ They describe the conditions as mostly cloudy, with one exception when it was “light rain to mostly cloudy.”²⁴⁶ Some of the surveys were for specific species, others were not.²⁴⁷ According to the Applicants, the general species surveys were conducted “in conjunction with other surveying efforts and included qualitatively recording observed flora and fauna.”²⁴⁸

No species-specific surveys for eastern indigo snake were conducted on or off-site, despite the fact that it “would likely have historically been found in the Richmond Area.”²⁴⁹ Likewise no species-specific surveys for rim rock crowned snake were conducted on or off-site, despite the fact that it was “documented in 2009 within the Zoo Miami area.”²⁵⁰ Enge (2004) provides some suggestions for surveying reptile fauna on pine rockland habitat in Miami-Dade County.²⁵¹

Bartram’s was surveyed using pineland croton as a proxy on Sept. 12, 22, 24, 26, Oct. 3, 6, and 7 2014.²⁵² The HCP does not state whether the entire Coral Reef Commons project site or off-site preservation were surveyed.

Florida bonneted bat surveys were conducted in September 2014 at 26 sites in forested areas of the Coral Reef Commons site.²⁵³ It is not clear from the HCP why the western and southwestern portions of the project were not surveyed.

The off-site mitigation area appears to not have been surveyed for any of the species at all.

C. The HCP’s Conservation Strategy is not Specific, Measurable or Accountable

The Service explains in its recently updated HCP Handbook that the conservation strategy of a HCP is the foundation upon which the rest of the HCP is built.²⁵⁴ “The conservation strategy defines what the HCP is trying to accomplish through biological goals, how the applicant will track progress through the monitoring program, and how the applicant will adjust implementation of the HCP through adaptive management and changed circumstances.”²⁵⁵

²⁴⁵ HCP at 36.

²⁴⁶ HCP at 36.

²⁴⁷ HCP at 36.

²⁴⁸ HCP at 36.

²⁴⁹ HCP at 51.

²⁵⁰ HCP at 51.

²⁵¹ Enge, K.M., M.S. Robson, and K.L. Krysko. 2004. Reptile surveys of pine rockland habitat in six Miami-Dade County parks. 67(3) *Biological Sciences*. pp. 194-204.

²⁵² HCP at 37.

²⁵³ HCP at 39.

²⁵⁴ HCP Handbook at 9-2.

²⁵⁵ HCP Handbook at 9-2.

Development of the HCP's biological goals are built on the foundation of broader conservation efforts at larger scales.²⁵⁶ By framing HCP goals within the context of larger conservation efforts, it should be clear how the HCP may affect the recovery of the species, further progress on large scale planning efforts, help build resilience and adaptive capacity for species to withstand future climatic change, and help protect large scale migration or movement corridors.

It is entirely unclear how the HCP will advance these important efforts. The HCP's biological goals are ill-defined and fail to address the biological needs of the species that will be impacted by the project. The goals include:

- Goal 1: Reduce on-going threats within the Mitigation Areas, and contribute to the recovery of federally listed pine rock land species by increasing their population size and enhancing long term viability
- Goal 2: Preserve and manage pine rocklands and rockland habitat within the CRC property
- Goal 3: Restore the on-site preserves and enhance the off-site mitigation area to promote recruitment and support long-term viability of pine rockland species
- Goal 4: Promote public education and awareness of pine rockland habitat and associated species

These goals leave the reader with countless questions. What are the on-going threats? How much will they be reduced? What does it mean to “contribute to the recovery of species?” How much of a population increase is to be expected? What does it mean to “enhance” or “support” long term viability? How is long-term viability even defined? How is “promoting recruitment” defined? There is also no indication that the preservation and management of habitat within Coral Reef Commons or the enhancement of off-site mitigation is intended to advance any larger scale conservation efforts. It is further unclear how promoting public education and awareness of pine rockland habitat and associated species addresses the biological needs of the species that will be impacted by the project.

The objectives, which are intended to articulate what is to be achieved, fail to provide any clarity. The Service states in its HCP Handbook that objectives need to be specific, measurable, achievable, result-oriented, and time-fixed.²⁵⁷ Instead, the objectives in the draft HCP lack any sort of specificity, direction, or means of measuring their success. Some are mere recitations of the goals. For example, the following three objectives are intended to implement Goal 1 (*Reduce on-going threats within the Mitigation Areas, and contribute to the recovery of federally listed pine rock land species by increasing their population size and enhancing long term viability*):

Objective 2: Provide connectivity from On-Site Preserves to adjacent pine rocklands and serve as a potential site for recruitment of pine rockland species,

²⁵⁶ HCP Handbook at 9-4.

²⁵⁷ HCP Handbook at 9-10.

thereby assisting in expanding population of listed species both on-site and in adjacent habitats.

Objective 3: Provide long-term protection and management of biological integrity and species diversity that is a characteristic of pine rocklands by preserving, restoring and managing the On-site Preserves and the Off-site Mitigation Area

Objective 4: Implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) measures for commercial and residential entities within the CRC Property to reduce impacts from human activity on the On-Site Conservation Areas

While providing connectivity sounds like a good thing, Objective 2 fails to articulate how establishing connectivity will “reduce ongoing threats within the mitigation areas” and “contribute to the recovery of federally listed pine rockland species by increasing their population size and enhancing long term viability.” How much connectivity and in what locations is required to actually advance recovery? Does it depend on the species? If so, to what extent? In addition, the objective only recognizes the *potential* for connectivity between on-site preserves and adjacent pine rocklands to serve as a site for recruitment “for pine rockland species”. Again, which species? All species? What if no recruitment actually occurs for some or all of the species? How does that impact recovery? Even if recruitment were to occur the objective fails to identify by what percentage the applicant anticipates population numbers would increase. The objective merely states that it would “assist” in “expanding a population of listed species both on-site and in adjacent habitats.”

Objective 3 suffers from the same infirmities. What does “provide long term protection and management of biological integrity and species diversity that is a characteristic of pine rocklands” actually mean? How does this translate into contributing to the recovery of federally listed species as set forth in Goal #1?

Objective 4 similarly fails to articulate how voluntary “best management practices” will reduce threats and advance species recovery.

For Goal #2 (*Preserve and manage pine rocklands and rockland hammock within the CRC Property in perpetuity*), Objective 4 states:

Minimize pesticide use to extent practicable by CRC/Master Association within the On-site Preserves and Stepping Stones

Again, what does it mean to “minimize pesticide use to the extent practicable”? By how much? In perpetuity?

And lastly, Objective 1 for Goal 4 is more or less a slightly longer recitation of the Goal.

Establish a community and outreach program within the CRC Property to promote awareness of pine rocklands and their importance, and to ensure the minimization of impacts to the On-site Conservation Area from daily operations

Just what do the Applicants hope will be achieved other than educating the community about the pine rocklands? How does this address the specific biological needs of the species and their habitat and minimize the impacts?

In creating their biological goals and objectives, the HCP Handbook directs applicants to avoid ambiguity, contain measurable elements that can readily be monitored to determine success or failure, develop objectives that are achievable and specify an end-result, and provide time periods during which they will be achieved and not be open-ended.²⁵⁸ The HCP Handbook contains numerous examples of objectives with measurable elements, linked to species specific biological needs, with clearly identified timelines for implementation.²⁵⁹ Climate change considerations should also be included.²⁶⁰ None of these essential elements are present in the Biological Goals and Objectives section in the draft HCP. Further, as explained in greater detail below, the conservation measures intended to achieve the objectives in support of the HCP's goals (avoidance, minimization, and mitigation) area inadequate, based on flawed assumptions, and lack a strong scientific basis. As a result, the conservation strategy lacks the necessary specificity, direction, and assurances for the Service to determine that the project has minimized and mitigated impacts to the extent practicable and that the project will not jeopardize the continued existence of these species as required under sections 10 and 7 of the ESA.

Additionally, the Applicants have not provided any specific information regarding the amount of take anticipated to result from the proposed activities. Thus, the proposed take is too general to meet the requirements for an ITP and HCP under the ESA. An ITP and corresponding HCP are required by law to include:

- (i) A complete description of the activity sought to be authorized;
- (ii) The common and scientific names of the species sought to be covered by the permit, as well as the number, age, and sex of such species, if known;
- (iii) A conservation plan that specifies:
 - (A) The impact that will likely result from such taking;
 - (B) What steps the applicant will take to monitor, minimize, and mitigate such impacts, the funding that will be available to implement such steps, and the procedures to be used to deal with unforeseen circumstances;
 - (C) What alternative actions to such taking the applicant considered and the reasons why such alternatives are not proposed to be utilized; and
 - (D) Such other measures that the Director may require as being necessary or appropriate for purposes of the plan²⁶¹

After considering the statutory and regulatory elements required for an ITP application and HCP, it is clear that the Applicants fail to provide a complete account of the proposed activities and sufficient information related to the number, age, and sex of the listed species to be included in the permit. The Applicants also fail to include sufficient information related to the anticipated

²⁵⁸ HCP Handbook at 9-10-9-11.

²⁵⁹ See HCP Handbook at 9-11.

²⁶⁰ See HCP Handbook at 9-12.

²⁶¹ 50 C.F.R. § 17.22(b)(1).

take for all listed species under the permit, as well as detailed steps that the applicant will take to monitor, minimize, and mitigate, the impacts. There simply is not enough information in the HCP to satisfy the requirements for an ITP and its corresponding HCP as set forth under the Section 10(a)(2)(A) of the ESA and the corresponding regulations.

D. The Applicants have not, to the Maximum Extent Practicable, Minimized and Mitigated the Impacts of the Take

Prior to authorizing an ITP or approving the corresponding HCP, the Service shall engage in formal consultation with itself to ensure that the species will not be jeopardized upon approval of the permits.²⁶² When the Service undergoes formal consultation, it shall provide information related to: 1) the action to be considered; 2) the specific area that will be affected by the action; 3) a description of the threatened and endangered species and/or critical habitat that may be affected by the action; 4) a description of the effects the action may have on the listed species, critical habitat, and an analysis of any cumulative effects; 5) relevant reports including biological assessments and/or environmental impact statements that have been prepared related to the action; and 6) and any relevant information related to the listed species, critical habitat, and proposed action.²⁶³

Here, it is clear that the proposed action, the authorization of an ITP and the approval of a corresponding HCP, will have adverse effects on the several threatened and endangered species. When considering the adverse effects, the Service must quantify the amount of take and habitat loss that it has authorized to date and analyze the impact of those authorizations on the survival and recovery of the species.²⁶⁴

Habitat in South Florida is in high demand for endangered species and developers alike. In South Florida, the population density has been higher than the statewide average since 1960 and in 2010 was estimated to reach 8.2 million people.²⁶⁵ As the South Florida population has increased, the pressure on endangered and threatened species and their habitats has also increased.²⁶⁶ In the past 50 years, it is estimated that more than 8 million acres of forest and wetlands have been cleared for development.²⁶⁷ Nearly all habitat types in South Florida have been devastated by South Florida's population boom.

The Service must examine the cumulative impacts of the take and habitat loss they have previously authorized to determine their effects on these species' recovery.

E. The Applicants Cannot Rely on Onsite and Off-site Mitigation to Overcome the Loss of Habitat

²⁶² *Id.* § 402.14(c).

²⁶³ *Id.* § 402.14(c)(1–6).

²⁶⁴ *See Id.* § 402.14.

²⁶⁵ *The South Florida Ecosystem*, U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERV., 2-19, <http://www.fws.gov/verobeach/msrppdfs/sfecosystem.pdf>.

²⁶⁶ *Id.* at 2-25.

²⁶⁷ *Id.*

The HCP's description of the "[p]roposed action covered by the Incidental Take Permit" only addresses the development of 86.49 acres and "all activities associated with such development,"²⁶⁸ and references the off-site mitigation area only in the context of a so-called "Conservation Program."²⁶⁹ The mention of the off-site mitigation area in the HCP is to offset impacts on the 86.49 acres and to seek take permission for land management activities; however, the off-site mitigation area has not been surveyed, the Applicants make little effort to describe the environmental baseline of that property, and the property is already subject to land use restrictions including the requirement to manage it for the benefit of the deltoid spurge. It is therefore entirely unclear why University of Miami is an applicant and how, absent some binding agreement between RAM and University of Miami, the off-site mitigation area could possibly be considered as mitigation for onsite impacts. Coral Reef Commons will occur on RCR property, no longer owned by University of Miami. University of Miami's interest lies in the ownership of the off-site mitigation, so it is not clear what ITP protections University of Miami are seeking. An applicant can only get mitigation credit if mitigation is performed by the applicant, not a third party.²⁷⁰

Habitat already under conservation is not a new commitment in response to need for ITP mitigation.²⁷¹ The ESA requires the applicant *will* minimize and mitigate, suggesting something actively being done and improving the conservation status of the species.²⁷² Furthermore, it is not clear if the species that Applicants are seeking incidental take protection coverage for also occur on the off-site University of Miami site. Therefore, it is not clear how preservation of this land will offset impacts. While burning could help restore the site, it is not clear how this results in protections for species that RAM Coral Reef will take in constructing and operating Coral Reef Commons. Mitigation measures must be rationally related to the level of take authorized by the permit.²⁷³ Here it is not clear what the nexus is.

According to NFC2012-012, in exchange for county land use approvals, 39.64 acres of Natural Forest Communities pine rockland habitat and 3.72 acres of NFC hardwood hammock habitat are already required to be "preserved in natural condition" pursuant to a covenant that runs with the land, including a controlled burn management regime.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ HCP at 80.

²⁶⁹ HCP at 81.

²⁷⁰ Section 10(a)(2)(B)(ii); *Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center v. NOAA*, _____ (N.D. Ca. 2005). *Sierra Club v. Babbitt*, 15 F. Supp. 2d 1282 (S.D. Ala. 1998).

²⁷¹ 16 USC 1539(a)(2)(B).

²⁷² See also 50 CFR 450.01.

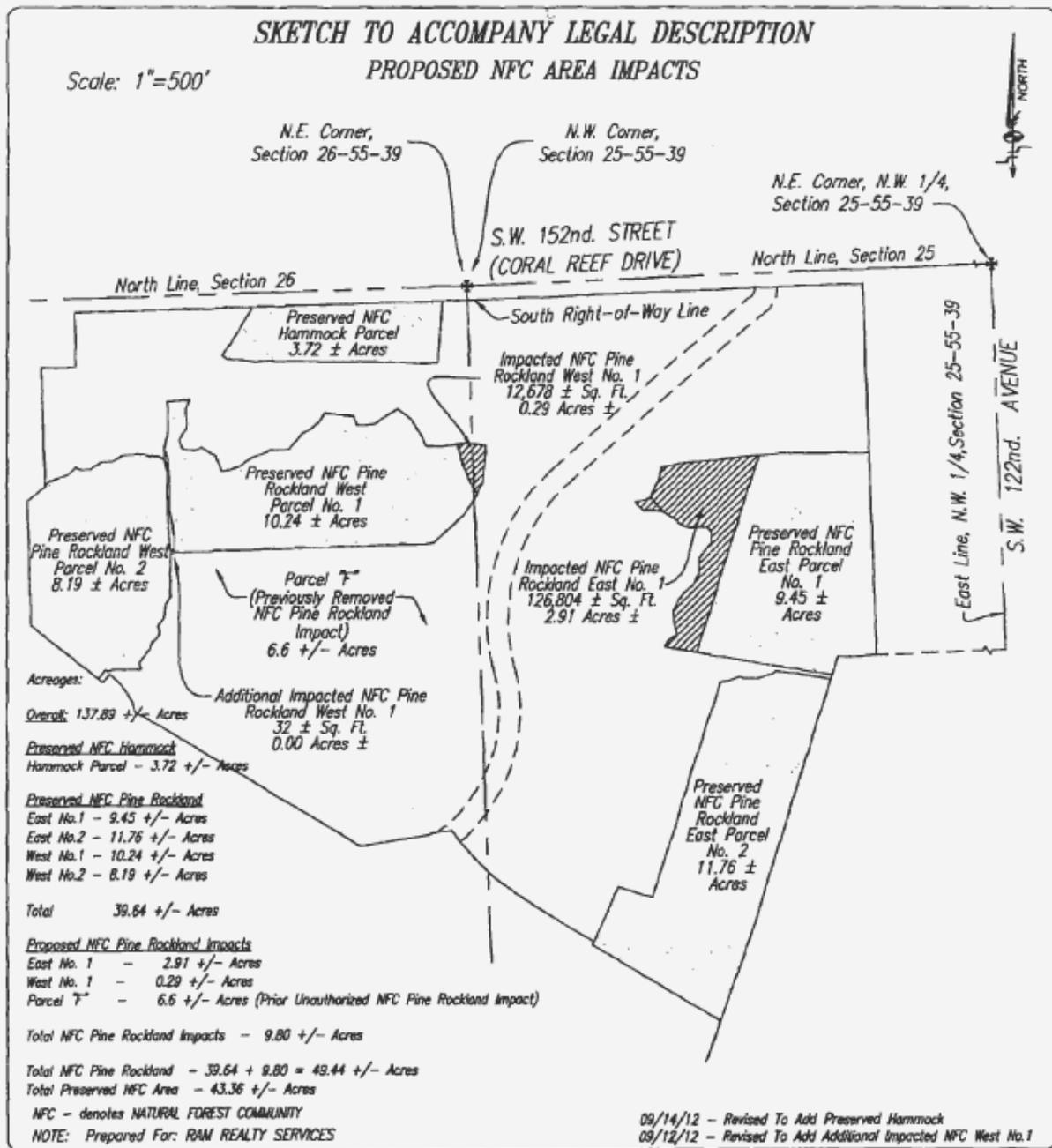
²⁷³ *National Wildlife Federation v. Norton*, 306 F. Supp. 2d 920, 928-9 (E.D. Cal. 2004).

²⁷⁴ HCP App. B.

EXHIBIT C

SKETCH TO ACCOMPANY LEGAL DESCRIPTION
PROPOSED NFC AREA IMPACTS

Scale: 1"=500'



Schwebke-Shiskin & Associates, Inc.
LAND SURVEYORS • ENGINEERS • LAND PLANNERS

(LB-87)

3240 CORPORATE WAY, MIRAMAR, FLORIDA 33025

TEL: BROWARD: (954) 435-2010 FAX: (954) 435-9288

THIS IS NOT A "LAND SURVEY."

ORDER NO.: 199230

DATE: June 22, 2012

SHEET 1 OF 1 SHEET(S)

F.B.: N.A.

PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION:
[Signature]
STATE OF
MARK STEVEN JOHNSON SECY-TREAS.
FLORIDA PROP. LAND SURVEYOR NO. 4775

Likewise, the off-site mitigation area is also already subject to deed restrictions. In 2000 a deed restriction prohibits construction, dumping, removal or destruction of vegetation, excavation, and must be managed consistent with a conservation management plan.²⁷⁵ The management plan requires the hand treatment of Burma reed and prescribed burns.

Despite these existing protections, the Applicants frequently refer to the habitat on the project site as degraded due to lack of management.²⁷⁶ Miami-Dade County Landscape Code, Chapter 18A apply where a permit is required for development. It is unclear whether University of Miami has previously applied for any development permits that would have triggered this code, but the Service should inquire. Regardless, permits sought by RAM Coral Reef certainly would have triggered this code, which requires that certain prohibited plant species shall not be planted and shall be removed.²⁷⁷ Additionally, the Miami-Dade Comprehensive Development Master Plan also appears to require that upland forests included on Miami-Dade County's Natural Forest Inventory, such as those on the project site, be maintained and protected.²⁷⁸

Not only is the University of Miami, a co-applicant here, directly responsible for the degraded state of the habitat, it now asks to be entrusted with rehabilitating the habitat, despite preexisting requirements to do so. Allowing the Applicants to receive credits for habitat they (1) should have already been taking care of pursuant to pre-existing legal requirements; and (2) have nonetheless allowed to degrade – would be the epitome of arbitrary and capricious decisionmaking.

Finally, the HCP offers less than a 2:1 mitigation ratio, both in terms of total acreage (86.49 to 51.41 acres for onsite only or 86.49 to 102.37 acres for onsite and off-site), and in using the novel habitat valuation approach (from 40.72 to 43.82 HVU). As stated above it appears that some of land identified as mitigation is already under some sort of conservation easement, so even the 86.49 to 51.41 and 86.49 to 102.37 may be overstating the compensatory mitigation ratio, and the HVU assessment as described below has many unproven and unlikely success values that likely also skew the supposed lift the project will provide for the mitigation habitat. Regardless of the ultimate mitigation ration, the Service must explain the biological rationale in determining it, particularly in light of a habitat type – pine rocklands – that are now so rare.

F. The Habitat Functional Assessment Violates the Requirements of the ESA

Much of the HCP is based on a habitat functional assessment developed by the Applicants in consultation with the Service. According to the HCP, this assessment was used to classify the quality of habitats on site, assist in the minimization of impacts and to quantify impacts and mitigation requirements.²⁷⁹

The Service should not rely on this assessment in determining whether the Applicants have adequately minimized and mitigated impacts to listed species. First, the HCP fails to adequately explain why take must be measured in the form of an ecological surrogate. Second, the use of

²⁷⁵ HCP App O, UM Richmond Camus Existing Deed Restriction - Off-site.

²⁷⁶ HCP at 2.

²⁷⁷ Ch. 18A-6(C)(1); 18A-12.

²⁷⁸ Miami-Dade County Comprehensive Development Master Plan, CON-8 and CON-9.

²⁷⁹ HCP at 82.

such a surrogate does not make the requisite correlation between species numbers, reproduction, and/or distribution and their habitat. Third, the methodology is unlike the assessments used for the Florida panther and wood stork in that it is not based on years of peer reviewed studies, is not for any one species, and was developed for the sole purpose of obtaining an incidental take permit. Consequently, reliance on this assessment could lead to *ad hoc* decisionmaking for future projects based on speculation and surmise—exactly what the Supreme Court cautioned against twenty years ago in the case, *Bennett v. Spear*. Lastly, due to the many flaws in this assessment the Service cannot fulfill its duties under the ESA to determine that the applicant has minimized and mitigated take to the maximum extent practicable.

In certain instances, like where it is impractical to detect or monitor take of individual species, habitat may be used as a surrogate, but its habitat, not habitat “value”. In this instance, the Applicants attempt to get around the issue that (1) the project will destroy a very rare and valuable habitat type for which there is no available compensation: pine rockland; and (2) that University of Miami has put its thumb on the scale by neglecting the habitat, and likely violating many obligations to maintain the habitat, so that the Applicants can now get credit for a supposed “lift” in habitat value via restoration.²⁸⁰ The Applicants created a novel pine rockland functional assessment by evaluating the quality of the land subject to the development using factors like open canopy, herbaceous flora, exposed limestone, fire frequency, invasive species, and habitat connectivity.²⁸¹ Several of these factors, including fire frequency and presence of invasive species are already within the direct control of the Applicants, and in the case of University of Miami, have been for decades. Applicants cannot now be allowed to cash in on their willful neglect of the property by holding hostage the possibility of doing the right thing, legally and morally, and managing the land for the benefit of the species for the ability to destroy that very same resource.

1. The HCP Does Not Adequately Explain Why An Ecological Surrogate is Appropriate

Ecological surrogates or habitat proxies may only be used when take cannot be quantified. To use a surrogate measure the Service must describe the causal link between the surrogate and take of the covered species, explain why it is not practical to express the amount or extent of anticipated take or to monitor take-related impacts in terms of number of individuals, and set a clear standard for determining when the level of anticipated take has been exceeded.²⁸²

The HCP does not adequately explain why it is impracticable to quantify the take of any of the species identified in the HCP: 8 animal species and 14 plant species. The HCP cites agency policy to use surrogates when species have a low detection probability, there are large temporal fluctuations in population numbers, there is a lack of information on a species, and when multiple species are being considered.²⁸³ But the HCP does not adequately explain why this is appropriate for any or all of the 22 species identified in the plan.

²⁸⁰ Service regulations regarding permit revocation state that willful violation of any state statute involving conditions of the permit or the laws or regulations governing the permitted activity shall be revoke. 50 C.F.R. 13.28. To the extent any of the Applicants’ failures amounts to a violation of an applicable law, the Service, on that basis alone, cannot grant the ITP.

²⁸¹ HCP at 82.

²⁸² HCP Handbook at 8-3.

²⁸³ HCP at 82.

Quantifying take was the preference of Congress when enacting section 10 of the ESA.²⁸⁴ Courts have emphasized that take must be quantified unless it is impracticable.²⁸⁵

2. *The Ecological Surrogate in the Form of a Habitat Functional Assessment Does Not Make the Requisite Correlation Between Species Needs and Their Habitat*

Take may be measured in the form of an ecological surrogate when it is impracticable to quantify take, but there must be a correlation between species numbers, reproduction, and/or distribution and their habitat. This is necessary to ensure that there is a trigger to reinitiate consultation if ecological conditions deteriorate and habitat based mitigation is not offsetting impacts to species.

The proposed ecological proxy for this project is not correlated with the specific population numbers and or trends, reproductive requirements, and/or distribution of species on site and within the off-site mitigation area. The needs of the affected species affected by the project are diverse within the pine rocklands habitat. Some benefit certain species more than others. For example, butterflies are benefited by proximity to and abundance of host plants, nectaring plants, open sunny areas, and shelter from wind. Whereas bats need roosting sites, meaning more canopy, while the HCP calls for less canopy area-wide. The HVU also fails to take into account the value of degraded habitat for species like the bat. Meanwhile, tiger beetles need sandy areas, and white-crowned pigeons need stop over sites even if it is small patches of canopy trees, gopher tortoise need open areas for burrowing and an assortment of plants for foraging.

It is unclear if the habitat that will be destroyed contains certain features that provide unique benefits to certain species in a quantity and quality that exceed what will be in the preserve areas post-project. It is measured strictly based on generalized values area-wide with no fine filter. One cannot tell at the species level if on-site and off-site preservation is enough. Moreover, there is no trigger to reinitiate consultation, and no species-specific performance measures. There are no pre-project or post-project population numbers or if this cannot be quantified an ecological surrogate that correlates with the biological needs of a particular species. For example to ensure the survival and recovery of a local population a certain amount of habitat must be preserved or a minimum number of roost sites (for example) must be maintained. If that declines post-project consultation must be reinitiated and more may need to be done.

3. *The Habitat Functional Assessment Cannot Be Compared to the Panther and Wood Stork Habitat Assessments Used By the Service in Other Consultations*

The proposed habitat functional assessment is not based on a standardized methodology that will apply to all applicants or provide any degree of predictability. It will lead to varying degrees of impacts and mitigation and regulatory uncertainty with no safeguards in place to ensure this project or future actions will not jeopardize a species. The “obvious purpose” of the best

²⁸⁴ H.R. Rep. No. 97-567, at 27 (1982).

²⁸⁵ See *Oregon Natural Resources Council v. Allen*, 476 F.3d 1031 (9th Cir. 2007); *Miccosukee Tribe of Indians v. United States*, 566 F.3d 1257 (11th Cir. 2009). See also Jason Totoiu, *Quantifying, Monitoring, and Tracking “Take” Under the Endangered Species Act: The Promise of a More Informed Approach to Consultation*, 41 *Envtl. L.* 165 (2011) (discussing why quantifying take helps the Service to better monitor and track take under the ESA).

available science requirement “is to ensure that the ESA not be implemented haphazardly, on the basis of speculation or surmise.”²⁸⁶

The Habitat Functional Assessment developed by the Applicants is easily distinguishable from panther and wood stork habitat assessments. The latter are species specific, taking into account unique biological considerations and requirements-reproduction/foraging/prey availability; the former is a broad assessment of a type of habitat with no species level management considerations with no fine filter.

Panther habitat assessment methodology assigns a functional value for various land cover types. Values are derived from peer reviewed studies of panther-habitat relationships using six statistical rankings. The rankings were then averaged and from there land cover types are assigned a habitat suitability value in a GIS.

The HCP’s assessment does not link various land cover types to the specific species and their needs. Nor is there any indication that this valuation system has been peer reviewed. There is no base ratio that provides for the protection of a sufficient acreage of habitat for a particular species. It does not take into account how much habitat has been preserved, its quality, its function, or its location or how much more needs to be protected and how much is available. It does not take into account rate of yearly loss of habitat (development) across a broad geographic region, and the location of that habitat. All of this goes into determining what is needed to recover the population of a species; there is no analysis here of what is necessary to offset impacts to individual species populations. Here there is no consideration of the ratio of conservation lands to impacted lands necessary to support each species or the amount of acreage needed to support a particular population.

It is further unclear how each of the characteristics has a unique value if the Applicants are basically concluding that one characteristic, for example, fire, is going to be used to improve other characteristics, like getting rid of invasives, restoring ground cover, improving soil conditions, etc. Moreover, given the heavy weighting toward improved habitat value based on fire management, there should be assurances that this method will be implemented.

There is no explanation as to how the Applicants delineated the polygons.²⁸⁷ And despite the description of how habitat connectivity and fragmentation was scored,²⁸⁸ it is unclear why polygons that become more isolated after development experienced an increase in valuation score for fragmentation.²⁸⁹ Here the functional assessment was analyzed using a metric that assigned a relative value “with particular attention to obligate species.”²⁹⁰ However, what is important to one species, is not valuable to another.

²⁸⁶ *Bennett v. Spear*, 520 U.S. 154 (1997).

²⁸⁷ HCP at 82.

²⁸⁸ HCP at 87.

²⁸⁹ Compare polygon 60: before .64 and after .8; polygon 61: before .49 and after .81; polygon 66: before .66 and after .71; polygon 79: before .63 and after .87; polygon 81: before .44 and after .54.

²⁹⁰ HCP at 82.

Further, there is a lack of certainty that prescribed fire will be possible post construction. The EA acknowledges that “prescribed fire would not be applied to the Southern Corridor due to its size,” and instead “mechanical and chemical treatments would occur in most areas as part of the initial site management to address reduction of fuel load and exotics.”²⁹¹ There’s no doubt that “[t]he use of prescribed fire is the most critical habitat management tool needed to ensure the survival of rare plant species.” URS 2007 p. 33-34. However, “finding personnel to conduct prescribed fires in Miami-Dade County has been a major obstacle in the proper management of pine rocklands.” URS 2007 at 39. Additionally, “construction of hospitals, schools, apartments, and hotels around [pine rocklands] sites should be discouraged because of conflicts with smoke generation during prescribed fires”²⁹² Given the construction of 900 units, retail, and a school, it seems extraordinarily optimistic, and in fact flies in the face of common sense and past practice that prescribed burning will be a viable land management tool. Therefore, without further support, assurances, or explanation of how the Applicants would conduct prescribed burns, the improvement value of 1.0 for post construction polygons should be changed to preconstruction values of 0.

Also, there appears to be a double accrediting of the removal of exotics which is often times directly related to percent native vegetation cover, and *vice versa*. Both the non-native vegetation and the native vegetation values enjoy the highest weighted value of 0.20.

Finally, the post-construction valuation for exotics, canopy cover, and herbaceous cover are all were awarded the aspirational, and likely overly optimistic value of 1.0. The Service should review the HVU with these considerations in mind and provide a detailed explanation as to how it can use this flawed, opaque model to satisfy its ESA obligations.

G. The Applicants have not Ensured that Adequate Funding for the Plan will be Provided

The Applicants state that the operation of the residential and commercial units will fund the conservation elements of the HCP.²⁹³ That “it will take five years [to achieve] long term maintenance condition”; however, there are no facts or science to support this assertion. This calls into question the financial calculations made in Chapter 11. Further, with respect to evidence of financial commitments, Exhibit L is merely a form of letter of credit with no details and no amounts, and Appendix N (the Draft Conservation Encumbrance - On Site CRC) is missing the essential details. Instead, the Applicants have stated that they will provide draft documents demonstrating their “financial assurance” to the Service for its “review and approval” at some future date.

H. The Take will Appreciably Reduce the Likelihood of the Survival and Recovery of the Species in the Wild

²⁹¹ EA at 76.

²⁹² URS Corp. 2007 at 31 – URS Corporation, The Institute for Regional Conservation, and Muller and Associates, Inc. 2007. Miami Dade County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program Management Plan, Part II: Management of specific habitat types, Chapter 1: The pine rockland habitat. Submitted to Environmentally Endangered Lands Program, Miami, Florida by URS Corporation.

²⁹³ HCP at 10.

The ESA provides for the issuance of an ITP only where the proposed take will not “reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild.”²⁹⁴ The Service must ensure that any proposed action it authorizes is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of their critical habitat.²⁹⁵ Service regulations state:

Jeopardize the continued existence of” means to engage in an action that reasonably would be expected, directly or indirectly, to reduce appreciably the likelihood of both the survival and recovery of a listed species in the wild by reducing the reproduction, numbers, or distribution of that species.²⁹⁶

As described throughout these comment, the evaluation of the species, habitat, and mitigation are deficient in numerous ways and even taken at face value could result in the jeopardy of listed species on the project site. Nothing in the analysis appears to account for species’ recovery or to take into account the long term, permanent nature of the project.²⁹⁷ The analysis discounts the value of exiting habitat, ignores the Applicants’ past degradation of the habitat, and optimistically overestimates the Applicants’ ability to restore the habitat, particularly through fire management. Finally, although plans for a school are mentioned several times in the HCP, no specific plans or analysis of that impact are described at all in the EA or HCP.

VI. Compliance with NEPA

NEPA ensures that federal agencies will have available and carefully consider detailed information concerning environmental impacts, and guarantees that the relevant information will be made available to the public and other agencies that may also play a role in both the decisionmaking process and implementation of that decision.²⁹⁸

A. The EA and HCP do not Consider a Reasonable Range of Alternatives

NEPA requires a “detailed statement” of “alternatives to the proposed action.”²⁹⁹ The alternatives analysis should address “the environmental impacts of the proposal and the alternatives in comparative form, thus sharply defining the issues and providing a clear basis for the choice among options by the decisionmaker and the public.”³⁰⁰ This analysis must “rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives.”³⁰¹

The purpose of this section is “to insist that no major federal project should be undertaken without intense consideration of other more ecologically sound courses of action, including

²⁹⁴ 16 U.S.C. 1539(a)(2)(B)(iv); *Friends of Endangered Species, Inc. v. Jantzen*, 760 F.2d 976, 982 (9th Cir. 1985).

²⁹⁵ 16 U.S.C. 1536(a)(2).

²⁹⁶ 50 C.F.R. 402.02.

²⁹⁷ HCP at 8. The Applicants requested an ITP for only 30 years, despite the long term, permanent nature of a mixed use development.

²⁹⁸ *Robertson v. Method Valley Citizens*, 490 U.S. 332, 349 (1989).

²⁹⁹ 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(c).

³⁰⁰ 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14.

³⁰¹ 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14(a).

shelving the entire project, or of accomplishing the same result by entirely different means.”³⁰² The Council on Environmental Quality describes the alternatives requirement as the “heart” of the environmental impact statement.³⁰³ While an agency is not obliged to consider every alternative to every aspect of a proposed action, reviewing courts have insisted that the agency “consider such alternatives to the proposed action as may partially or completely meet the proposals goal.”³⁰⁴ A viable but unexamined alternative renders an EIS or EA inadequate.³⁰⁵

The draft HCP identifies six alternatives. These alternatives include:

- Alternative 1-No Action Alternative
- Alternative 2-Redevelopment Only/No Restoration
- Alternative 3-Maximum Build-out
- Alternative 4-County Approved Zoning in 2013
- Alternative 5-County Approved Zoning/Stepping Stones and Southern Corridor
- Alternative 6-Reduced Commercial/Increased Preserve (Preferred Alternative)

This is not a reasonable range of alternatives as NEPA requires. Aside from the no action alternative, there is a redevelopment option of 25.4 developed acres, three alternatives consisting of 92-100 developed acres, and a preferred alternative of more than 86 developed acres.

The Applicants summarily reject the redevelopment alternative as not feasible because it does not meet the project purpose of constructing “an environmentally conscious, economically viable, mixed-use development.” As the redevelopment alternative would have mixed use and impact significantly fewer acres of pine rockland habitat than the preferred alternative, the issue appears to be one of economic viability. The Applicants claim the project would not be commercially viable because there is not room for a large anchor tenant but there does not appear to be any financial analysis in the HCP to support this claim.³⁰⁶ Moreover, the Service may not blindly adopt the applicant’s economic rationale as determinative.³⁰⁷ NEPA regulations make it clear that “the emphasis is on what is ‘reasonable’ rather than on whether the proponent or applicant likes it or is itself capable of carrying out a particular alternative.”³⁰⁸ “Reasonable alternatives include those that are practical or feasible from the technical and economic standpoint and using common sense rather than simply desirable from the standpoint of the applicant.”³⁰⁹ “A cursory dismissal of a proposed alternative, unsupported by agency analysis, does not help an agency satisfy its NEPA duty to consider a reasonable range of alternatives.”³¹⁰

³⁰² *Environmental Defense Fund v. Corps of Engineers*, 492 F.2d 1123, 1135 (5th Cir. 1974).

³⁰³ 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14.

³⁰⁴ *Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc. v. Callaway*, 524 F.2d 79, 93 (2d Cir. 1975).

³⁰⁵ See *Muckleshoot Indian Tribe v. U.S. Forest Service*, 177 F.3d 800, 814 (9th Cir. 1999)(quoting *Citizens for a Better Henderson v. Hodel*, 768 F.2d 1051, 1057 (9th Cir. 1985)).

³⁰⁶ See Draft HCP at 70.

³⁰⁷ *Southwest Center for Biological Diversity v. Bartel*, 470 F. Supp. 2d at 1158.

³⁰⁸ CEQ Forty Most Asked Questions Guidelines Concerning CEQ’s NEPA Regulations, Question 2a (Mar. 23, 1981).

³⁰⁹ CEQ Forty Most Asked Questions Guidelines Concerning CEQ’s NEPA Regulations, Question 2a (Mar. 23, 1981).

³¹⁰ *Environmental Protection Information Center v. U.S. Forest Service*, 234 Fed. Appx. 440, 443, 2007 WL 1417163 (9th Cir. 2007).

Further, Alternatives 3, 4, and 5 all have the same amount of commercial development. Alternatives 4 and 5 also have the same number of residential units. As all three alternatives only differ by a matter of a few acres in the total amount of developed property, they are essentially all maximum build out or near-build out scenarios.³¹¹ In rejecting out of hand the redevelopment option and putting forth three substantially similar alternatives for consideration, the applicant has not provided “a clear basis for choice among options by the decisionmaker and the public” as NEPA requires. 40 CFR 1502.14. Courts have also routinely rejected environmental impact statements that fail to provide a true range of alternatives or put forth substantially similar alternatives for consideration. See *Muckleshoot Indian Tribe v. U.S. Forest Service*, 177 F.3d 800, 813 (9th Cir. 1999); *Curry v. U.S. Forest Service*, 988 F. Supp. 541 (W.D. Penn. 1997).

There is also no consideration of alternatives that fall between the 25.4-acre redevelopment only alternative and the more than 86-acre preferred alternative. The draft HCP merely states, “other alternatives were considered and rejected earlier in the process, and therefore, not brought forward for in-depth consideration.”³¹² But NEPA demands more. It is not enough that the applicant considered and rejected out-of-hand alternatives in brief statements in the EA. In *Bob Marshall Alliance*, 852 F.2d 1223, 1228-29 (9th Cir. 1988), the court explained:

The goal of the statute is to ensure “that federal agencies infuse in project planning a thorough consideration of environmental values.” *Conner v. Burford*, 836 F.2d [1521], 1532 [(9th Cir. 1988)]. The consideration of alternatives requirement furthers that goal by guaranteeing that agency decisionmakers “[have] before [them] and take [] into proper account all possible approaches to a particular project (including total abandonment of the project) which would alter the environmental impact and the cost-benefit balance.” *Calvert Cliff’s Coordinating Committee, Inc. v. United States Atomic Energy Commission*, 449 F.2d 1109, 1114 (D.D.C. 1971). NEPA’s requirement that alternatives be studied, developed, and described both guides the substance of environmental decisionmaking and provides evidence that the mandated decisionmaking process has actually taken place. *Id.* Informed and meaningful consideration of alternatives- including the no action alternative-is thus an integral part of the statutory scheme.

It is entirely unclear whether any such less damaging alternatives were considered by the applicant. To the extent they were but dismissed because they did not quite meet the applicant’s economic goals for the project, NEPA “does not permit the agency to eliminate from discussion or consideration a whole range of alternatives, merely because they would achieve only some of the purposes of a multipurpose project.”³¹³ Without a careful and fully informed examination of a range of alternatives-including the redevelopment alternative and other alternatives that result

³¹¹ See Draft HCP at 74.

³¹² Draft HCP at 69.

³¹³ *Town of Matthews v. U.S. Dep’t of Transp.*, 527 F.Supp. 1055 (W.D. N.C. 1981); see also, *North Buckhead Civic Assoc. v. Skinner*, 903 F.2d 1533, 1542 (11th Cir. 1990) (a discussion of alternatives that would only partly meet the goals of the project may allow the decision maker to conclude that meeting part of the goal with less environmental impact may be worth the tradeoff with a preferred alternative that has greater environmental impact.”).

in fewer acres of development than the preferred alternative, the NEPA analysis is “hopelessly skewed” in favor of a preferred alternative that (as explained below) will have significant impacts to a number of species and in many respects is not that much unlike those that call for a maximum build out or near build out of the site.³¹⁴ Moreover, without a reasonable range of alternatives and an independent analysis of the economic feasibility of alternatives (such as the redevelopment only option) that would result in fewer impacts to pine rocklands, the Service cannot make an informed determination that the “applicant will, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize and mitigate the impacts of such taking.”³¹⁵

Finally, the Applicants’ characterization of the no action alternative that no restoration will occur ignores the existing obligations the Applicants are already under, and likely in violation of, to properly manage the land.³¹⁶

B. An EIS Must be Prepared for the Proposed Action

NEPA requires federal agencies to prepare an environmental impact statement for proposed actions that may significantly affect the quality of the environment.³¹⁷ Coral Reef Commons would result in significant environmental impacts, requiring an EIS.

The Council on Environmental Quality’s NEPA regulations identify a number of “significance factors” that federal agencies must consider in determining whether there may be significant impacts that would trigger the need for an EIS.³¹⁸

- Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas
- The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial
- The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks
- The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration
- The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA.

A number of these factors would be triggered by Coral Reef Commons, requiring that an EIS be prepared.

The pine rocklands are unique unto themselves as described above. In addition to representing the last 2% of this habitat type, it is host to numerous imperiled species that exist nowhere else

³¹⁴ See *Commonwealth of Mass. v. Clark*, 594 F. Supp. 1373, 1379 (D. Mass. 1984).

³¹⁵ 16 USC 1539(a)(2)(B)(ii).

³¹⁶ HCP at 69.

³¹⁷ 42 U.S.C. 4332(C).

³¹⁸ 40 C.F.R. 1508.27(b).

on Earth. For that reason alone the impact of the project on pine rocklands is significant and warrants a deeper environmental analysis through an EIS.

As evidenced by the thousands of letter and comments in opposition to this project, the project is highly controversial. The Service should have conducted a public hearing and at this stage should evaluate the impacts of the project through an EIS.

Regarding effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks, nearly all of the proposed restoration that serves as mitigation for the project depends on fire management. The property has not been fire managed (perhaps ever?) by the Applicants and as stated above, may face difficulty in managing the property with fire. This will become even more difficult and perhaps pose human health risks with the addition of 900 residential units, retail, and a school. The fire management plans, their feasibility, assurances of possibility, proof of insurance, should all be required of the Applicants and analyzed under an EIS.

The use of a habitat valuation assessment, particularly the one developed here, may establish a precedent for future actions, especially considering the proposed Miami Wilds project that will be on adjacent, similar habitat. If this proxy for habitat and species take is to be used here, it should be more carefully evaluated through peer review, or in phases of development, which should be reviewed in an EIS.

There is no question that the proposed action “may adversely affect endangered species and their habitat.”³¹⁹ As described throughout these comments, the on and off-site mitigation are wholly inadequate to compensate for the harm, harassment and habitat loss and fragmentation that the project will cause.

Conclusion

The Applicants’ proposed HCP has the potential to impact several federally listed species in a variety of ways: it will further fragment, degrade, and destroy important habitat for these species making it difficult for each of them to shelter, feed, and reproduce; it may disrupt the slow and fragile recovery of the species; it may increase the mortality of these species as the result of vehicular collisions; it may increase the tension between these species and the area’s human population; and it could lead to other unforeseen and unexpected impacts to species we have such little information about. For these reasons and many others stated above, we request that you do not authorize the take of any of these species as proposed in the HCP. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (727)490-9190 or jlopez@biologicaldiversity.org with any questions about this comment letter.

³¹⁹ 40 C.F.R. 1508.27(b)(9).

Sincerely,



Jaclyn Lopez, Florida Director
Center for Biological Diversity



jlopez@biologicaldiversity.org

P.S. In lieu of emailing or mailing you copies of the works cited, I've uploaded them to an electronic document transfer service and provided you instructions via email for downloading them. Please let me know if you'd like to receive them a different way.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Common
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:07:39 PM

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in opposition to the proposed development called Coral Reef Commons. I have reviewed the map and read scientific data. I also recently flew over South Florida to the airport in Ft. Lauderdale. It was stark to see the divide between the remaining green, natural areas and the intense development that we have experienced in South Florida. I also recently toured Vizcaya and drove through less dense areas of Coral Gables. And I study the water situation for our area.

In light of the scarcity of remaining undeveloped land and the dramatic impact this development would have on endangered and rare species in what was once the lush natural land of South Florida, I urge the Service to refuse to issue permits for the proposed project. Once the remaining bit of Pine Rocklands are gone, we will have damaged our eco-system, made ourselves more vulnerable to hurricanes and taken away from the natural diversity so critical to all living beings, including humans.

Sincerely,

Christelle Martin
Palm Beach, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Developmentw
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 6:30:11 PM

I am writing to express my strong objection to the commercial development of endangered pine Rockland in Miami Dade County (Richmond tract) due to the construction of the referenced shopping center/ apartment complex. While I agree that creating economic opportunities and affordable housing are critical to the community' vitality, allowing the destruction a portion of this biodiverse habitat for commercial development is just wrong. I am asking you to deny the current proposed hcp for the property and prohibit or at least limit the commercial development of this endangered tract.

Thank you for your consideration of what I am sure is just one of many similar appeals.

Sincerely,

Steven Duncan

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: Crc_hcp@fws.gov; Ashleigh Blackford
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft HCP - inadequate consideration of the threat of Sea Level Rise
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:53:36 PM

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford,

This email is to express my concern, one among many, with the assertion made in the Coral Reef Commons HCP ***that the project will not be impacted by climate change***. This conclusion is completely short sighted, based upon unrealistic projections of sea level rise and lack of thorough analysis of the resulting impacts. In the coming decades, human and non-human populations alike will experience severe habitat degradation in the low lying areas of Miami-Dade county, like the Richmond Pine Rocklands, due to climate change.

Considering the threat of habitat destruction and degradation from sea level rise, allowing human development in the largest remaining tract of Pine Rocklands jeopardizes the future of the many endangered and threatened species for which this property is critical habitat.

The HCP bases its conclusion that the project will not be impacted by climate change on the use of a 2' projected rise in sea levels by 2060, which falls below the upper range of sea level rise for this time frame. The upper range is recommended for projects that meet the following criteria:

- not easily removable
- has a long design life
- interdependent; contains residential and commercial development clearly intended for long-term use

For projects that meet this criteria, the upper range of the following projections is recommended.

- By 2030, 6 to 8 inches above 1992 levels
- By 2060, 14 to 34 inches above 1992 levels
- By 2100, 31 to 81 inches above 1992 levels

Data from the past ten years in Miami-Dade County indicates a much higher than global average rise in seas, further confirming that properties in this area are more likely to experience sea level rise at the highest end of the range. ***But even at 2' of sea level rise, the consequences to human, plant and animal species in the Richmond Pine Rocklands are vastly understated.***

Given the almost certain loss of habitat due to climate change, allowing human development in this remaining "lifeboat habitat" upon which so many species count for survival, is tantamount to allowing for their extinction, something the USFWS, under NEPA, is tasked to prevent.

I ask that you reject the draft HCP from Coral Reef Commons for, among other reasons, its inadequate analysis and recognition of this threat.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Erin Clancy

From: [REDACTED]
To: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; David_dell@fws.gov
Cc: Crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft HCP: Inadequate Outreach Plan
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:12:12 PM

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford,

I believe the Coral Reef Commons' Habitat Conservation Plan has significant flaws and should not be accepted in its current state.

Among the many flaws outlined by other comment letters, there is not enough substance to the education and outreach plans outlined in the HCP. The educational programs do not have adequate outreach measures for contractors, construction personnel, or residents. Educating these groups is integral to mitigation and reducing the take of Covered Species during the development and settling of the CRC property.

Construction Personnel and Contractors

Construction personnel are the most likely to come into contact with and "take" Covered Species during development but education initiatives for them are only covered in five sentences of the HCP (6.2.2.2 p.97). The only education provided for workers is a copy of the ITP, HCP, and identification material provided to the general and subcontractors. As it stands, the HCP requires construction personnel to educate themselves to ensure that they are in compliance with the HCP, ITP, and best management practices (BMP). Reading these materials is completely voluntary and therefore undermines the intent of ensuring personnel are informed and knowledgeable. Incidental take mitigation for this HCP relies heavily on self-policing and compliance. If reading these materials is not mandatory there is no guarantee in personnel compliance. Compulsory lectures need to be considered as it would more efficiently disseminate information and allow personnel to ask questions. Construction personnel will come into contact with Covered Species and USFWS should require CRC to develop a more comprehensive education plan for construction personnel.

Contractor education is also insufficient. All contractors will have an initial meeting with the Preserve Biologist to "discuss the specifics of conducting work within this habitat type" (See 6.2.4.3 of HCP). This phrasing is vague and does not specify how and if the Preserve Biologist will explicitly discuss the Covered Species. Reducing incidental take in this HCP relies on contractors to disseminate information and ensure compliance. A more comprehensive education plan is required in order to ensure the contractors can apply BMPs.

Residents

The community outreach section of the HCP contains a wide breadth of information for residents but falls short on application. According to the HCP, education will cover: pine

rockland habitat, Covered Species, prescribed fires and their importance, pest management practices, and HCP requirements for residents and businesses. Outreach on these subjects is limited to posting educational information in public spaces and providing pamphlets and identification materials but does not propose any interactive outreach (7.3 p. 111-112 of HCP). Residents will be educated on indigo snakes, but the HCP does not go into further detail on education (Section 6.2.3 p.98 of HCP). This presents a problem as it puts the labor of educating the community on to the residents themselves.

Education should be compulsory, as people taking up residence on the CRC property will provide stressors on the pine rocklands and Covered Species. Interactive outreach methods (eg. seminars, identification activities) need to be considered as they would encourage the community to learn about the pine rocklands and give them a stake in protecting their On-site Preserve and the Covered Species.

The current educational measures outlined in the HCP are insufficient. USFWS needs to require that the HCP develop a more comprehensive outreach program in order to ensure the compliance of mitigation measures.

I ask that USFWS reject the draft HCP from Coral Reef Commons due to the inadequacies of their outreach plan and other issues contained within it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alison Enchelmaier

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:54:38 PM

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to you today regarding the endangered pine rockland, Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.

As a resident of Miami-Dade County Florida for the past 38 years, I have seen how over-development has put in peril our natural habitats and native species. But for the Pine Rocklands we have reached a critical mass where we cannot afford to lose anymore ground, literally and figuratively. The "high ground" in South Florida, it was the first areas to be developed and now we are down to just 2% of the original habitat. It is home to several endemic and endangered species.

It is not reasonable to just set aside a piece of this tract for preservation. We need to save the entire tract, for the unique wildlife and flora, endangered and threatened plants and animals that currently thrive here.

Please help us be stewards of our children's future and preserve this last native habitat. We cannot afford to endanger it anymore. We do not need another concrete strip mall especially when it will harm and infringe upon a globally imperiled habitat like the Pine Rocklands.

Please deny the incidental take permit for this project. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Dolores Perera

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:38:22 PM

This letter is in regard to Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The history of Miami's Pine Rocklands can be described as death by a billion cuts. This unique habitat once dominated Miami's Coastal Ridge. As virtually the only high ground - above the fresh wetlands of sawgrass and cypress and the salt wetlands of Mangroves, and above hurricane storm-surge, it was the only land available to early pioneers and later waves of settlers.

First there were homesteads and farms. Agriculture for export began to expand. Beginning around 1850 with the establishment of Lemon City, a settlement began to grow. Settlements along the Miami River, in Coconut Grove and Cutler provided ports.

There were thousands of acres of land... especially Pineland... so why worry?

Then Flagler's railroad arrived, and Miami became a resort destination. Within a few years, a land-boom exploded. The Pines were harvested mercilessly as a building material, and acre after acre were taken for homes, streets, stores, industry, tourism and agriculture.

Over the next 100 years, land booms came and went. Population pressure grew. Heavy equipment became increasingly powerful. Tract housing development dominated, leading to complete removal of all plants and trees.

As a result, around 186,000 acres were wiped off the map, and with them went virtually every plant, tree, mammal, bat, bird, reptile, insect, tiger beetle, etc. Only 2% remains, so every remaining acre is extraordinarily valuable.

When the University of Miami (UM) was given the Richmond Pine Rocklands, it was with the proviso that they would provide stewardship to the tract, protecting its priceless value. They broke that commitment year after year and decade after decade.

UM excluded their own faculty from assessing the biodiversity of the Pine Rocklands because the faculty would have held their University accountable in the Faculty Senate. Instead, they hired outside consultants who could be muzzled with non-disclosure agreements

When a fire broke out there, the outside consultants identified a prime opportunity to remove invasive exotic species such as Burma reed and Brazilian pepper. Not only did UM fail to take appropriate and responsible action, they suppressed the publication of these reports to shirk their responsibility for this blatant neglect.

The public has a right to know about UM's destructive policies, breaking covenants, and allowing these public resources to become damaged. Consultant records should be subpoenaed, and made public record. Legal protection and financial incentives should be provided to whistle-blowers. We-the-People have a right to know.

This systematic policy of "demolition by neglect" is now being used to justify the complete demolition of many acres under this HCP. While it is true that this site is deeply infested by invasive exotics, it is by no means lost.

Fire is essential to the health of Pine Rocklands. Any HCP that could curtail or limit the use of controlled burns is an unconscionable extension of "demolition by neglect". If retail and residential development is embedded in this habitat, controlled burns will become impossible. That is unacceptable.

Based on my professional experiences with the removal of invasive exotic plants and trees, an aggressive campaign to control and remove the invasives would be completely successful. In fact, our organization has discovered that following fire, Burma reed becomes extremely easy to remove manually. I would be happy to share this knowledge and our methods with a responsible agency doing stewardship in the Pine Rocklands.

The numerous endangered species known to exist there are already sufficiently documented to stop the destruction of this habitat. It appears to be the only remaining refuge of the Miami Tiger Beetle.

The HCP fails to adequately protect this priceless tract. These are some of the reasons*:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected:developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is 1.23:1 at most. This is not within the "range of reason", especially for a project that amounts to the taking of a major remnant portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is essential to this habitat, but it is not feasible with the planned 900 apartments, a Walmart, mall, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." No proposed alternatives provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative). Off-site mitigation is not acceptable, since no habitat restoration can fully replace such priceless natural resources.

Large tracts of Pine Rocklands - with their greater capacity for biodiversity - are priceless. This is the last and largest tract outside the boundaries of Everglades National Park. Please take all necessary steps to stop this development from moving forward. It must be preserved for future generations.

Sincerely,

Mirka Szlezak
Speaking up for America Environmental group

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:29:02 PM

This letter is in regard to Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.

Because Mr. Van Leer can put it so much more eloquently, I will copy and paste what he wrote. In short, I do not support the proposed development project for the Coral Reef Commons land and hope you reconsider.

Pine Rocklands are exceedingly and increasingly rare and we should be doing what we can to protect and preserve what's left of this fractured habitat.

Sincerely,
Nicole Cabral

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I write this as a resident of Miami for 47 years, and as the leader of a non-profit with 9 years directly relevant experience in habitat stewardship and conservation. Our projects include the creation of Pine Rocklands, which are now used as proof of concept in the masterplanning of habitat at Vizcaya Museum & Gardens in Miami.

The history of Miami's Pine Rocklands can be described as death by a billion cuts. This unique habitat once dominated Miami's Coastal Ridge. As virtually the only high ground - above the fresh wetlands of sawgrass and cypress and the salt wetlands of Mangroves, and above hurricane storm-surge, it was the only land available to early pioneers and later waves of settlers.

First there were homesteads and farms. Agriculture for export began to expand. Beginning around 1850 with the establishment of Lemon City, a settlement began to grow. Settlements along the Miami River, in Coconut Grove and Cutler provided ports. There were thousands of acres of land... especially Pineland... so why worry?

Then Flagler's railroad arrived, and Miami became a resort destination. Within a few years, a land-boom exploded. The Pines were harvested mercilessly as a building material, and acre after acre were taken for homes, streets, stores, industry, tourism and agriculture.

Over the next 100 years, land booms came and went. Population pressure grew. Heavy equipment became increasingly powerful. Tract housing development dominated, leading to complete removal of all plants and trees.

As a result, around 186,000 acres were wiped off the map, and with them went virtually every plant, tree, mammal, bat, bird, reptile, insect, tiger beetle, etc. Only 2% remains, so every

remaining acre is extraordinarily valuable.

When the University of Miami (UM) was given the Richmond Pine Rocklands, it was with the proviso that they would provide stewardship to the tract, protecting its priceless value. They broke that commitment year after year and decade after decade.

UM excluded their own faculty from assessing the biodiversity of the Pine Rocklands because the faculty would have held their University accountable in the Faculty Senate. Instead, they hired outside consultants who could be muzzled with non-disclosure agreements

When a fire broke out there, the outside consultants identified a prime opportunity to remove invasive exotic species such as Burma reed and Brazilian pepper. Not only did UM fail to take appropriate and responsible action, they suppressed the publication of these reports to shirk their responsibility for this blatant neglect.

The public has a right to know about UM's destructive policies, breaking covenants, and allowing these public resources to become damaged. Consultant records should be subpoenaed, and made public record. Legal protection and financial incentives should be provided to whistle-blowers. We-the-People have a right to know.

This systematic policy of "demolition by neglect" is now being used to justify the complete demolition of many acres under this HCP. While it is true that this site is deeply infested by invasive exotics, it is by no means lost.

Fire is essential to the health of Pine Rocklands. Any HCP that could curtail or limit the use of controlled burns is an unconscionable extension of "demolition by neglect". If retail and residential development is embedded in this habitat, controlled burns will become impossible. That is unacceptable.

Based on my professional experiences with the removal of invasive exotic plants and trees, an aggressive campaign to control and remove the invasives would be completely successful. In fact, our organization has discovered that following fire, Burma reed becomes extremely easy to remove manually. I would be happy to share this knowledge and our methods with a responsible agency doing stewardship in the Pine Rocklands.

The numerous endangered species known to exist there are already sufficiently documented to stop the destruction of this habitat. It appears to be the only remaining refuge of the Miami Tiger Beetle.

The HCP fails to adequately protect this priceless tract. These are some of the reasons*:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected:developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is 1.23:1 at most. This is not within the "range of reason", especially for a project that amounts to the taking of a major remnant portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is essential to this habitat, but it is not feasible with the planned 900 apartments, a Walmart, mall, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be

burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.

4. "No Good Alternatives." No proposed alternatives provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative). Off-site mitigation is not acceptable, since no habitat restoration can fully replace such priceless natural resources.

Large tracts of Pine Rocklands - with their greater capacity for biodiversity - are priceless. This is the last and largest tract outside the boundaries of Everglades National Park. Please take all necessary steps to stop this development from moving forward. It must be preserved for future generations.

Sincerely,

Sam Van Leer
President & Founder
Urban Paradise Guild



"Creating Sustainable Paradise, One Habitat at a Time."

<http://urbanparadiseguild.org/>

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<http://wlrn.org/post/environmentalists-ask-intervention-preserve-rare-pine-rockland-forest-southern-miami-dade>

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh.Blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:12:26 PM

Greetings,

I am a 65 year old resident of Miami-Dade county who was also born here, not far from the tract of land involved here. I have watched this environment disappear, and along with the plants and animals. Animals that were once common are now rare or do not exist in this county anymore, glass lizards, Bobwhite quail, Eastern meadowlarks. We have lost over 98% of our pine lands and are trying to hold on to what we have so we don't lose these remaining species. It is my understanding that the Miami Tiger beetle does not even exist in the pine lands of Everglades National Park.

How can you even consider an I.T.P. when the species does not even exist elsewhere. You hold the power to save the Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Florida bonneted bat, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, Miami tiger beetle and white-crowned pigeon's habitat in this area.

All my life I have watched habitats being destroyed down here, this habitat cannot be restored once they damage the limestone surface rock. We have chipped most of it away. This is an ecosystem that requires fire, and if there are stores, residences and the habitat is fragmented there cannot be fires.

I know this isn't easy, you have the statistics, please rule for the habitat and it's flora and fauna and not for the developers. Far too often the developers win and we all lose.

Thank you for your time and your service.

Christina Dupuy

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 4:53:03 PM

Good evening,

I implore you ... please, please, PLEASE do not allow development that will destroy The Pine Rocklands. Endangered species habitats are at stake and we canNOT afford to further destroy nature in the name of supposed "progress".

Thank you for your consideration.

- Susan Steinhauser
Coconut Creek, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:14:06 AM
Attachments: [PineRocklands.docx](#)

Thank you for providing the opportunity for me to express my thoughts via the attached letter.

Rebecca Coughlin

May 22, 2017

Via Email

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Re: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223

Dear Sir:

I find it incomprehensible that there is even a moment's consideration of destroying a single part of the remaining 2% of the Pine Rocklands area in Miami. As you know, this is the only remaining habitat outside of Everglades National Park for several threatened and endangered species of plants and animals. There is no other place for them to survive. Leaving a tiny portion of the 2% and expecting these species to survive is not logical, especially when it would not be possible to properly burn and maintain this area. Please leave the entire tract in place for the preservation of the environment and its inhabitants.

We as a civilization often mourn the fact that man has caused the extinction of so many species and created a situation in which the environment is destroyed, all in the name of progress. What progress is there in killing off unique species and tearing up more of the environment in order to provide yet more retail and housing space, which is more than plentiful in South Florida?

There is no second chance to do the right thing once this habitat and its inhabitants are lost. Please, put a stop to this land development and eradication of the Pine Rocklands now. We should be working to increase the numbers of endangered and threatened species, not destroying them. I ask that you deny the incidental take permit for this project and help save this precious piece of Florida for all of us to enjoy and appreciate.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Coughlin

Cc: Ashleigh Blackford
crc_hcp@fws.gov

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Available for Public Review and Comment
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 2:32:33 PM
Attachments: [Coral Reef Commons\(2\).pdf](#)
[Coral Reef Commons\(1\).pdf](#)

To whom it may concerned:

Attached please find my comments on a letter format for the above referenced Plan.

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 30345

and

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach FL 32960

IF you have a question please do not hesitate to contact us.

--

Ariadna P. Risher (Ari)

cell: [REDACTED]

H: [REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

Ariadna P. Risher (Ari)

May 15, 2017

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street Vero Beach FL 32960

Dear Ashleigh Blackford

My name is Ariadna Risher (Ari), I am a Miami-Dade County resident and an engineer involved in the managed growth and sustainability of our community.

My letter is in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons.

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserver the proposed HCP will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present into the future.

I recommend U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to approve the detailed proposed plan.

Respectfully, a concern Miami-Dade County resident



Ariadna P. Risher (Ari)

Ariadna P. Risher (Ari)

May 15, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 30345

Dear David Dell

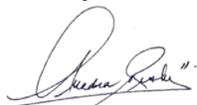
My name is Ariadna Risher (Ari), I am a Miami-Dade County resident and an engineer involved in the managed growth and sustainability of our community.

My letter is in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons.

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserver the proposed HCP will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present into the future.

I recommend U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to approve the detailed proposed plan.

Respectfully, a concern Miami-Dade resident



Ariadna P. Risher (Ari)

From: ■
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 1:39:32 AM

This is in regard to Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.

Please, as a lifelong resident and native to Florida, I beg of you to preserve the Pineland in it's entirety for future generations of humanity and wildlife alike.

"No Good Alternatives." No proposed alternatives provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative). Off-site mitigation is not acceptable, since no habitat restoration can fully replace such priceless natural resources.

Large tracts of Pine Rocklands - with their greater capacity for biodiversity - are priceless. This is the last and largest tract outside the boundaries of Everglades National Park. Please take all necessary steps to stop this development from moving forward. It must be preserved for future generations.

Thank you,

Ryan Baer

From: [REDACTED]
To: David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:20:18 PM

May 22, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office, Ecological Services
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
Via email: David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
South Florida Ecological Services
1339 20th St.
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Via email: Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

FWS Response via email crc_hcp@fws.gov

Re: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan

I greatly oppose the Federal Kill Permits for Developers to start bulldozing the Richmond Pine Rocklands. And do not wish to see this precious land used for the UM/Ram-Walmart HCP development, Coral Reef Commons, or any such project.

<!--[if !supportLineBreakNewLine]-->
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We only have a small amount of intact pine rockland left that remains home to federally designated and threatened animals and plants. I do not believe paving over and destroying one of the last remaining pieces of South Florida's rich and diverse ecological history is necessary. Why cut into, portion out, any amount of it when there are other parcels of land that won't affect the environment? We can't afford to lose anymore!

I would hate to see any more disruption to the fauna and flora that makes South Florida so unique. From child to adulthood, I have had the pleasure of experiencing the unique freedom we have living here and not the concrete jungle of other cities. As a Floridian, it's something positive I can boast about our state.

Please consider these issues:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of

reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.

3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.

4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provided sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat,

and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative)

are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").

5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."

6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."

7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

On top of the destruction of this delicate ecosystem, this plan for development is likely to increase the headache so many of us already experience daily in southwest Miami-Dade with increased housing development and stress on the roadways. I don't think there is going to be anyway to avoid or minimize the impact of this project.

I urge you to please consider the thoughts and concerns of the local citizens of Miami Dade County to preserve and restore the Richmond Pine Rocklands and not develop them.

Thank you,

Celia McIntosh

██████████
██████████

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:20:29 PM

Hello,

I am writing to you in light of the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan, Agency/Docket Number: FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223 Document Number: 2017-05767. As a well educated local of the Coral Reef area community with a Master of Environmental Policy and Management, I must comment on this issue. In regards to the actual conservation plan, it is plainly obvious that that the endangered species known to be on the site were not properly and thoroughly surveyed for. The proposed mitigation is inadequate according to most accepted conservation biology standards, in particular when considering a project that proposes losses to a large portion of a globally imperiled ecosystem of which only 2% remains and is a critical habitat for several endemic and endangered species.

In this plan, the developer's definition of successful mitigation is self-defined is not based in science. Furthermore, there are no clear penalties for failure to achieve their goals or goals set by anyone. If the proposed plan is approved, the developers will be able to take endangered land and fauna at no cost or penalty to them if standards are not meant.

It is well known by that the University of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally gifted to them by the federal government for educational purposes. This property was then sold at massive profits for development after re-zoning and spoken deals approved of without the approval of the county commissioners, of which a few have voiced their displeasure over these shady dealings. The same can be said of this public comment period and the absence of sufficiently public hearings for citizens to voice their opinions.

As a resident of the Emerald Palms Apartments complex on sw 152 st and 122 ave for the past four years, I am well accustomed to the horrendous traffic conditions that exist on Coral Reef Drive on a daily basis. The addition of a high-density apartment complex and a mall to include a Wal-Mart will add thousands of more drivers as well as added air and noise pollution to an already congested main artery of traffic to which most locals have no choice but to use for their commute. Any tracts of land and the animals within left behind will be impacted. The construction in the area has already made traffic patterns worse and commuting on this road more dangerous.

I urge you to please consider the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Mission statement when evaluating the public comments for this proposal: Working with others to **conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats** for the continuing benefit of the American people. We don't need another Wal-Mart or over-priced apartments, we need to conserve and protect the little that is left of the nature that existed before Miami and its urban sprawl took 98% of the Pine Rocklands that once inhabited the area and converted it into mostly concrete.

Best,

--

Anthony Cosio

Academic Support Service Administrator

Florida International University

B.S. Geoscience Atmospheric Science '12

P.S.M. Environmental Policy and Management '17

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 6:31:04 PM

I, Mackenzie Sheldon, a resident of Miami, zip code 33129, oppose the Habitat Conservation Plan submitted by Coral Reef Commons. This conservation plan does not provide adequate protections for the rare plant, animal, and insect species already struggling to survive in South Florida's pine rocklands. As one of the few habitats of its kind in the world, it is the duty of South Floridians and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be good stewards of this land and its unique flora and fauna.

Thank you for your consideration,
Mackenzie

From: [REDACTED]
To: ["David_dell@fws.gov"](mailto:David_dell@fws.gov); ["Crc_hcp@fws.gov"](mailto:Crc_hcp@fws.gov); Ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 12:19:51 PM
Attachments: [2017-5-19 Letter to USFWS - BC Edits FINAL\(111727599_1\).DOCX](#)

Dear Mr. Dell & Ms. Blackford,

On behalf of Dennis J. Olle, please see the attached correspondence. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Bridgit



M. Bridgit Dooley
Legal Administrative Assistant

Miami Tower



[REDACTED] | www.carltonfields.com

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**Miami Blue Chapter
North American Butterfly Association
P.O. Box 141667
Coral Gables, FL 33114**

May 19, 2017

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
David_dell@fws.gov
Crc_hcp@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford:

On behalf of The Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association we offer these comments to the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan (revised Feb. 2017) and the related Environmental Assessment. We write to oppose the acceptance and approval of the HCP and EA as submitted. For the reasons stated below, we respectfully request that the USFWS deny this application. Based on the comments below and applicable law, it is clear that the USFWS should evaluate the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the subject project in an Environmental Impact Statement. Except as otherwise provided herein, the defined terms used below shall have the same definition as set forth in the HCP and/or EA.

1. The "surveys" conducted for the Covered Species (except, perhaps, with respect to the Florida bonneted-bat) were fundamentally flawed: Of the total of 16 site visits, 14 were conducted in a (mostly cloudy) 39-day period in Sept. and early Oct 2014 (see Table 3, at 36 of HCP). Based on the way the surveys were conducted, there is no basis to expect to find the five diurnal Covered Species (two butterflies, a beetle, two snakes). Further, not only were the survey dates contrived, but there was no evidence that qualified persons were looking for the snakes or the butterflies. And as a result there is no wonder few if any of the Covered Species were found on the CRC property. Further, with respect to the Miami tiger beetle, the expert (Dr. Knisley) ventured onto what he thought was ZooMiami property, unaware he was on a small portion of the subject property then owned by the Univ. of Miami; he randomly surveyed only a few acres. There has been no thorough biological survey of the entire CRC Property (including the Off-Site Mitigation Area) with respect to each of the Covered Species.

2. The On-Site and Off-Site Mitigation Plans are overwhelmingly based on the ability to routinely burn the mitigation areas for the period of the ITP (30 yrs). Without fire these plans fail, rendering the mitigation plan illusory. Based on prior history at this site (see App J.) is no reason to believe prescribed fire as a reasonable possibility. [We understand that the co-Applicant (Univ. of Miami) has not burned the pinelands subject to the NFC (the pineland portion of the Mitigation Areas) required thereby, based on written advice by Miami-Dade Co. that burning in those locations was not to be feasible. How can the proposed mitigation be more feasible after you add ~2000 people (900 apts.), a Wal-Mart, and a

public school, all immediately proximate to the Mitigation Areas? Chemical and mechanical procedures, in lieu of fire, are not valid substitutes for the preservation of a healthy pineland. For specific comments to the proposed goals and mitigation plans (secs. 6 and 7 of the HCP) see schedule A, attached.

3. The most if not all of the six Alternatives (see Sec. 4 of the HCP and EA) are not “reasonable alternatives” as required by applicable Federal regulations; instead, the Applicants excluded the Alternatives 1 -3 by their own motion: Per the HCP, these alternatives did not meet the “project’s [financial] purpose”; if so, then those Alternatives should never have been proposed – they were “straw men.” With respect to Alts. 4 and 5, virtually all of the acreage proposed development property (~94 and 91 acres, respectively) is in Critical Habitat, and when compared to the amount of acreage set aside for mitigation (43 and 49 acres, respectively), the resulting ratio of mitigation to development is only 0.4725 : 1 for Alt. 4, and 0.538 : 1 for Alt. 5. To our knowledge, mitigation ratios in this range (~ 0.5 : 1) is not remotely consistent with any previous HCP accepted by the FWS and clearly represent arbitrary alternatives, not based on reason. Finally, Alternative 6 (the Preferred Alternative) is an attempt to salvage one ostensible “reasonable” alternative, but even that is tainted, and even with “full credit” for the Off-Site Mitigation Area (~51 acres) the mitigation ratio is unreasonably low: 1.23 : 1.

The additional mitigation land (Off-Site Management Area) is already under an environmental restriction and the additional promises made by the Applicants only give rise to “double counting”: It gives the Applicants credit for a pineland “restoration when it is already under a legal duty (deed restriction) to the USFWS to manage the subject site for the federally-endangered Deltoid spurge, a pineland specific plant species. Further, neither the Applicant nor the USFWS has made any attempt to survey the Off-Site Management Area for the Covered Species. So there is no baseline against which mitigation benefits to the Covered Species can be measured.

4. The “habitat functional assessment” set forth in Sec 5 of the HCP is ultimately based on so-called “habitat value units” (HVUs) which are a concoction to try to ascribe “value” to subjective conditions. This is no more than a mechanism to attribute value to the proposed mitigation areas in order to mask the fundamental truth: Based on the Alternatives submitted by the Applicants, there is a significant lack of available lands for full and appropriate mitigation in an amount which would reasonably justify the level of proposed development for this project. Further, the mitigation formula and the scoring metrics (see Table 5-1, at 83 of HCP) are made up and have no basis in science. The “HVUs” are arbitrarily concocted and submitted on behalf of the co-Applicants) and the values ascribed each enhancement are no more than “cryptocurrency.” The USFWS’s acceptance of this methodology would be capricious, and not based in fact or science. Accepting the HCP’s scoring tomfoolery, we believe the scoring of the baseline conditions (the so-called “existing condition habitat functional value” = 40.72 HVUs) is undervalued, and the “cost” of fragmentation is also undervalued. And with respect to Alternative 6 – the Preferred Alternative specifically, even if one accepts the HVU “currency” and resulting scoring, the Applicants’ conclusion is that the “net” increase in HVUs, i.e., the net “benefit” to the subject property, is only 3.10 HVUs (43.83 HVUs - 40.72 HVUs) or an increase of ~7.6%. This delta is statistically insignificant and woefully insufficient to justify the destruction of one acre much less ~91 acres of what is globally-imperiled habitat, as well as designated Critical Habitat for certain Covered Species.

5. “Success Criteria” (see Sec 7.7 at 118 and Table 7-3 at 119 of HCP) are fundamentally flawed for reasons set forth in Item 4, above, and below. The Applicants’ “Success Criteria”, specifically Levels 1-3 as set forth in sec 7.7 of the HCP, are arbitrarily set so as to create a “low bar” for determining success, and this determination is made in the sole opinion of the Applicants (or successor(s)). As discussed

above, the cyptocurrency of HVUs is nothing more than Applicants' consultant's concoction (which has never been used in a multi-species HCP with this scope, complexity and vulnerability). Any determination based on this "funny money" with a self-grading process is equally as flawed. More important, for purposes of determining the significance of this federally-permitted action regarding a suite of federally-endangered and threatened species, et al., (the Covered Species and beyond) use of HVUs sets a dangerous precedent. We note that the line items set forth in table 7-3 are interesting but "canopy cover" and "croton density", while noteworthy, are merely derivatives. The line items should include the actual presence of Covered Species, with a view to the restoration of their numbers. Further, the sheer number of crotons present is irrelevant if the Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak population is not maintained and increased, and the Florida Leafwing restored. Not to use the metric of the presence/numbers of at least a majority of the Covered Species is to entirely miss the point of successful mitigation. We note that the line items titled "total cover of non-native species" and "composition PR desirable herbaceous species" appears to cover essentially the same metric. Simply put, the proposed line items for determining successful mitigation all the while are deficient and paves the way for an easy determination of "success" by the Applicants.

6. Indeterminate Financial Assurances. The HCP in Section 11.2 states that "it will take five years [to achieve] long term maintenance condition"; however, there are no facts or science to support this assertion. This calls into question the financial calculations made in Chapter 11. With respect to evidence of the financial wherewithal or commitment of Applicants: Ex. L is merely a form of letter of credit with no details and no amounts., and App. N (the Draft Conservation Encumbrance- On Site CRC) is deficient in several ways, see sections 7 and 21 thereof. This funding information (amounts and sources) is crucial to any successful mitigation plan; however, the essential details ae totally missing. Instead, the Applicants have stated that they will provide draft documents demonstrating their "financial assurance" will be provided to the USFWS for its "review and approval." The public should have the opportunity to review and comment not only on the form of these documents, but also the proposed amount(s) of and "vehicles" for providing such funds.

7. Violation of Local Environmental Laws. The Applicants are in violation of the subject NFC Permit (App B) for failure to timely conduct a "controlled burn" and failing that, to "initiate and extensive exotic invasive plant eradication event" on the pinelands located in the CRC Property. Further, the applicants are also in violation of the landscape provisions relating to invasive plants and the "developed areas" of the CRC Property (see Ch. 18.1 of the Miami-Dade Co. Code). Finally, we note that the CRC Property appears to be in violation of the County's Comprehensive Management Plan (CDMP), see Policy CON 8, and we note that the CDMP expressly prohibits the issuance of any further permits for this project except in compliance with Policy CON 9 of the CDMP.

* * * * *

Under the National Environmental Policy Act, the USFWS is duty-bound to require the preparation of an EIS in these circumstances. There is no question that the proposed project is a major federal action affecting the quality of the human environment, and based on the above, its "significance" is established by any one of the following facts:

1. The development of CRC is highly controversial, as evidenced by the previous and pending comments to the HCP.

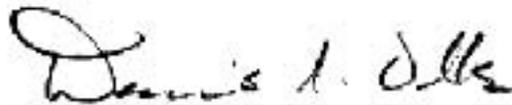
2. As set forth in the HCP and relied upon in the EA, the Habitat Functional Assessment and the use of HVUs to establish “success criteria” in the context of a globally-imperiled habitat currently used by many federally- protected species, sets a precedent for future actions, which may have significant effects, especially with respect to the preparation and consideration of future habitat conservation plans.
3. The loss of any of the federally-protected species, which occupy the subject project (especially those with designated or proposed Critical Habitat) may directly result in a corresponding loss of significant scientific resources.
4. There will be material and repeated adverse effects upon (material “take” of) a number of federally-endangered or threatened species resulting from the CRC.

* * * * *

Simply put, if the HCP is approved, the largest parcel of pine rockland in Miami-Dade Co. (outside Everglades National Park) will be further fragmented and in the case of the developed portions lost forever, and the purported salutary effects of mitigation plan set forth HCP will not be realized because of the infeasibility of prescribed burning, which will only be heightened because of the increased proximity of humans and human structures. The cumulative result of these events will constitute more than the “incidental take” of several endangered and threatened species, the very species the ESA was designed to protect. What is more, if no EIS is required in contemplation of this proposed action, then the USFWS will be in breach of its duties under NEPA.

If you have any questions in this regard, please feel free to contact the undersigned at:

Sincerely,



Dennis J. Olle
Director of Conservation Programs
Miami Blue Chapter
North American Butterfly Association
Phone: 305-539-7419
Email: dennisolle@me.com

SCHEDULE "A"

Comments to HCP Sec 6 Biological Goals and Objectives:

6.1 Biological Goals.

Goal no. 1 relies, in part, on objectives 1 and 5 which require (i) achieving so-called "success criteria" described in Secs. 7.7 , which are "made-up" by Applicants (as discussed below) and not scientifically verifiable, and (ii) the validation by the "biological monitoring program" which is inadequate (as discussed below).

Goal no.2 relies, in part objectives 1 and 2 which contemplates the creation of a Master Association, but insufficient details have been provided to evidence the workings of this funding source. Further, insufficient details have been provided to determine the viability of the other dedicated funding sources for maintenance of the preserves in perpetuity. (Note financial details are missing in in Apps to HCP).

Goal no. 3 does not sufficiently prioritize the use of prescribed burns for maintaining the Preserves; instead, there is a reference to the "balance of burning and non-burning applications" (see objective 2) which belies the extraordinary difficulty the project will encounter when it tries to burn various preserves.

6.2 Measures to Minimize Impacts of the Project.

Re 6.2.2.1 Simply making construction personnel "aware" of HCP requirements is insufficient; there need to be meaningful penalties set forth in any demolition/construction contracts for violations by contractor (construction personnel) of any HCP requirements.

Re 6.2.2.3 There is no reference as to who will monitor and enforce the Construction BMPs. An independent third-party needs to be on-site during demolition construction with the obligation and authority to stop construction or demolition if there is a violation. It is not meaningful to expect construction workers to report the presence of Covered Species, instead an on-site trained biologist (knowledgeable re all Covered Species) needs to be on-site at all-times during demo and construction. Further, simply posting no-access signage around the preserves is hardly enough protection. What will the effect of construction lighting be on the FBB if construction is performed at night; there should be science to back-up this determination?

Re 6.2.3 "All pets on lease" rule should include cats. Feral cats are a huge and insidious problem in south Florida natural areas, which is compounded by humans living in close proximity thereto. A comprehensive and strictly-enforced set of rules that eliminates any threat from feral cats is crucial to any effective restoration maintenance of small animal populations. Simply requiring tenants /owners to sign documentation re pet wastes, etc., should include notice and waiver re fire regimes. Insufficient detail is provided as to how Property Management is going to enforce the BMPs, and who will be on-site to insure that Management is actively and vigorously enforcing same? If no third-party, then this is a fundamental flaw. What are the financial and legal consequences of the failure to enforce? Can third-parties bring legal actions in this regard? The reference to use of "native and non-invasive plants" for landscaping means that the subject plants satisfy both criteria. Tenants should be encouraged to report

the observation (presence) of any and all Covered Species, not just Indigo Snakes. Why should the design of buildings be such to discourage their use by bats? The presence of nature in the “built environment” should be encouraged.

Re 6.2.3.1 Street lighting needs to be in “compliance” with recommendations by bat experts selected by the USFWS. We question the impact of lights (both during construction and thereafter) upon the FSB.

Re 6.2.3.2 Specific details with example of form of “acknowledgment of fire management activities” needs to be provided for public comment. The use of fire to maintain the pineland Reserves is crucial to the successful maintenance of those pinelands; without it the pineland will fail. The document needs to be detailed, legally enforceable and acceptable to the USFWS. Please note that sufficient legal funds should be budgeted for any litigation that may ensue when and a prescribed fire is contemplated near human habitation; insufficient funds should not be an excuse used by the Applicants to avoid their obligation to vigorously pursue the stipulated burn regime.

Re 6.2.3.3 Any use of pesticides, whether by the community or the local mosquito control authorities, should be strictly limited if not prohibited. With respect to the latter party, there should be an agreement in place so that no inadvertent anti-mosquito spraying (or resulting drift) is done by the authorities. Will any anti-mosquito spraying be allowed on or near the Preserves, under any circumstances? If so, then the presence of an additional 2000+ humans plus Walmart and public school students will severely compromise the ability to properly manage the conservation and restoration of the Covered Species, esp. the two butterflies and the beetle and, assuming collateral effects as well as the FBB. The effects of spraying (either by truck or aerially) on those Covered Species needs to be fully understood and considered.

Re 6.2.4.1 There needs to be significantly better controls on public access to the Preserves; the proposed signage is not enough. How will the BMP restrictions on contractors “conducting land management” within the Preserves be enforced?

Re 6.2.4.3 How will the Preserve Biologist be selected? What are the required credentials? Who will insure that the minimum criteria are satisfied? What are the duties and authorities of the Preserve Biologist; to whom do they report? What are the circumstances, if any, in which the Preserve Biologist has the ability to stop demolition/construction on the project: If none, why not?

Re 6.2.4.4 The identification (flagging) and other BMP protections afforded federally-listed plants should be extended to pineland croton, especially if its presence is been used as a surrogate for the two Covered Species that are butterflies. No insecticides/pesticides should be allowed within the Preserves except to treat exotic ants. Who determines the feasibility of hand removal v. mechanical removal? What BMPs have been established for the hand removal and relocation of BSH eggs and caterpillars in Preserve areas about to be burned?

Re 6.2.4.5 Have you considered the requirement of the presence of smoke for some of the federally-listed plants to properly germinate? In light of the burn history for this overall area (Richmond Pineland) as noted in App. J, and given the increased presence of humans and buildings resulting from the proposed project, please explain, in detail, the basis to believe that there is a reasonable likelihood that there will be successful and timely, periodic prescribed burns on the Preserves?

Comments to HCP Section 7 On-Site and Off-Site Mitigation

While noted as a point to realizing “conservation “gains”, implementing an prescribed burn plan for both the On-site and Off-site Preserves is the single most important point; it is not of the same tenor as 6 bat boxes or the proposed “public education.” If fire cannot be used, for whatever reason, then mitigation will be failure; what are the practical implications for the recovery management of the Covered Species? And the resulting penalties upon the Applicant (or its successor(s)); if none, why not?

Re 7.5.1 No reference is made to the existing management obligations with respect to invasive plants (see NFC permit and applicable portions of the Miami-Dade Co. Code) and the status of Applicants’ compliance therewith. Generally, any proposal for future work on the On-Site Preserves should be understood in conjunction with Applicants’ history of compliance (or not).

Re 7.5.2 The stated “trigger” for selecting mechanical treatment rather than burning is “feasibility”, which is too vague; further, we note prescriptive burning is often a function of costs (see sec. 2 of App. J.).

Re 7.5.3 With respect to App J, the size and frequency of planned prescribed burns for the management areas of the Preserves (see table J4-1) is unrealistic. The ~18+ acres prescribed to be burned annually (see table J4-1) equals the total amount of acreage subject to prescribed burning in the entire Richmond Area for the preceding five-year period: 6/17/12 – to date (see table J2-1).

Re 7.5. The plantings within the southern boundary are should be exclusively not “primarily” native plants from the referenced Miami-Dade Co. plant list.

7.6 Given the imperiled nature of the habitat and the intrusion contemplated, the so-called “short-term monitoring should be done no less than quarterly, and probably monthly during demolition and construction of the project. Monitoring annually (once a year) is by definition not “short-term.” Too much can go wrong over the months, much less 12, which would render many, if not most, of the proposed mitigatory effects ineffectual. There is no mechanism for the reviews and comment on the reports with penalties for failure to submit in format acceptable. The determination of the when the “success criteria” (discussed in more detail elsewhere herein) are met, should be made by USFWS, and clearly subject to public review, input and challenge. Long-term monitoring with reporting every 5 years is indefensible given the precarious nature of the natural resources. We note that there is no clear explanation of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative monitoring. The use of the Preserve Biologist or HCP Coordinator to prepare “annual work plan” only contemplates the submission and review thereof by the USFWS. The USFWS should have final approval of such work plans and there should be meaningful financial penalties for the failure to timely deliver or have obtained an approved plan, by certain prescribed dates.

7.7 The “success criteria” specifically levels 1-3 are arbitrarily set so as to create a “low bar” for determining success, which determination is made in the sole opinion of the Applicants (or successor(s)). As discussed above, the cryptocurrency of HVUs is nothing more than a consultant’s concocted currency (which has never been used in a multi-species HCP with this scope, complexity and vulnerability). So the determination based on this “funny money” and using the self-testing process is equally as flawed. More important, for purposes of determining the significance of this federally-

permitted action regarding a suite of federally-endangered and threatened species, et al., (the Covered Species and beyond) this sets a dangerous precedent. The line items set forth in table 7-3 are interesting but “canopy cover” and croton density are derivatives, the line items should include the actual presence of Covered Species, with a view to the restoration of their numbers. For Example, the sheer number of crotons is irrelevant if the BHS population is not maintained and increased and the FL restored; not use this metric (for each of the Covered Species is to entirely miss the point of successful mitigation. We note that the line items re “total cover of non-native species” and “composition PR desirable herbaceous species” appears to cover essentially the same metric. Simply put, the proposed line items are deficient and paves the way for an easy determination of “success.”

7.9 App. N (Draft Conservation Encumbrance - On Site CRC) is deficient in several ways including most particularly sections 7 and 21 thereof re financial obligations which are crucial to any successful mitigation plan. The public should have the opportunity to review and comment not only on the form, but also the proposed amount(s) of such obligations.

7.10 We are not aware of any recently-conducted thorough biological surveys for the Covered Species, or beyond including the Deltoid spurge, the species which is the subject of the existing deed restriction (App O). How can any value be ascribed to the proposed mitigation offered by the tender of the Off-Site Management Area without a series of thorough, competently-led surveys to establish an appropriate baseline? Further, we have seen no evidence in the HCP regarding the status of compliance with the terms of the referenced deed restriction (re fire, reporting and access) on the Off-Site Mitigation Area (which the Applicants have elected to make part of the CRC Project). Also, since the subject off-site property is already subject to an environmental deed restriction, we are nonplussed why the Applicants should get any much less full credit for tendering this property into mitigation. Finally, we note here (sec. 7.10., and 7.10.1) and elsewhere in the HCP (at 3), the Applicants repeatedly state that the deed restriction “provides the landowner [the University] with the ability to vacate the [environmental] restriction.” This is disingenuous: The University may vacate such restriction, but only with the consent of the USFWS.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:58:19 PM

"We don't need to destroy more habitat to create more jobs"

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office, Ecological Services
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
Via email: David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
South Florida Ecological Services
1339 20th St.
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Via email: Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

FWS Response via email crc_hcp@fws.gov

Re: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Agency/Docket Number: FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
Document Number: 2017-05767

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford,

In my 20 years of life, I grew up living in Kendall where my backyard was once across the street from Larry and Penny and now on the west banks of the suburbs on [REDACTED]. Practically everyday I am in the vicinity of the Richmond Pineland, being that I work in the zoo and have friends living in the association of [REDACTED], right across from where the supposed location of the Coral Reef Commons Walmart shopping center and 900 apartments will be. Growing up in the continuously developing community of west Kendall made wildlife and nature a normal sight to see only in pockets scattered throughout town. It wasn't until I experienced the neighboring wildlife of the Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve did I realize the once ubiquitous and truly distinct nature of the Pine Rockland habitat in South Florida.

With only less than 2% existing outside of the Everglades, this globally-imperiled habitat and all the plant and animal life it harbors stands vulnerably against its biggest threat-- human encroachment and development. The Richmond Pine Rockland is home to numerous federally threatened and endangered flora and fauna species that easily wouldn't survive if their home were to be fragmented any further. Our neglected Floridian neighbors include species such as the bonneted bat, the tiger beetle, the bartram scrub hairstreak butterfly, the atala butterfly, and so on.

We need to preserve what is left of Florida's natural history and habitat for our neighboring species and for the generations to come.

Sincerely, Gloria Pinon

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:29:48 AM

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you today in reference to the endangered pine rockland, Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.

I am a resident of Dade County Florida, for the past 45 years. I currently own a home at [REDACTED] Florida. I have a portion of my property as a designated NFC (Natural Forest Community) and have signed an EEL (Environmentally Endangered Land) Covenant with Miami Dade County. I have been working hard to protect and encourage native pine rockland plants and animals on my property. It is a difficult job as the world gets smaller everyday and noxious invasive plants and animals take over in our subtropical environment. That being said we have an opportunity here to keep a very much pristine and viable pine rockland alive and thriving by denying the development of one of the largest pine rocklands left in southern Florida, outside of Everglades National Park. Development has dwindled us down to less than 2% of our original native habitats here in Dade County Florida. It would be unconscionable to let this important tract of rockland fall to another Walmart and housing. There are many important endangered and threatened plants and animals that call this area home.

We are too far gone to just set aside a piece of this tract for preservation! This is truly one of the last places like it anywhere. Please, let's save the entire tract... for the plants, animals, and for our future generations! Please do your job for all citizens and deny the incidental take permit for this project. We don't have enough Bonneted bats, Tiger Beetles, or Atala butterflies, and we certainly have no where for them to go if we allow this project to carry forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Let's not have future generations looking back and wondering why we didn't do something for our natural environment before it was too late!

Most Sincerely,
Anne Gorden-Vega

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; David.dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh.blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP - Miami Dade, Florida
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:56:17 PM
Attachments: [HCP_PINE_ROCKLANDS.docx](#)

Good Evening!

Attached is my public comments opposing the take permit and HCP for Coral Reef Commons in Miami-Dade!

Very Respectfully,

Benjamin John Chiszar, MPA

[REDACTED]

TO: UNITED STATES FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
ATTENTION: DAVID DELL & ASHLEIGH BLANKFORD
FROM: BENJAMIN JOHN CHISZAR, MPA
DATE: May 21, 2017
SUBJECT: HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN / TAKE PERMIT "CORAL REEF COMMONS"
LOCATION: MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

OPENING STATEMENT

Greetings and Salutations! I am writing to the USFWS to formally oppose the "CORAL REEF COMMONS" project on the "RICHMOND TRACT" of globally imperiled Pine Rocklands in Miami-Dade County, Florida. The destruction of 86 acres of "critical habitat" expressly protected by Section 4 of the Endangered Species Act for commercial/residential development is a clear violation of both federal law and Congressional Intent.

REASONS FOR OPPOSITION

The Richmond Tract and its approximate 700-800 acres, constitutes the largest remaining fragment of globally imperiled Pine Rocklands outside the Everglades National Park system. The loss of 86 acres (approx. 10+%) of critical habitat inside the 700-800 acres would potentially harm ALL 100+ species with Federal and State protective status found in Pine Rocklands habitat. The presence of all the species on the tract is undetermined. We know that a healthy Pine Rocklands is amongst the most biodiverse Woodlands habitats in the world. We know hundreds of different species call Rocklands home. We can presume with great confidence that a real comprehensive, professional and unbiased survey will show high levels of biodiversity,

including endemic, endangered and protected species existing on the entire Richmond Tract. The location of the Coral Reef Commons development itself would harm the recovery of the iconic and once thought extinct, Miami Tiger Beetle. The developers "environmental study" was a farce conducted by a company who was paid to find little to no impact. The species of Pine Rocklands do not know what a property line boundary is. We know that endangered and protected species exist on the Richmond tract, therefore losing approximately 10% of the total area would have a detrimental impact. Pine Rocklands are never so degraded as to need a solution of concrete development. Restoration is easy and achievable. The mitigation plan to counter the destruction of protected critical habitat is insufficient and includes additional acreage not part of the application. The extra 55 acres not affiliated with this project should be considered critical habitat as well and should be protected no matter what. Pine Rocklands are a habitat that requires regular burn intervals to be fully healthy. The property can be managed by hand but it is highly labor intensive. A 3-5 year burn interval for the entire Richmond Tract is the best course of action to promote a healthy ecosystem. There is no safe or efficient way to have massive development and regular burn intervals. There is no justification for the adverse impact on the surrounding community that additional development would bring in the form of increased traffic. The loss of 10% of the Richmond Tract will negatively affect our county sea level rise/ climate change mitigation plans by reducing much needed high ground and tree cover. The possible location of national security assets near the development could potentially have negative implications on the safety of residents and our ability to engage in war fighting.

ALTERNATIVES

The best course of action for the "RICHMOND TRACT" is to form ONE CONTIGUOUS NATURE AREA", which would be easier to manage and in line with Congressional intent. The land area should be returned to its natural state with regular burn intervals. A denied HCP / "take permit" does not equal the end of the Coral Reef Commons project. A land swap for the center of property and/or combined with edge acreage should solve any legal concerns of the County or Federal government being in an actionable position.

CONCLUSION

The destruction of critical habitat for private profit is NOT protected by Constitutional property rights as a vested interest, therefore the HCP / "take permits" for "CORAL REEF COMMONS" must be denied. The property owners, the University of Miami (and know RAM Realty) knew that the property was protected Pine Rocklands when conveyed to them by the Federal government. Peter Cummings knew he was buying globally imperiled habitat at the point of purchase from a willing seller (UM), who also knew about the protected Rocklands. The free land from the federal government to UM was NEVER intended to be available for private commercial / residential development. In fact, the citizens and their elected representatives might argue that a property owner of known protected habitat has an obligation to take care of ALL the protected habitat on the property. Another serious concern is the potential National /Homeland Security risks that come with being near a military target. The Endangered Species Act and the defense of the nation are far more important than the profit potential of the Richmond Tract. Every inch of critical habitat must be conserved and preserved per Section 4!

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP - Please Reject
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:36:52 PM

Hello,

I hope you have received several "No" messages as far as the approval for the development of the rock ridge pine lands in south Dade county, Miami.

I have heard the rational on both sides. But my "No" is more of a plea to save the last remaining forest in the Miami Dade area. No joke. Sure there are trees around, but not a forest. Not a forest on a rock ridge. The ridge is here, I live on it, but there is no forest. I grew up in South Miami Heights, pretty much the location of the proposed mega store, unnecessary proposed school, great, a theme park, and something like more than 900 additional homes.

Wow! If you have visited it, you might see the problems. I have lived it and seen it over develop. The roads are crammed at the intersection of SW 152 street and 117 Avenue. That is a region, not just an intersection. The Florida Turnpike has exits and entrances here.

The past twenty years has led to development of storefronts for stores that continually relocate. It's just not a sound decision to add development to where it really can't be handled. It's too much. More stores? Why? Just go west (into more development and more stores of all kinds) go north (again more), go east, go south. There is no need for more in this area, it has everything. So, why not develop the last spot and get it over with? Because it's the last section of a once larger

forest, there is no more. The mitigation area proposed is a joke, the separation of land pieces is insulting. It doesn't work, it won't work. How can it work? The forest isn't a landscaping project. It needs room. It isn't getting any more.

The University of Miami as the seller and the buyer knew full well what this area represented and what it represents. There has been too much secrecy with this deal. Even the proposed artist drawings are not accurate. How can that be said? Because the forest won't work, the traffic won't suddenly get better, people won't flock to a south Dade theme park for very long (wrong location). Right now with big names and money backing a soccer stadium in Dade county, they can't get it done, it's not needed. Water slide parks have already closed here. Now another one?

What about the federally protected plants and animals?
How do you get around that?

Please put this to rest by rejecting the use of the land for development.

Jeff Miller
High Pines Florida

[Reply Reply to All Forward More](#)

From

Jeff Miller 

To

[CC/BCC](#)

•

Hide

[CC](#)

[Hide CC/BCC](#)

•

Hide

[BCC](#)

•

Hide

Message Body

On Monday, May 22, 2017 11:17 PM, Jeff Miller [REDACTED] wrote:

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From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP -- 2,085 comments
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 3:29:20 PM
Attachments: [CoralReefCommons CBD 2085comments.pdf](#)

Attached please find 2,085 comments on Coral Reef Commons from activists with the Center for Biological Diversity. A number of these comments have been customized so your close review is appreciated.

Please let me know if there is anything else you need from me to complete this comment submission.

Thank you,
Cybele Knowles
Communications Associate
Center for Biological Diversity

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Alison Zyla



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Thank you,

Claire Chambers

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Animae Chi



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Thank you,

Robin Baker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

John Brewer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

natasha salgado

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Walter Firth

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joan Walker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Allen Olson



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Thank you,

Victoria Peyser

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs Pamela Hermes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

James & Shelley & Poston

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Giana Peranio-Paz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mr Keenan Percival

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Helen Golding

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

shirley swan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dawn Mason
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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Thank you,

Ruth Cain

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lisa Neste

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lisa Mazzola

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

nicolette ludolphi

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sheila D

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mariana Lukacova

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ed Vieira

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sabrina Degasperi

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrea Quinn

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrea Quinn

[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Meryl Pinque

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms. Grace Neff

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marina Parfenova

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs. Jillana Laufer

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Donald Baumgartner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs. Diane Kent

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Anna Jasiukiewicz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carol Thompson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Linda Jones

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ernst Mecke

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Malena Hall

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs Barbara Vieira

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Mr. Lawrence Crowley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Ms Anita Coolidge
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mr James S Mulcare

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rkachea Carpenter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kimberly Wiley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

DEBORAH SMITH

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jackie Tryggeseth

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

M Katz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Antonio Garcia-Palao Redondo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

C Bradley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Daggie Anders

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Shayne O'Brien

■ [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Vickey Baker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Peter Cummins

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

David Thieke



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Thank you,

Ms. Sheila Desmond

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Bonnie Lynn MacKinnon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mr. Javier Rivera

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Patricia Vazquez

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs. Sandra Woodall

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you, **MUST SAVE THE PINE ROCK LAND FOREST HABITAT AND WILDLIFE FOR THE FUTURE. EARTH NEEDS IT.**

JOHN PASQUA

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marc Grawunder

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cheryl Coen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Christopher Panayi

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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CC: David Dell, USFWS
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Thank you,

Colleen Lobel

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

mauricio carvajal

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rhonda Carr

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

rita uljee

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Anne Moeller

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Annie Wei

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michelle Taylor

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Fran Fulwiler

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sabrina Degasperi

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Harry Knapp
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Patricia Marino

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Catherine D. Susman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dr. Steven J. Prince

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sylvia Piskunov

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sandra Boylston

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marc Schoenberg
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

eric biemuller

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Elma Tassi

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

shirley mills

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

sandra arapoudis

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sylvie Auger

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

José Rafael Cuerva Nunes

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Debbie Williams

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Tami Palacky

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

paul cole

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

bianka munoz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeff Creech

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michael Kennedy
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms Raleigh koritz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marco Baracca

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lorenz Steininger

██████
████████████████████

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Thank you,

Luciano Graniello

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karola Windweh

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrea Mancini

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Celeste Capasso

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Martha W D Bushnell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert Sanders

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nora Davidson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Keith Melton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

laura jentz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrew Stromfeld

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Elizabeth Diaz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joey Henson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Grant Campbell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Claudia Martins

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

jamie dos santos

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Steve Vannelli

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brenda Sommer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jessica Bertolini

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karma Goodloe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Olga RODRIGUEZ

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Armistead, M.D.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

john deddy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Samantha Kornfeld

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marie-Lane Sada

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Letitia Dace

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Elaine Heathcoat

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dewey Jackson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Betsy Farmer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Conservation Dir peter galvin
director of programs

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carol Lonsdale

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jo Anne Neaves

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

julie shames-rogan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mr Jezahira Restrepo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carole Reddish



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Thank you,

MINDY RAPKIN

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Anne DeMaria

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Jamie Harrison

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Cheryl Fischer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

ERIN ENGER

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert O'Brien

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing. Do not make our state into a series of gated communities, strip malls, and high rises. It's well on its way and it is now ugly looking.

Thank you,

Mary Morris

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Theresa Galante

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alexis Siemon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michelle Barros
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

RedElisa Mendoza

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert Weinberg

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Julie Kagan
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

joan rubin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Adela Henao

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

MINDY RAPKIN

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jen Odom

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Anne Spence

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs Rita (Against All Sociopaths) Gaudry

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Edward Wild
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jessica Smith

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carol Farber
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cindy Sheaks

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Barbara Singer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

George Radell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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WE DON'T WANT, OR NEED, ANOTHER STRIP MALL, ESPECIALLY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE FOREST AND ALL THE WILDLIFE LOCATED WITHIN THAT FOREST.

Thank you,

Allie Tennant

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brett Wolfson

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rob Gonzalez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melissa Abreu

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Becky Niehoff

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Vanessa Llaguno

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Vas Welles

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amber Goldstein
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tina Bailey

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

s logan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

virginia wilson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jim Costello

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

ken gunther

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ginny Pendas

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mickie Diclemente

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Linda Smithe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carole Springer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Paul Jones
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

RAYA ENGLER

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Merry Sue Smoller

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Martha Singleton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I am a concerned tax-payer of Dade County that cherishes plants and animals over mega shopping malls. Looking around the southern end of the county there are numerous new malls being built while older ones are looking for tenants.

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Barbara Blank

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Jessica McCormick

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Constance White

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

v v

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Norry Lynch

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Elsy E Shallm

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mr. Chad Alvarez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lauren Linares

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

SERENA NYIKES

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Adriana Faraldo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Covi Lopez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joey Henson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrea Fortin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

As you know, in Nature everything is connected. I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons. We cannot expect to maintain species when we create species islands without connections.

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Thank you,

Mr. Jim D Ewing

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jan Steele

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Suzy Berkowitz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karen Bond

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I'm writing to request you place wildlife and wild areas first. Pine rocklands are in need of protection, not destruction. These are globally imperiled ecosystems that help endangered species survive. As a voter, I find that it is absurd that as voters we constantly vote to protect the environment yet this endangered ecosystem can potentially be destroyed to create the Coral Reef Commons.

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Thank you,

Ann Martinez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kathleen Heckler



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Thank you,

Mr Richard Jones
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rocío Iario

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lily Sayre

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Joann Talano

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Katherine De Blij

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

JONATHAN MICEK

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lawrence Holtzman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms Susan Nickerson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Hyun Lee

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Emmanuel Jerome

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

dee preston

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Evette Pike

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Hilda Gilman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michael DeLoye

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrea Velasquez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cecilia Garcia

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

RedElisa Mendoza

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mr Robert Oberdorf

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Victoria Roth

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michael Lawrence

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sheryl Post
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mr James Dawson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michele Volpe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kathy Williams

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Faith Houck

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jean Auris

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jean Auris

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

E. Machado

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Darlene Wolf

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

E S Shulman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cydney Lesniak

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Bryan Smith
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rachel Plunkett

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Neville Bruce

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karuna Eberl

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nancy Milewski

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms Dayana Avila

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jim Dundee

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kurt Hirschenhofer

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Claudia Zoeller



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Thank you,

Sandy Seaton

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs. silvia hall

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Anne Myers

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Christy Chaney

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

kathleen conroy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Vania Gutierrez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melody Moon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

George - please select - please Craciun

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dianne Miller

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lori Triggs

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Ms Edith Yelland

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gregory Taylor

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Paula Morgan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lenore Reeves

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jennifer Sams

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs Beth Muetzel

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Julie Miro

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Douglas Rosenthal

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alice Fiorini

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ellen Hogarty

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

John Circharo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Susanna Purucker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Duane Sebesta

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Wayne Langley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ramona Harvey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jude Lotz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mr Larry Benvenuti

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

John Bruch
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dean Weismantle

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms Ina Merritt

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Heidi Heinrich

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Jane Montonen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

ray derrickson



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Thank you,

Jim Loveland

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Harlan Sandberg

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

melinda themm

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Martin Osborne
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Additionally, I think it was shameful that the University of Miami accepted this land from the county as a gift with the understanding that they would create a branch of the University on the site, and then instead of returning it to the county for protection as a natural area, proceeded to sell to the highest bidder, showing no sense of community or responsibility to conserve or protect this special area. Further, as one who commutes to ZooMiami, the concept of adding up to 1800 cars to an area already excessively congested mornings and evenings to the point that emergency vehicles must travel in the lanes of oncoming traffic during rush hours to simply move (something I have encountered in the very area the development would occur)is beyond insane. Obviously NO ONE has even considered the traffic impacts .: and this is only considering the impact of the proposed 900 apartment units, without adding the shopping element!

Thank you,

Carol Farber
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert Hensman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kim Peterson

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Teresa Iwanow
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ramiro Abal

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jesse Fernandez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carol Drabin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Anthea Wray

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lesia Mills
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms. Janet Robinson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dobi Dobroslawka

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Thurairatnam

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Watson Gooch
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Richard Spotts

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Douglas Rosenthal

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Charlotte Roth

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carl Skipworth

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

carolyn suchenicz
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms. Nikki Travers

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Patrizia Gestro

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Harlan Sandberg

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gerry Quintero

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Steven Whitfield

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Liz Reed



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Thank you,

Robert Beck

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Wg Rowe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

jorge j tamargo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kathi Ridgway

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ryan Scates

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

David Levinson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jessica Messulam

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cristina Amarillas

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rachel Kahn

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

j bonn

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tiio-Mai McCurty

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Stephen Parr
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mary Junek

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ana De Cárdenas

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lisa D'Anronio

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Maureen O'Neal

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Ellen Franzen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

stanley Pannaman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alexandra Gordon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert Ortiz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing. We are supposed to be the stewards of the earth ... yet destruction of habitat and decimation of species are rampant.

Thank you,

Cassandra Weldon-Faulkner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

andreas ohland
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Eric Hensgen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karen LeBoutillier

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

rita friedman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mimi Gardener

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

steven shifrin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karlany Greenup
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Burkhard Broecker

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████████████████████

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Thank you,

Jan Petrikowski

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ingrid Broecker



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Thank you,

chad fuqua

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Barbara Delgado

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Francois Bezuidenhout

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robin Poppe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

James Cormier

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Samantha Rosa-Re

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Donna Lynne Polson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Donna Provance

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert Keiser

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kathy Williams

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

tamara hendershot

██████████
██████████

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Thank you,

Leah Huddleston

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Paul Lederman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Austin Manchester

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

joyce doria

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lisa Gardner

██████████

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Thank you,

Annie Dwight

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs. Gloria Trinka
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jessica Rivera

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

SYLVANA ARGUELLO

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Constance Kosowsky

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

shirley swan
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mr. Dennis Morley

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sara Paoluzzi

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Elisabeth Bechmann

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Barbara Adler

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ian Christensen



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Thank you,

sara shaw

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

George Wilder

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Risha Mateos

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs Suzanne Marienau

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lillian Martin
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amanda Rewinkel

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,
M. Laurel Siemon

Mary Siemon

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Thiago Medaljon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms. Lynn Hafter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mr James Whitelock

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Virginia Mendez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rosanna Sabbagh

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs D.M. Hunter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nicole Loh

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Stephanie Trudeau

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms Mary Bobb

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sheila Ward
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Katy Whitehouse

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Otto Salm
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michelle Terriault

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jennifer Nowacki

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karen Lozow

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tanya Piker



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Thank you,

Jennifer Vaca
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Julia Berezovski



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Margie Fourie

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lee Dalton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Shannon Blea

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brittany Milliner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Verna Lee

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lorna Wallach

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Janet Molchan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marianne Verhagen
Socialwork

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gabriele Verhagen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michelle Sebree

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Suzanne Gooch

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Danielle Agriopoulos

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sandy Pallo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kerry Clark
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jaime Aubin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Ash Decker



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Thank you,

Marcia Weingarden

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cheryl DeShaies

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

L Harding

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rani Khan
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Shelby Heimbach

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Phyllis Ingram

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Diane Kossman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kara Gallant

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mr Kevin walsh
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Barbara Robbin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michael Sperr

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kevin W. W. McAlister

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jesse Fernandez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ilse Spiegel

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

donna ehrer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kurt Schwarz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Perry Gx

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

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Thank you,

Ms.Susan/Mr.Robert Puscheck

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

0

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Thank you,

Mrs Joy Thomson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lori Triggs

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kimberly Bayer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms Lynn Hayes
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ilene Kazak

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Stephanie Christoff

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

DK Weamer

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs Cynthia Loewer-Torrez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Gayle Edelman-Tolchin



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Casey Ream

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms Valentina Mamut Sosa

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Samantha Russo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeena Nelson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Linda Olson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

john guandolo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lauri Moon
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms Ange Petrovic

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joe Ginsburg

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

eliana ermacora

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rajwinder Kaur

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

joan scott

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lily Roccasalvo
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Irene Snavelly

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Valerie Romero

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

V Voland

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Richard Spotts

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kristin Womack

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

shirley swan
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dat Tran

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Constantina Economou

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

As a wildlife veterinarian, I'm writing to strongly yet respectfully request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing. Please provide robust and effective protection by conserving this habitat and denying permission for this development project to proceed. Please make that decision based on factual science and not short-term economic gain and narrow minded politics.

Thank you,

Robert Adamski
Wildlife Veterinarian

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Lynn Wolf

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Bridget Bailey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I'm writing to request that you preserve the pine rocklands for its plants and animals. Deny the permit for Coral Reef Commons.

Present reduction in government at all levels eventually leaves no one to supervise any developer's proposed habitat conservation plan; therefore, the best long-term action in the interests of Floridians and their beloved environment is to mostly deny permits. Deny them all if you like, but deny this one in particular. As if Miami needs another strip mall more than it needs its unique subtropical environment! Grow a pair, hold a public hearing, and the citizens can tell you this themselves.

Thank you,
Joanna Weinberger
Friend of Florida, native Floridian, and voter

Joanna Weinberger
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tarika Sankar

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lynn D. Howerton
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Meghan Houston

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Martha Moore

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Stephanie Brovold

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

desanka sandulovic

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michael Rodriguez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Laura Lafata
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

RYAN R

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dayana Paula
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Adriana Jaramillo



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Thank you,

Mr. Hal Trufan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sue Montoya

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Irma Rey



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Thank you,

Sharon & Richard Tamm

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lydia Cuni



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Thank you,

Stephen Sporck

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Doris Telles

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dianne Miller

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,
Tina Tine'

Tina Tine'

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nick Gilmore

██████████

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CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Claudia Estrada
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Raphael Rodriguez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

doug krause

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Giovanna Pompele



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Thank you,

Jennifer Watson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

MIGUEL KITREL

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Emanuela Bianchi

██████████

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Thank you,

andrea kitrel



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Thank you,

peter kelsick

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development that takes over our precious Pine Lands . We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Ana Schnabel

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Barbara Condon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Less than 1% of Miami-Dade's pine rocklands exist outside of Everglades National Park, most of which is found on the coastal rock ridge along US-1 circa Coral Reef Drive. There are several endangered plant and animal species found only in Miami-Dade County pineland. For these species to survive extinction, it's imperative that pollinators are able to travel back and forth between the coastal pinelands and Everglades National Park and this area of land slated for development is the ONLY sizeable pineland connecting the two. It is absolutely critical that it remains undeveloped.

There are many already developed areas of Miami-Dade that need redevelopment. There are zero good reasons to cause the extinction of protected species in order to build on the last remaining bits of undeveloped land.

Thank you,

Alexandra Ramos

Alexandra Ramos

████████████████████

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Thank you,

Julie Berhane



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Thank you,

David Estrada



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Thank you,

Rachal Chohonis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Roberto Penaherrera

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Linda Gregory
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Monica Restrepo
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alejandra Gorina
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Erika Guzman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Elizabeth Bonnell

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alex Fernandez-Casais

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Kelley Tighe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

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Thank you,

Mary Claire Krager
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sheila Sykes-Gatz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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RE: Coral Reef Commons
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Thank you,

Brigid Baker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Agustin Fernandez

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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Thank you,

Anna Thoma

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan D'Agostino

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Benjamin Miranda

██████████

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CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Natalia Molina



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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And if all that is not enough, then what is to be done about the nuclear contaminants that are still believed to be in the ground that Ram Realty plans to build 900 condos on top of? UM made a deal with the devil, did not disclose fully and sold Ram (no sweetheart in all this, but seemingly unaware) a bill of good for \$21M.

UM should be made to return the \$21M to Ram and suffer the penalty accordingly. My respect for the University of Miami has taken a major hit.

We don't need more development in South Florida of this lurid type. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies, their forest home from vanishing and conduct business in an ethical and transparent manner.

Thank you,

KENNETH PENMAN

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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In addition: I can promise you, now that I know there's been dumping of radioactive waste on the site, I will NEVER GO THERE!!! EVER!!!

And, I will tell this to others.

LEAVE THE AREA AS IT IS! We've already done enough damage; there's no way to permanently remove radiation like that. Let it go...

Thank you,

William Howard

████████████████████

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
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Thank you,

shirley swan
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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Thank you,

Tina Dominguez



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
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Thank you,

Sandra Calzadilla

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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Thank you,

Sergio P.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Harley Komar

██████████

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov

RE: Coral Reef Commons

CC: David Dell, USFWS

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Thank you,

Pamela Wogan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

ken schliesman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs. Yamira Thompson

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Juan Pablo Ortega

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I'm writing to urgently request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they need to survive imminent local extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests, which is inclusive of the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat is far from good enough, given that only an estimated 2% of this critically endangered habitat is currently left standing, with the Coral Reef Commons being the largest tract beyond federally protected park boundaries. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for the equally critically endangered inhabitants on a local scale because the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for many of these species, there's simply nowhere else to live. The establishment of a buffer zone, now scientifically proven to be of equal importance to the preservation of the core, or internal, habitat, was also not a factor in the proposed conservation plan. It does not explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive, but recover. If a mitigation area is proposed, it should include mandatory pre- and post-disturbance biological censuses to verify the success of said plan. There are far too many developer-prone shortfalls and there is far too much nearsightedness so blaringly apparent in this project's proposal.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them in a location made most accessible to the neighborhoods being directly affected.

We don't need more development in South Florida: we don't need another Wal-Mart, we don't need more condos, and we definitely don't need any more traffic causing congestion beyond all human reason or mental stability.

We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants and pollinators -- and the only remnants of their forested homes from vanishing.

Thank you,

Alora Myers

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Adrienne Caplan
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Desiree Mesa



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Dr. Tony DeLia

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Casey Pittman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gaston Sanchez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sue Jarrard

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

WHEN IS ENOUGH DESTRUCTION ENOUGH??.
ISN'T HAVING DESTROYED 98% OF THE HABITAT ALREADY ENOUGH?

WHO/WHAT GAVE HUMANS TO RIGHT TO DESTROY THIS INCREDIBLE PLANET WE
HAVE BEEN GIVEN.

In these times. good and courageous and honorable people need to stand up to any ideas
of further ruining our planet. Please be courageous!

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections
they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found
only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development
of Coral Reef Commons.

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Thank you,

Sharon Minzer, M.D.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sara Katz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I request that you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals (including relief for the human species in the area) with the protections they and we urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons. This very location has been burdened for years, since Hurricane Andrew hit, with impossible traffic to navigate because of inadequate road ways. With additional traffic from Walmart and 900+ apartments, this is not only unhealthy for the wildlife, but does not provide for peace, tranquility and welfare that is the basic right of the people residing there.

We have not been provided new evacuation plans in the event of mandatory evacuations for a hurricane, or worse. What are those evacuation plans?

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough, actually it's laughably unrealistic and is completely unacceptable. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

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We don't need more development in South Florida. There is more development than S Florida can handle. This needs to be stopped. We are facing critical fresh water shortages and the very site where they are paving over is the lime stone that filters the water that we drink to survive. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing. If we do not protect our wildlife, we are no longer protecting our environments in which we all can live and survive ourselves. That means that if nothing is done to stop this disaster from happening, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is complicit in the destruction of life on this earth as we have known it.

PLEASE take these very important points into consideration by inviting the public for discussion - an expense that is worthy of our tax dollars, and therefore very feasible.

Thank you,
Linda Wanshel

Linda Wanshel

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Heidi Piccerelli



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Thank you,

Samantha Hoadley

██████████
██

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Thank you,

Chris Strickwerda

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

sara sexton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Glen Venezia

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jodi Rodar

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

mario giannone

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Katy Whitehouse

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Raymond T Collins

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kathleen Smaluk-Nix

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

sara sexton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

J Angell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Christina Klein

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jared Fuller

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Brett Dennison

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Jennifer Leer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sandra Kawa

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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Thank you,

Kristine Kawa

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lennart Blomqvist

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sue White

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrea Cuccaro

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

sonia santos

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marcy Chamblin

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dana Wilson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Claire Chambers

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jenna Miles

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

elaline risch

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Patricia Ferguson

██████████
██████████

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Thank you,

Brooks Armstrong

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Darren Cook
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mr. Joseph Konig

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

linda carlson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karen Pickering

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rhonda Hilson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Elaine Vileria
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jack Dunham

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Walter Erhorn

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms Orva M Gullett

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Thomas Berg

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Theresa Kaiser

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ryan Bradley

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marla Erhart

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

LINDA HABUDA

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

JAMES BENJAMIN

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert M. Deems

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lynn Forsht
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Inge Maumus

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jelica Roland

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cheryl Walker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tiffany Lacker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joan Diggs

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carolyn M Murphey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Patrick Walsh

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ron Melsha
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brenda Weber

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Katherine Mouzourakis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Beatrix Gayle

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Patricia DeLuca

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kathleen Jones
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lynn Crandall

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Leslie Siltan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
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Thank you,

lance jimenez

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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lance jimenez

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nancy Loftin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Anita Phaneuf

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marion Kreuzscher

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

David E. White

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

bruce vaben

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Doris Lapierre

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Glenna Waterman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Hugh A Havlik

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Celeste Watt

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Megan Baker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeanne Esposito

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cheri Albin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

lorena peinado

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joline Barth

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gisele Silva Souza

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Wendy Green

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dan Morgan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

annamarie jones

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Zoe Spiropoulou

██████████
████████████████████

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Thank you,

Elizabeth Conlan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
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CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Kathi Meyers
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Laura Schwind
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jill Canney

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

C Cechi

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Garo Kassabian

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Matthew Van Camp

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

liron solomon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Barbara Delgado

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

chad fuqua

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

JOYCE SUGGS

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Yael Shimshon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ann-Marie Corkett

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Janice Parker
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Teri Lamb

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Stephanie Smith

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Connie Williams

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dawn LaMarca

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lennart Blomqvist

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Deanna Horton

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

MAYLYN RODRIGUEZ

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Bonnie Steiger

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

sirena green

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Mm Mill

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ian Hentall



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Thank you,

Zsuzsanna Nemeth

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ernest Garcia
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Don Bristow

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Danielle R Barcion

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,
Andrea Subhawong

Andrea Subhawong

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,
Ty SUBhawong

Ty Subhawong

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,
Marcia Proctor

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kenneth Proctor
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Eve Koenig

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alison Walker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Leah Shadle



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Thank you,

Kathleen Moorman
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

GARY HUNT

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov

RE: Coral Reef Commons

CC: David Dell, USFWS

CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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We don't need to sacrifice what's left of our S FI wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- so that already wealthy developers can upgrade their Landrovers and remodel their vacation villas!! Money can be made by REDEVELOPING existing areas!!

Thank you,

D Alford

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms. Ann W Wiley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joel Rosenthal

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Martha Garcia

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Eric Lastre

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Charlotte Cartaya

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jennifer Feliz

██████████

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Thank you,

Lourdes Souto

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jonathan Ross

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

HOWARD GOLDMAN

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Adriene Barmann

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

richard acosta

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

LAWRENCE GLADSDEN

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeanne Kaufman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrea Lewis-Pearson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Danica Perez

██████████

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Thank you,

Robin Banks

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Diane Jacobs

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Culmo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,
Carmen Marin Fruit

Carmen Marin Fruit
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Philip F Balbi

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Arlene Ferris

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Luis Chacon Perez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karen Banks

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melody Gonzalez

[REDACTED]t
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

David Twigg

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ann Martinez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ann Schmidt

[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

margaret roy



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Thank you,

Marta de Tuya

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Barbara Stehle

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Robert Keiser

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mrs Janet Brown
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

ANDREW GEIST

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

JOHANNA CORREA

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

william bedinghaus

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

JOSE PALACIOS

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sandra Hendricks

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Beth Kibler

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Bruce Chesney



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Thank you,

Rafael Escalona

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nanci Mitchell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ellen Siegel

██████████
██████████

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Thank you,

sonja Koppenwallner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kathleen Spencer
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nina Heiser

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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I produced a film that aired Earth Day 2012 on the Miami PBS Station WPBT featuring the imperiled Pine Rockland community found only in south Florida. Take a moment to watch and better understand what is at stake:

<http://www.intonaturefilms.org/project/pine-rockland-composition/>

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Thank you,

Jennifer Brown

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dawn Kuhns

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Vicki Baker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Toni Prothero

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

lois scholer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert Peltz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mike Kuehn

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Estrella Mitrani

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Eric BORBE

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Erika Marsh
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Richard Schpenborn
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Moshe Heyn
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dorothy Parker



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Thank you,

Maria Papazian
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms Jane Jones
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michael Moss

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carole Stahl

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Beverly Cech

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Helen Colby
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robin Turetsky

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

audrey carta

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gail Romero

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Bonnie Ciolino

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marina Stasi

██████████
██████████

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Thank you,

Lori Oberhofer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Judy Jones

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Grace Britton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brian Robbin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dylann Turffs
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

J M

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Coky and Paul Michel

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Louise Ross

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jaime Seymour Newton

██████████

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Thank you,

Rosetta Hernandez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Anne Gorden-Vega

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nancy Coppola

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Olivia Romero



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Thank you,

cristina whelan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Grace Carricarte

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I'm writing to urge you to protect pine rocklands plants and animals. I've worked at Everglades National Park and know how special this habitat is, especially in highly developed Florida. These forests are endangered, as are many of the species found in them. Coral Reef Commons development would have disastrous consequences.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

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Thank you,

Carolyn Loren

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you, Margaret Culbertson

Margaret Culbertson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mark Stein
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

kathleen malloy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeffrey Tucker
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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In addition to the threat to the wildlife in this area, the rocks and limestone filters rainwater helping to our clean our groundwater naturally. This is vitally important so we can avoid adding even more chemicals and cost to purifying water.

Thank you,

Sharyn Marks

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Christi Gonzalez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrea Loring

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tiina Lombard

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Catharine Raby

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov

RE: Coral Reef Commons

CC: David Dell, USFWS

CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

Please

Tiina Lombard

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

kaatje bernabei

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alexis Price

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I agree with the comments below. Also, fire is essential to Pine Rocklands, and is incompatible with development.

Oz

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Thank you,

Otto Zequeira

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Richard Kern
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Paul Marcellini

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Barbara Parrish

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ivonne Arias



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Thank you,

Nancy Tackett

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andy mondejar



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Thank you,

Barbara Livieri

[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Michael Hayes



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Thank you,

Jamie Jeffords

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marcel Lecours



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Thank you,

Lora Scotese

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kerry McIntyre

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amber Fitzgerald

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cassandra Bonds



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Thank you,

Suz Barnes
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Cassandra Lopez



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Thank you,

Keith Curry-Pochy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jay Franklin

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Thank you,

Paola Hernandez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Thomas Miller

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Helen Rogers

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrew McMahon

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Thank you,

Sharon Thomas

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Josie D

██████████

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Thank you,

Sarah Hoog

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Stephen Pfaller
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Watson

██████████

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Thank you,

Patricia Hammond

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Al Sunshine

██████████
██████████

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Thank you,

Ms Nancy Roane
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Chris White

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gabby Satterberg



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Thank you,

Sherry Odell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Douglas Lugthart

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nicky Edelman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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David Karr
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Diana Lamb
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kristin Randall



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Thank you,

Charles Dyal

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jordan Snyder

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Matt Shiffler



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Thank you,

Alison Creed

██████████

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Thank you,

Scott Beazley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Leah Dice

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Margarett Jane Vaught

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Trista Lopez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marilu Cristina Flores

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Kari Berg

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Catherine Marengo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrea Jeria

██████████

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Thank you,

J Jensen

██████████

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Thank you,

Robert Ballard

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Laura Vanderipe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Bernadette Alicea
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Stephanie Epperson



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Thank you,

Maxine Herb

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sharon Thomas

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Suzana Stucka

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Garl Harrold

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

M Russek

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Virginia Bass

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Thank you,

Jesse Germeraad

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Susan Allshouse



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Thank you,

Michael Riffle

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lisa Golden

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Priscilla Sloan

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Thank you,

Todd Gibson

██████████

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Thank you,

Pamela Schaffner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Derex Marengo

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Thank you,

Carol Nickless

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Lisa Turner



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We have a huge responsibility to our future generations and the habitats and wildlife that will surround them. We don't need more giant chain stores.....WE NEED OUR EARTH!

Thank you,
Amy Storck

Amy Storck



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Thank you,

Alice Glassen

██████████

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Thank you,

Linda Lundstedt

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carol Vega

[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Amy Kelly

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrea Duane
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Holly McCall

██████████

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Thank you,

Jennifer Saavedra

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Debbie Frost
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Devron Lee

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Phillip Gillette

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

John Pigott

██████████

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Thank you,

Kayla Bates



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Thank you,

Patti Maceri

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Chris Gillette

[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Brad Chappell

[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Leslie Garone
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Christine Pardo



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Thank you,

Sarah Gardner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sandra Falcon



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Thank you,

Marsha Wheatley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

David Barrow

██████████

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Thank you,

Lois Kaufman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kiki Mutis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Bell

[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Jennifer Goldberg

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Bryanna Zachary

██████████

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Thank you,

Arianne Wezgraj
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ralph Ramirez-Maglio

██████████

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Thank you,

Ralph Ramirez-Maglio

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Thank you,

Sharon Watson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you, Jillian Southerland

Jillian Southerland



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Thank you,

Alisha Jennings

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Mello

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rachael Schinbeckler

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joe Piccini
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Shannon Tracy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ralph Callander



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Thank you,

Garl Harrold

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Merry Waldroup

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joseph Brallier

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Phyllis Wholihan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Philip Monahan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Prince

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Jeanne Thompson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Lindsay Corrales



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing. When you keep messing with the environment everyone pays for it in the long run. The world has enough Walmart's and shopping plazas.

Thank you,
Melissa VanDerMeulen

Melissa vandermeulen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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Thank you,

P.S. Fuck you Walmart (aka China puppets)

Jesse Cartlidge



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Lynn Kupkee
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joe Devre



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Thank you,
Jenny Poon

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Thank you,

Jennifer Meizoso



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Thank you,

Debra Shook

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I may have used a form letter, but I MEAN EVERY WORD OF IT!:

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Thank you,

Mr Sean Atkinson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michael Warren
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Margaret Hickman



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Thank you,

Betty Callander

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Heather Graham

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Darla Powell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Candace Tejidor

██████████

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Thank you,

MAY TABOR

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Julie June
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dawn Zakevich

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Natalia T. Pridemore

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Di mau

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Stephanie Perez



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Thank you,

Amanda Mims

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Benge Wheeler

██████████

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Permelia Ehle

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nick Vitale

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Thank you,

Erika Kurtz



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Thank you,

Lulu Sarshalom
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Rohr

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Chuck Bloomer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carol Corder

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms. Lorraine Maloof

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alain Didier



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Thank you,

Michelle Hess

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jacob Clark



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Thank you,

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Thank you,

Carlos Robinson

██████████

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Thank you,

Mary Ann Roberts

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Connie Osteen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Summer Pauley



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Thank you,

Amber Williams

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kelley Charnas

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

pamela roberts

██████████

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Thank you,

Kenny Proebsting

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Theresa Simmons



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Thank you,

Katie Daniels

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jill R

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jimmy Santander
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Heather Brown

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Judy Eitneier

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

May Halford

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carol Sweeney

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dolores Triana

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Peter Larson III

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Katie Hunt



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Thank you,

Erika Ellis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sean Dowie

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Connie Modriskey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tiana Kaufmann

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mary Ann Stahl
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tish Porter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michael Warden

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Diego Ramirez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Paula Sullivan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

robert cannon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sara Shapiro

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Richard Sardo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melissa Sunshine

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Geoffroy Kerr

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Christian Sganga

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

jackie sparke

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Julie Larsen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Miski Michalski

██████████

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Thank you,

Cendra Siler

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Paula Johnson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lazaro Ruda

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amanda Tennis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

leighon lanzetta

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Grey Casanova

██████████

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Thank you,

Haydee Sanchez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brenda Williams

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Maria Polfliet



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Thank you,

Alejandra Uribe



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Thank you,

Janice Crawford

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Leah Palmer



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Thank you,

Jenny Coyle

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mark Wittling

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Martha Lococo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Maryanne Trengove

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thomas Markham
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Stephanie Brito
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ariel Artime
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Russell Fink

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jazmin Estravit-Montanez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Barbra Lederman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Toby Waksman
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mike Elston

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jacob Feinstein

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amy Hewett

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mary Cooper

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dottie Hagelstein



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Thank you,

Jeffery Trotta

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ana Peterson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Lewis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Chuck Johnstone

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Allison Gatesman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Linda Mair
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brittney Valladares

██████████
██████████

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Thank you,

Susan D'Agostino

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Virginia Barbanera



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov

RE: Coral Reef Commons

CC: David Dell, USFWS

CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

your job is to protect Florida's environment - not build another Walmart. So do your job. The Coral Reef Commons land grab is a bad deal and you know it. The area is already clogged with traffic, adding more traffic serves no purpose. We do not need another Walmart. They can build that somewhere else.

These are some of the last remaining pine rocklands in the world. And you know the "preservation" plan is a joke - might as well just develop the entire plot for all the good that will do.

Do not allow the pine rocklands to be paved. If you do that then I say we don't even need the US Fish and Wildlife service, we can eliminate your job. Maybe you can get an awesome job at that Walmart?

James Carlin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

John Kiser

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Constance Hoerning

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Virginia Dweck
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amanda Clark



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Thank you,

Susan Muir

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,
Jennifer Zaczek

Jennifer Zaczek



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RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I'm not a tree hugger by any means but why destroy what cannot be remade? I know you'll make money but aren't there other ways to get it?

Well here is the canned letter.

Freddy

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Very respectfully,
Freddy Skelt

Freddy Skelt

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Caridad Rodriguez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Pam Gorman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Vanessa Moreno



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Thank you,

Jessica Banos

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brandi Vickers

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kimberly Heise

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karen Witter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sharon Thacker
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jessica Cabral

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sherri Epstein

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joanie Ippolito

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Casey Bishop



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Thank you,

Erin Berry

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cynthia Hewitt

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

C Valles

██████████

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Thank you,

Morgan Holcombe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Will Sanborn

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tahnee Eaton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jen Lubow
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Omar Abu hantaash
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Barbara Rausch

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,
Carolyn Ramsey

Carolyn Ramsey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Victoria Rivera
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Ernest Lent

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

P R Castle

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Harvey Schwier

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Bianca Gutiérrez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Pat Rock

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brandon Ulasiewicz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lisa Martin
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michelle Vance
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Warren Taylor

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Elisabeth Regina Widman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Heather Pasch
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Barbara Hedges

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alicia Bozeman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Vicki Booth

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Scott Goode



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Thank you,

Tatiana Cruz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amanda Hipps

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert Delaney

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brian Gibb



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Thank you,

Heather Wint

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Virginia Kostiuk

██████████
██

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Brian Monk



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CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

CINDY WETHERINGTON

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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Thank you,

Kathi Mann
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Elissa Petruzzello

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Debra Montgomery

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ingrid Laas

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Helen Parker
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Teresa Fox



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Thank you,

Alison Granger

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Martha Edwards

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tersa Perez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cale McMahon



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Thank you,

Faith Bahadurian

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Christine Rippe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Monica Ross

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joseph Granger

██████████

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Thank you,

Lorraine Bahrick
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
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Thank you,

Michael Chatham

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Thank you,

Rachel Bell

████████████████████

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Thank you,

Dawn Warner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amber Perkins

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Krisrine Klein

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alexandra Lluberes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carole Reddish



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Thank you,

Dawn Starling

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Karin Herardin



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Thank you,

Lori Sell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rachel Markel-Hernandez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Caroline Sklenar

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Bonnie Wiedeman



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Thank you,

Marya Murphy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susie Bernal

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Paul Prestegaard
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We need to protect our wildlife and keep a sense of place that represents our unique habitat.

Thank you,

David Bogardus

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Katherine Whalen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Massiel Garcia

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Suzy Cross



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Thank you,

Janine Hyatt

██████████

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Thank you,

Cheryl Wilcox

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Evan Pettit



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Thank you,

Briana Kelley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tom Craig

██████████

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Thank you,

Kathleen Spencer
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brenda Lawrence

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Linda Baker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marge Haile



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Thank you,

Cory Dozier

████████████████████

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Thank you,

Dallas Warner
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Laura Cheeseman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
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Thank you,

Pam Brumbley

██████████

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Thank you,

Tom Handley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert Kisfalusi

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov

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I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons. As an employee within Everglades National Park, I witness every day how crucial these habitats are for south Florida's incredible plants and wildlife, who cannot speak for themselves. There will always be other opportunities for humans to develop shopping empires for selfish economic gains. Meanwhile, we are running out of time to preserve south Florida's pine rocklands.

Please make the ethical, intelligent choice and start prioritizing the environment.

Thank you,

Katie Sykes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rita Peeples

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Walter Wood

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kimberly Ferguson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lourdes Sifontes



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Thank you,

Dorsay Fischer
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amanda Trail

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mary Beth Busutil

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Maria Vela
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gregorio Garcia

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Orelbe Diaz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nicole Crabtree



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Thank you,

Steve Lowe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

John Hanson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Margo Robison

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Georgine Husta



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Thank you,

Jan Hewitt

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Peggy Hunt

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joan Richards

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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Thank you,

Eva Cater

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Hattie Ernst

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tara Lester

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Wittig

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tony Ansley

██████████

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Thank you,

Dustin mahoy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Julie Gale



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Thank you,

Skipper Rolan



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Thank you,

Ricardo Rodriguez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mary Matthews

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tim Cotter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

melissa taylor

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amy Davis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Katie Ferrer



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Thank you,

Marcia Elder
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jocelyne Mackay

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

George Verplank

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Frederick Brooks

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cameron Beaudin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert Hallstrand

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you, Alberto Diaz

Albert Diaz



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Thank you,

Linda Baker
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Danielle Zak

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Nikki Costanzo



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Thank you,

Nathanael Herrera

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

S. Robinson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sheti Sines

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Diana McCoy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Barbara Salmon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Scott Beals

██████████

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Thank you,

Bryan Thorpe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

William Fornaciari

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Arlene Ross
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karen Byrd
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeff Zilmer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jacob Plummer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Valerie Shupp

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Nathan Gamble



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Thank you,

Claudia Tenzer
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lois Dankel

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Judi Sawyer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lauren Simonitis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rosemary Tucci

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

C Day

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Stacey Kaufman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lisa Santiago Rhymestine

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Monica Robinson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Mrs Julie Sabella

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melissa Riner

██████████

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Thank you,

David Ralph

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jennifer Baldacci

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Linda Sanford
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dan Mele

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms Mary McCabe
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Leah Daniel
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeannie Zapata
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Violetta Yerrid

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jorge Gomez



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Thank you,

Chris Sullivan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melanie Valentine

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Elizabeth Bruckner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Janine McDowell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tammy Campbell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Leslie Calvert
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karl Renelt

██████████

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Thank you,

Laura Sedlmayr
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Theresa Luise

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jenna Tucci

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Diana Unverricht



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Thank you,

Keri Mcgee

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Jacqueline Rose



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Thank you,

kim campbell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jennifer Rio

██████████

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Thank you,

Monica Edwards

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

priscilla tylinski

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Franca Berti

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marie Galbraith
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Diane Martin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melanie Beard

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sandra Hare

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Christina Urban

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kyle Vensel

██████████

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Thank you,

Jennifer Work

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Hansi Sanchez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jessica Maldonado

██████████

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Thank you,

Daniela Pipitone



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I strongly don't support destroying precious pine rockland forests for development.

Thank you,

Mariel Abreu

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Max Peterson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mario Lopez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Shannon Stout

██████████

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Thank you,

Kathryn Shepherd

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Patricia Rowley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Paul Woodall

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Michael Miller

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Valerie Prince

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Julie Oswald

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Celeste Diaz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Vick Rogerson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

SANDRA GREEN

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jake Lynar

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Betsy Edwards

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

colleen Mccnicoll



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Thank you,

Oswaldo Navarrete

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

claudia mesa

██████████

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Thank you,

Linda Nitzschke

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Avivit Ashkenazi

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Zaidy Diaz

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Thank you,

Mary Jo Volante

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Linda Foley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kittie Johnson

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Thank you,

Terri Fazzari

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Daniel Rios
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Maria F Fernandez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Megan Mawdesley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Selena Golden

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gisele Armour

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Richard Gambill

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeff Logan
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lazaro Lopes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Catherine Provenzano

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dawn McCarthy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Patricia R Alvarez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tim Martin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nicole Krauss

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Laura Miles

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Linda Miller

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Veronica Orozco



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Thank you,

Don Pridmore

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Courtney Gray

██████████

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Ali Briner



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Thank you,

Jeanette Holmes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Linda Baron

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Thank you,

Nikki Borden
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ryan Chew



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Thank you,

Kim Owens

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ashley Berry

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Caryl Klose

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

These places are dwindling.. Miami Dade was made up of around two hundred thousand acres of pine Rockland. I grew up spending time in the Redlands and have always had an affinity for these Dade County pines... They were here before us and we need to respect that.. The least we could do is protect the last remaining 2 percent out of Everglades National Park... Can we as Residents business people politicians whomever- be so shameless???

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Thank you,

Michael Whitney

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Heather Vess

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Barbara Couch

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brandi Varnell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Helen O'Carroll

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

robert stipe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alan Reddish

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Victoria Flynn

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Shannon MacShane Lee

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gerry Tiziani
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Harry Ziegler

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Casey Leydon



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Thank you,

James DiLoreto

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Bari Gowan



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Thank you,

Suzanne Wallace

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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I grew up in South Florida and watched the Everglades be slowly encroached on and it needs to stop.

Thank you,

John Smith

██████████

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Thank you,

Laurie Schaim

████████████████████

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Thank you,

Drilona Gjokaj

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Oni Lewis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kristin Christensen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

donna Cortes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mallory Martinez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cira Basulto

██████████

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Jorge Jane

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Josefiba Osty



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Thank you,

Nicole Murphy
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kristin Green

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Hannah Bellamy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mark Lambrakopoulos

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jana Sheeder

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

John Maguire

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alicia Pelletier

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marjorie Roy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

federica pasotti



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Thank you,

Suzanne Chesser

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jennifer Kane

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amanda Marshall



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Thank you,

Christina Campbell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Margarita Gonzalez



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Thank you,

Sherry Gatewood



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Thank you,

Shawn Aubrey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Monique Bogaers

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mary Rafferty

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Staci Davis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Laurel Davis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amber Morgan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

Once it is gone..it can never be recovered! We are the losers!

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Thank you,

Barbara Zarrella



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Thank you,

Michael Bowen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

George LaBonte

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joseph Andreoli

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cindy Lorenzo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kim Workman

██████████
██████████

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Thank you,

Claire Drummond

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jan O'Halloran

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Holly Johnson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gillian Biggers-Miller

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robyn Hammes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ana Goll

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mark Smith
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amanda Carpenter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Linda Walker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Penny Ackerly
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tracy Kaswinkle

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

judy brown

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Val Simmons

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lorraine Wells



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Thank you,

Danner Foster

██████████

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Thank you,

Brian Strickland



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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Gayle Marcellini

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Michael Brown

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mirtha Uriarte-Perez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

chris carlson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cheryl Allender
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marlene Csunyo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Debbie Keesling

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tiffany Hall

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rita Goddard



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Thank you,

Jennifer Chester

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Laura Vose

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karen Muni
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

We don't need another shopping center!!! I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

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Thank you,

Tracy Jones



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Thank you,

Mathilde Facon



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Thank you,

Richard Jackson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Angela Gee

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Chiddenton

██████████
██

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Thank you,

Celeste Garcia

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jay Patel

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

Does the human race need another Walmart, or will it survive by allowing this area to remain undeveloped?

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Again, does the human race need another Walmart, or will it survive by allowing this area to remain undeveloped?

Thank you,

Cynthia Hill

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marsha Huntley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Patrick Kennealy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kristin Cofino

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

James barrow

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

John Turnage

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Idalmis Santana

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Emi Rains



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Thank you,

Teress Rogers

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ruth Berge

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Christine Peck



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Thank you,

Ed Tichenor

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karen Avila

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

David Trafton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

I am a Miami journalist adding a note to the above letter. Further development in South Florida will also already exacerbate a fragile ecosystem FOR HUMANS. I love the animals and I also love people. The neighborhood where this habitat exists is surrounded by countless commercial businesses amply meeting the needs of those who live in south Miami-Dade. The area is hardly rural and what precious nature there is should be preserved for the enjoyment and co-existing consciousness of all flora, fauna and humans. Enough already.

Maria Lemus

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Deanne Cooper



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Thank you,

Gisela Trueba

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Liliana Inguanti-Garcia
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Maria Schneider

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michael Voit

████████████████████

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Thank you,

Dean Deuyour
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kelly Mcpherson



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Thank you,

Georgia Tasker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kim Scott
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Celena Coburn

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mercy Estevez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Christopher Waltz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tara Mcpeak

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Ellie St. Aubin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kathleen Hillman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Vanessa Duckworth



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Thank you,

Lois deValle

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jennifer Kerlin



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Thank you,

Emily Whiteley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dawn Nirenberg

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov

RE: Coral Reef Commons

CC: David Dell, USFWS

CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I'm very sorry to hear of this decision.

Matthew Marquis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Juan DeJesus

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lauren Bridges

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carol Gauvin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Patty Murphy



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Thank you,

Kimberlee Hall

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rena Katz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Carter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Scott Sasich
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

George David

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dawn Parlier

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Doris Howey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marcia Mann

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Callum Rowley



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Thank you,

Heather Arrington

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Deborah Bachar

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sandra Fobb

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kimberly Jay

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Deborah Bachar

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Lerner



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Thank you,

Roger Reid

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Georgia Taje

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sharon Petrosky

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tom s

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mayr Malool

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mike Kennedy

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amanda Huggins

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Paulette Frank

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alison Armstrong

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dawn Bluewolf

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
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There are few chances left to save what remains of our native forests. Rather than cutting them down for commerce we should be preserving them for future generations to experience, not to mention the very unique set of creatures that call Pine Rocklands home. I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

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Thank you,

Jason Lopez

██████████

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Thank you,

Susan Kelly

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Hope Phillips

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Holly Cukier

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Einstein Espinal



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Thank you,

Megan Mercer



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Thank you,

Valerie Brewer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Natalie Cooper



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Thank you,

Vivianne Maduro



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Thank you,

Cathy Pacini



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Thank you,

jeanne griffith

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,
Nicole Fiori

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Thank you,

Gabrielle Georgetti

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alice Rodriguez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeffrey Fobb
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Luane Reyerros

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rebecca Diem

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jennifer Welsh

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Viktoria Filias
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,
Margareta Conroy

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

judy brown

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jill Brown

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carol Kirtley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dailyn Wall

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alina Rodriguez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gigi Alvarez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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judy brown
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Shilo Bigness



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Thank you,

Clay Wallen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kelli Mason



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Thank you,

Amy Brito

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Beatriz Milian

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeannene Mironack

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Stacey Raybon
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Martha Dale Sereno

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Barbara Bailey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Christine Girty

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lisel Mansen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Judith Smith

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sergio Dore

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Christy Owens

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

James Viteri

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sean Brown

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Diane Soloven

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Emilce Elgarresta

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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As a native Floridian, I implore you to reconsider this development. I ask you to make the right decision for the critically endangered wildlife that calls this land home. We love Florida for its beauty and wildlife. Don't ruin the last of this land in exchange for a strip mall. Leave it alone.

Thank you,

Mary Morris

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Elizabeth Bonnell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Justin Streeb



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Thank you,

Cynthia Hopkins

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Beverly Berg

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Terri Salichs

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marshall Morton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Holly Resnick



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Thank you,

Frances Tyler



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Thank you,

Debbie Schwiep

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nancy Freedman
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brian Call

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Jeffrey Weber
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Christopher Boykin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carly Van Pelt



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Thank you,

Joel Becerra

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Angela Hall

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Aimee Elizabeth Simonton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms Mary Barfield

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tani Parkinson

██████████

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Thank you,

Elizabeth Parsons
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lynn Hall

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

john miller

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kim Luckey



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Thank you,

Cathryn Waters

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Kelsey Naumann



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Thank you,

Doris Tyson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mike Myers

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amy Wang

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Deb Krause



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As a Florida native born in South Dade County, I have seen the destruction of much of our state. I've also seen valiant efforts to preserve some of what is still left. There are not many pine rocklands remaining. There's still a chance to save this parcel. Heroes don't need to wear capes--they just need to act to save the helpless when presented with the opportunity. Be that hero. Save the Rocklands.

Thank you, Tara Powers

Tara Powers
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mara Eugenia Martinez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lisette Lopez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gloria Tomback

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Lisa Kelley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cheryl McFadden

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marc Frankel
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

K M

██████████

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Thank you,

Ceilidh Watson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Renee moticker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Eric Briner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeffrey Alt

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Oliver Ljustina
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Leyla Bravo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rhonda Suelter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

ruth cohen
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

sylvia gordon
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Christine Kucera

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

David Miranda-Mundo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Yvonne Koch
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nycoll Gomez



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Thank you,

Edward Blair

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andy Sweeney

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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Thank you,

Amy Lund

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Samantha Decker-Hoppen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Victoria Kemish

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Ann Colagross

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Jed Shlackman



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I vehemently oppose destroying prime eco-habitat in order to build yet another Wal-Mart/mega development. There is enough concrete in S. Florida. Leave the land in its current, undeveloped state. Protect the species and the vegetation that this acreage contains.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

John Gilbert

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mark Kosarin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michelle Hernandez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Erin Dahl



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Thank you,

Betty Scott

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Heather Singler



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Thank you,

Joanne Faw

[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Holly Martin



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Thank you,

Mary Ann Page

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ileana Atencio

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Noreen Dobrinsky



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Thank you,

Andreina Weichselbaumer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Chloe Lloyd

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Natalie Cole

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Chris Bellor



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Thank you,

Alexis Horn
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Bernice Russo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Fred Rubin
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

B Tuttle

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Adriana Ponte

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Cathryn Ansbro

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amber Stoupas



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CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

Please give the pine rocklands plants and animals the protection they urgently need to survive extinction. So many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests, germinating only when there has been a fire-Coral Reef Commons are going to be paved over for a store you can find everywhere.

Pines=one place

Walmart= too many locations

No matter what the developer says, the loss of this land will kill many of these species. This is the only place where some endangered species still exist. Why is there an Endangered Species Act if it is not applied.

Why did the service decline to host a public hearing on the proposal? Is there pressure on you to hide this to the main public? Please give local citizens a chance to learn more about the unique wildlife hanging on to a thread.

Protection of our wildlife -- plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home, the forest. It is so sad to see once again nature is losing to greedy men.

Thank you,

Steve Bourassa

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ursula Lampron

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melissa Hiksdaal



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Thank you,

Michael Prather

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joyce Sasser

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sean Sanford

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ignacio Martel

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Riley Duncan
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Arthur Auwaerter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Emily Wever



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Thank you,

Kathleen Lamiell



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Thank you,

Isis Fuentes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Luis Mesa



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Thank you,

Elizabeth Romfh

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Wayne Helfrich

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Leonella Alvarez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

B Montgomery

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mercedes De Marchena

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Matthew Price

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Yisel Batlle



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Thank you,

Cynthia Blankenship

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Lilia Piedrahita

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sandra Schultz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ricardo Benitez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Eileen Harrigan

██████████
██████████

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Thank you,

Cynthia Tomassetti

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Katie Swanson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Autumn Choka

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Todd Obolsky



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Thank you,

Elizabeth Turner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrea Andersen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Madison Taylor

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeffrey Ellis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marianne Shiple

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lois Whelan

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[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Wilma Ramirez

[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Michael Sirochman
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ryan Martinez

[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Phebe Rogers

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rebecca Sawyer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jillian Burrows



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Thank you,

Sharon Brant
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Mr Randy York
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Tara Byron

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nadine Matos
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Charles Reeder

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Benjamin Taylor

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert Mellone
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Iris Griffin



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Thank you,

Lizzy Sexton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms Cynthia Scothorn
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Janet Sims-Phillips



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Thank you,

Kevin Smith
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Belinda b Maynard

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Molly Fisher

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Katherine Sego

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cynthia Vazquez



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Thank you,

James Cheak

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carlos Montenegro

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joe

joe laduca

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Angel Pierro
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ratna Elis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Toni Napolitano

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Tom Papageorgiou

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert Burr

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cathy Miller



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Liz Harris

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Margaret McCarthy

██████████

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Thank you,

Rebecca Cernogorsky

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Angel Abreu

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amy De Los Reyes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Natalie Laudicina

██████████

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Thank you,

Dakota Parris

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Libby Volgyes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jason Gomez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nicole Drury

██████████

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Thank you,

Jennifer Morris



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Thank you,

Kathleen Frabk
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Saby Carey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kellie Otero

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rachael Philipson

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Thank you,

Rosa Lydia
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sara Carroll

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Donna Fries

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Rachael Philipsen

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Thank you,

Susan Schermer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rachel Beasley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nick Nottebaum



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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Yvonne Douglas

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Phyllis Peters

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

James Howe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Patricia Folsom
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Paula Powers

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dennis Bencomo



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Thank you,

JoAnn Moyano

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Camille de Marchena



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Thank you,

Silvia Steppan



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[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Alex Montiglio



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Thank you,

Elsie C. W
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Beverley Murdock

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Martin Ander



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I'm writing as a biologist and a concerned citizen of Miami-Dade to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land -- one of the few pockets of pine rocklands left in South Florida -- could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

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Thank you,

Neil Losin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carol Malec

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Daryth Morrissey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

William Heimbuch
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Steven Rivera

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Robert Malec

[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Mariana Rosales
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mary Goetzinger

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michelle Alonso

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Marisel Abreu

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

keila gonzalez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amy Creek

██████████

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Thank you,

Marcia Maynard

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lori German

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kay Torano
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dorothy Fernandez



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Thank you,

Alice Kulikauskas

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cornelis Reijm

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Vicki Simon
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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Please provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive. Many of these species are found only in the endangered pine rockland forests, including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The loss of this land would be a death sentence for these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that there's simply nowhere else to live these species. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

I was immensely disappointed to learn that the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida, least of all another wal mart. We need to protect the few remaining wildlife habitats on our great state.

Thank you,
Paul Kemp

Paul Kemp

██████████

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Thank you,

Brady Beck



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Thank you,

Holly Krahe
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amy Hollingsworth

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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David Thatcher



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Thank you,

Victor Kasper

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Julie Hicks
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cristian Ramirez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lorna Arnett

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Deborah Trachtman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ian Parker



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Thank you,

Lori Muckler
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Al Huff

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melissa Martinez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
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Thank you,

MaryLou Nadeau

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amanda Salis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Megan Kiser



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Thank you,

Jill Lopilato

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Paola Carranza-Robinson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,
Emily Ingram

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Yael Girard

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sue Pattock

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Barham



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Thank you,

Margaret Busch

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ismael Valdes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

FLOR FLORES

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kasey McNutt



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Thank you,

Ansley Wales



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Thank you,

Alycia Eisenhauer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melissa Stinson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mat Osgood



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Thank you,

Ken O'Connor



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Thank you,

Diane Hedges

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Beatriz Corzo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeanie Slade



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Thank you,

Kathi Smith

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melissa Milligan
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Julie Sloane

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

jeffrey busch

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Suzanne Thornton



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And if you want people to visit, then you need to stop taking away what makes it unique!!
Thank you,

Elizabeth Fleming

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dona Knapp

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Val Smith

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alex Diaz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kathryn Comer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sylvia Hatcher

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Pauline Goldsmith

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

MaryLou Marazi

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Eddie Garcia



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Thank you,

Liz White

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lucy Craft

██████████

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Thank you,

Valerie Bohannon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jason Frank
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kenneth Setzer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carisa Angulo

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Thank you,

Amy Harris

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Julia Golbey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mallory Fenn

████████████████████

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Thank you,

Gloria Pinon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brittany Bankovich

This is the most endangered habitat type in Florida! We cannot afford to lose another square meter of it.

Brittany Bankovich
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Davis Sapper

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Cheri Pierce

██████████

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Thank you,

Jessica Gilbert

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sheila K



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Thank you,

Amy Nichols

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jessica Espada

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

William Floyd
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Judy Purinton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michael Baranski
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kahn Eve



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Thank you,

Eric Bierer

██████████
██

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Thank you,

Sheamus Lennon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Yosanni Torres

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

April Leonard

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Heidi Mirisola

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

K M Smith

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mariela Heddle



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Thank you,

Melissa Brown



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Thank you,

Mrs Rebecca Coughlin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Stephanie Brovold

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Casey Goldsmith

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sandra Sanchez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

McKenna Vance



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Lisa Fernandez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ingrid Sheyn
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Su Thomas

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rachel Mintz



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██████████

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Thank you,

elizabeth battaglia

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Paul Bithorn



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Thank you,
Catherine Kilbride

Catherine Kilbride
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Judy Dunker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karrie Quirin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Piero Manca
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cheryl Powell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carol Carnevale



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Thank you,

Suzanne Sieder

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Neil Fenn



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Thank you,

Whitney Bowton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Norman Heinrich

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Zeida Cecilia-Mendez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andres Reyes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,
Jessica Trifiletti

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Thank you,

Marcos Gonzalez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Fran Sullivan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kenneth Setzer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lynn Ritter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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CC: David Dell, USFWS
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Thank you,

Sherri Swearingen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Veronica Adams

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Patricia Echeverri

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brenna Verner
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kaitlin Palenzuela

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joseph Alvarez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jack Dabah
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

George Lambert

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kristin Cadavieco
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

giovanna kourany

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

LeeAnn Haley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Charlotte Ljustina



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Thank you,

John Gehr

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Avishag Engelman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gloria latham
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gabriel Ramirez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lisa Gunn
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Raquel KopetmAn



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Thank you,

Alexandra Vargas

████████████████████

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Thank you,

Silvia M Valles

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gus Kaufman
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Glass

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sarah Ridgway



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Patricia Brucks
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Margarita Fichtner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kimball Mathews

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

Dear USF&WS,

The pine rockland forest, which is being considered as a site for Walmart, a school and apartments, is too precious of a resource to destroy. The developers and other interested parties say that, actually, the habitat will be better preserved after this development takes place, but they are wrong. They are serving their own interests, and have very powerful, understandable motives to advocate for their point of view. But I've lived in Miami for 40+ years and every day I understand and appreciate our unique environment more. I believe Mother Nature, God, the Spirit of the Universe (or random chance), has given the gift of nature to enjoy and more importantly to protect and cherish. I believe our task -- our challenge -- as humans, who are governed by strong survival instincts, is to figure out how to survive and thrive while also preserving these gifts of nature. It would be easy to just pave over everything, for the comfort and convenience of humans -- but there is a huge hidden cost to doing that. This letter -- no one letter - can enumerate that cost. But biodiversity deserves to be protected and saved. It is that simple, and in fact, if we could see and articulate the really really big picture, we would see that saving biodiversity will benefit humans in countless ways. It's just hard to measure, because our society values things in monetary terms, and it is hard to quantify the value of saving biodiversity - it's a huge and extraordinarily complex topic! Citizens, organizations, governments and agencies must constantly try to articulate that value -- OR - things will just go extinct and drop off our radar screen, because powerful interests are set to make money off of the land they live on. I urge you to deny the permit to develop this precious pine rockland parcel and to save it for the creatures and plants that live there, the ecosystem services it provides and ultimately for the benefit of our community and society at large.

Sincerely yours,
Arlene Ferris
South Miami, FL

Arlene Ferris

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Beverley Bailey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Eileen M Snitzer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marilyn Daenzer

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kristen Cox



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Thank you,

Riley Blair

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Patricia Hoot

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kelly Owens

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Shirley Grills Konefal

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lynn Bodie

████████████████████

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Thank you,

Christopher Maloney

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joseph Segor

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sandra Barbosa

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carole Reddish



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Thank you,

Arthur Nelson

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Thank you,

Jerry Maddox

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Erin Eule

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Justin Shick



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Thank you,

Anne-Marie Skjong-Nilsen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ian Poveda

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

April Rosenik
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Emily Falascino



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Thank you,

rafael sa



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Thank you,

Kara Paez



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Thank you,

Angeline Evans



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Thank you,

Monica Pena

██████████
██████████

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Thank you,

Casey Dillard



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Thank you,

Cynthia Chaney

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rosemary Widman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Margaret Kovacs
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Benita Maynard
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Bonnie Hill

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Ana Martinez



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Thank you,

Bertha Bringas

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mylin Espinoza

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mary Clifford

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amy Mitchell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jos Hill

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

David Ratcliff

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lori Farrington

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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John Diaz



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Thank you,

Valkyrie Kimmel

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Charlotte Colon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Gracy Kushner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

David Lacayo



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Thank you,

Cristina Hopkins



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Thank you,

victoria gonzalez



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Thank you,

Amanda Cuello

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jamie Chandler

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Shirley Webb

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

John Fazio



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Thank you,

Janina Abreu

██████████

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Thank you,

Raymond Devlin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melissa Brown



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Thank you,

Richelle Gerner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sarah Vingerhoedt

██████████

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Thank you,

Steve LaBree

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

brooke gehr
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marcela Vado

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cecilia Ford



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Thank you,

Bebe Benbrook

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

Hello,

To get right to the point, allowing this tract of rare natural pine rockland to be developed is a terrible idea. We need all the pine rocklands we can get, there is hardly any of it left! This habitat and associated ecosystem is a national treasure, that is now almost completely gone due to poorly planned and massive overdevelopment. We can't undo all that now, but we can hold onto what little we have left.

Therefore, I strongly urge you to DENY any permit to develop this land. It needs to stay wild.

We simply cannot afford to lose any more of this habitat, especially any tract large enough to support sustaining populations of wildlife. Keeping this unique parcel viable as a natural area is clearly the highest and best purpose for this tract, and the broad public interest demands that you strongly support that goal.

Thank you.

Mike Whaley



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Thank you,

Phyllis Anderson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lauren Cacciatori



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Thank you,

Steve King

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

don renelt

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Benjamin Torrens

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Auriane de Buchet

██████████

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Amy Lomaskin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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Thank you,

Doris Tillman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gabrielle Miller



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Thank you,

Frances McClintock

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Daniel Carter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cindy Ermus

████████████████████

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Thank you,

Veronica Gomez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Chris Borrás

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lawrence Hill

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robin Karnes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sandy Loesche

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Laura Miller

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Victoria Jammel
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Eric Ungberg

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Walter Wallenstein

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

JP Easton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
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When will you stop? After everything is gone? STOP DESTROYING OUR STATE!

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Thank you,

Donna Clements

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rebecca Gerrish

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brittany Palladino

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sarah Melcher

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Meagan Maginot

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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I CAN NOT believe this is even under consideration. This is not why I moved here. I moved here for a green neighborhood, not Walmart

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Thank you,

Gloria Cantens

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marie Sutera

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Ruth Schaut

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Michelle Crawford



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Thank you,

Al Uy



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Thank you,

Beatriz Ayca

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeff Jarboe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Madeline Petersen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ginger Smith

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Caroline Krenik

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Stephanie Dunn

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you, signed. Brian P. Wilson.

Brian Wilson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mayra Pupo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

David Brinko

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Maureen Theunissen

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Beatriz Macias

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Walter Carpenter
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nancy Porter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brenda Duffey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marcell Feijoo



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Thank you,

Heather Barnes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Daniel Dubs

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Amy Kelble

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

SANDRA STRICKLAND

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Karen Sardo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Laurie Martin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Katie Randall

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Natalie Rodriguez



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Thank you,

Barbara Feeney

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Eileen Wolfe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Scott Fuhrman
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dolora Batchelor

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Neil O'Neal



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Thank you,

Deborah Thompson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jarrood Gillen
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Maritza Abreu

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rebecca Bradley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Candy Ramirez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Crystal Malinguaggio

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Slater

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alex Luiggi

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Juan Carlos Jarquin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jennifer huffman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melony Clarke

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Heather Yates

██████████

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Thank you,

Mark Griffith



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Donna Ray

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Gregory Sussman

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Colin Polk

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
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OUR WILDLIFE IS PRECIOUS

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Thank you,

Sophie Delebois



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Thank you,

Delaney Shimkus

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrea Orellana

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Albert Rykhof

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carina Peterson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Debi Kittle

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Angelina Sweda



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Thank you,

Laci Hendershot



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Thank you,

Melissa Mann

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Douglas Abbarno
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jeanette Tortora

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jane Harris

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jane Harris

[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Mari Alcolea

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Debra Thornton

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ashley Marinaro



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Thank you,

Yami Medina

██████████

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
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Thank you,

Pamela Thomas

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melissa Melnick

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Erin Alfonso

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Jacqueline Nunez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lucinda Register

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Terri Bradbury

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jamie Gonzalez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kriste Mesa

[REDACTED]
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Thank you,

Justin Zickafoose

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nikki Costanzo



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Thank you,

Gail Gross

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marielba Paredes

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Liliane Agra

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

William Watson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Carl Ruthman



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Thank you,

Donna Torres

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Matthew Rosales

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jesse Denis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

io gonzalez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Toni McIntosh



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Thank you,

Madelyn Tucker

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Andrew Gilhooly



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Thank you,

Dahlia Du Chateau

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sheryl Leigh-Davault



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Thank you,

Greg Lewis

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Maria De La Rosa



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Thank you,

Adam Wiegand

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,
James Jacob

James Jacob

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Helen D'Avanza

██████████

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Thank you,

George Guillen

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Thank you,

Patricia Lynch

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Paul Chavez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Rosie Brown
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marcia Smith
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

irene simpson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cameron Arocha

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Steven Guillen

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Thank you,

Linda Lancaster
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Cindy Griffin

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lisa Howe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Katelyn Horn
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Megan Barnes

, 3387

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Thank you,

Cynthia Guerra

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

John Ochotnický

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Erick Rodriguez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

sue figgs

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Rhonda May



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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Thomas Zenteno

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Adrian Slade

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lauri Rowell



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Thank you,

Tracie Kolhoff

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Anddy Entrena
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jack Patterson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Marie Rossachacj

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Richelle Hunt

██████████

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Thank you,

Adriana Castellanos

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jon Nusz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Giannina Longmire
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Victoria Fernandez



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Thank you,

Sarah L. Smith

Sarah Smith



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I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons. Miami sure as hell does not need yet one more development in this endangered habitat.

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Thank you,

Steven Holt

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Clarissa Rodriguez



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Thank you,

Joanne Bolemon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Also, this area does not need another Walmart and the multi-unit housing that is being proposed for that tract of land will only bring further congestion to an already over populated and over congested area of town.

Thank you,

Javier Prat

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Melanie Padron
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ariana Del valle

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carmen Rodriguez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nathalie Benitez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Carlos Strange

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Barbara Rath

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Kenia Dolmuz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Aggie Lillo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Yoanna Pousa

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Leah Canavan

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

DIANNA PEREZ

██████████
██████████

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Thank you,

Kristin Cadavieco
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mai Yap

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Esther Garvett

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Xeniamaria Rodriguez

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Thank you,

Marcos Gonzalez
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lark Campisano

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Charles Cutteridge

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alexandra Morgan



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Thank you,

Elena Pratt

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ms michele wade
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Dorie Lynne

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Ryan Zach

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robert Lickliter

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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If a Walmart is built there please be sure that we will take this to the people and protest @UM

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Thank you,

Maryin Vargas

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Thea Wang

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sara Watson
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Susan Neale

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Joyce Espineta



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Thank you,

Vivian Gonzalez



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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Jessica Zilinsky



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

violeta legon

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Nicole Hottendorf

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

brian agudelo

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

maggie LaSpina

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Helena Taylor

██████████

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Thank you,

Melissa Berry

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

lauren hastings



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Thank you,

Lourdes Caveda

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Brad and Mable Brown

██████████
██████████

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Thank you,

Antonella Wilby



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Thank you,

Gustavo Ginebra

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Adriane Wise

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I agree with this letter below. As a Park Ranger with Everglades, I am lucky to work within pinestrands that will never be destroyed. I strongly believe these pines should also be preserved outside of the park within the neighborhoods. Please put a stop to this development and ensure these pinelands remain wild and protected.

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Thank you,

Jeff Gonzalez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Lindsey Mann



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Thank you,

Kirsten Hines

██████████

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Thank you,

Lara Moody

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Elizabeth Spagnoli

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Elizabeth Grafe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
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I'm a former Florida resident (born and raised) and I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

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I was born and raised in South Florida and will be returning to the state in a few short years. I treasured and valued the natural habitat and our family took full advantage of Florida's natural wonders. We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Barb Rankin

██████████

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Thank you,

Karla Garcia

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Karin Sanders

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Rebecca Brey

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Steven Engel

████████████████████

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Thank you,

Nancy Hadley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Miriam Neville

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Robin Porter



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Thank you,

Rebecca Sardell

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sue Montoya

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Julie Morcate

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Geraldine McClary

Geraldein McClary
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

J.Michael Wilhelm

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Jacqueline Moore

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Sandy Milledge



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Thank you,

Doreen Perez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Angel Pauley

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Alexander Elliott

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Juan Arellano

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Bella Zinca

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Mary Tost-Dunning

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

Neely Alberson



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

I'm writing as a concern citizen and pine rockland researcher. I request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons. Without this habitat, these species are doomed for extinction - all because we need another Walmart and apartment buildings? This to me is just unacceptable. This last significant pine rockland remnant NEEDS to be protected, not paved over and destroyed.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat is absolutely not good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. In addition to much of their habitat being destroyed, it has also been extremely fragmented making them genetically isolated pools without any breeding/crosspollination. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed. Without the Richmond pine rockland, many plant/animal species will simply be doomed for extinction.

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Thank you,

Meike de Vringer

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██████████

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Thank you,

Kris Gus

██████████

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Thank you,

Stephanie Coutant

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Thank you,

ginny burks

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Isabelle Matik

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

William Clary

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

Miranda Stuart
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, crc_hcp@fws.gov
RE: Coral Reef Commons
CC: David Dell, USFWS
CC: Ashleigh Blackford, South Florida Ecological Services Office

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Thank you,

April Watson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP and EA Comment
Date: Sunday, May 14, 2017 8:14:49 PM

To whom it may concern,

Pine rockland was once one of the dominant habitats in South Florida. It is home to the highest native plant biodiversity of any Florida ecosystem and is one of the rarest types of forest in the entire world. Nevertheless, today less than 2 percent of pine rockland habitat remains in Miami-Dade County. Of the dwindling remnants of pine rockland in South Florida, the largest habitat patch outside a National Park is the South Dade Richmond Pine Complex, which is scheduled to be bulldozed, or at the least, further fragmented to construct yet another residential and commercial complex.

In addition to threatening one of the few remnants of a globally imperiled habitat, the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan imperils numerous at-risk species, including Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Florida bonneted bat, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, Miami tiger beetle, white-crowned pigeon, Florida Brickell bush, and Carter's small flowered flax.

Every vanishing patch of pine rockland, and each species that it supports, warrant protection. They are a rare and a unique part of the country's natural history, and should be protected in perpetuity. Strip malls are an ephemeral and ubiquitous feature of the American landscape which deserve none of the same considerations.

Please do not approve any habitat conservation plan that threatens to replace a single square-yard of precious pine rockland habitat.

Sincerely,
Kelly Soluri

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP and EA
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 4:39:10 PM

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford,

I urge you please do not approve the Habitat Conservation Plan for the proposed Coral Reef Commons development. As you are aware, pine rockland habitat is found only in southern Florida and the Bahamas. It is crucial to preserve the remaining pinelands we have **intact**, and not divide them up into smaller parcels, which is deleterious to wildlife.

Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site, including the Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Florida bonneted bat, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, Miami tiger beetle and white-crowned pigeon, were not properly surveyed by the developer RAM Realty in partnership with the University of Miami. They also concluded that much of the pineland is overgrown and beyond salvage. Naturalist and author Roger Hammer disagrees, recently telling the *Miami Herald* that pine rocklands are "easy to reclaim, but they're [UM and RAM] using this false argument that it's ruined and therefore we need a Walmart," he said. "That's bogus." Mr. Hammer cited the example of the nearby pine rockland habitat in Larry & Penny Thompson Park that was heavily damaged by Hurricane Andrew and invasive Burma reed but was restored and is now thriving.

The site of the proposed Coral Reef Commons was originally donated to the University of Miami for research and preservation purposes, not to add to traffic congestion and overdevelopment. The developer's proposed mitigation is markedly inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas: developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is, at best, 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within an acceptable range, especially when compared to other HCPs, and especially for a project that contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem that is designated **critical habitat** for several species.

The proposed mitigation area is a pine rockland, a highly unique and rare ecosystem that depends on periodic burning, which would not be feasible with approximately 2,000 residents in the proposed apartments, as well as a Walmart and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must undergo burns. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pine rockland is not an adequate substitute for fire.

All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, and, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative), are either "straw men," or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative), seek to get mitigation credit for property that is already under a conservation easement (the Off-Site Mitigation Area).

The developer's criteria for restoration and maintenance of the preserves is not based on science and has no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (by their own admission) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their own definition of conservation success. This cannot be allowed to happen. The University of Miami was a very poor steward of the area in the past, even refusing access to Miami-Dade County officials to

conduct an environmental survey. UM would not be a trustworthy conservation partner; they have proven that abundantly.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as stated on its web site, is to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. It is abundantly clear to me and many others that the Richmond pine rockland area proposed as the Coral Reef Commons site, and the diverse and rare species of plants and animals it shelters, should be preserved for present and future generations. To destroy something unique - such as the Miami tiger beetle which occurs nowhere else in the world, and pine rocklands, one of the rarest forests on the planet - to build something ubiquitous (a parking lot and a Walmart and other retail shops, which are everywhere) **cannot be justified**.

The beauty and uniqueness of Florida nature and wildlife is precious, and will only become more so in the years to come as population and development pressures increase. We need to preserve what we have left, for its own sake as well as to preserve our quality of life. No resident of Miami-Dade County would say that we need more traffic and congestion, and we **especially do not** need to sacrifice a rare natural area for the profit of a developer.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter. Please be true to the mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is not acceptable to destroy endangered species – both plant and animal – for this unworthy and unneeded project.

Sincerely,

Marci Philbin

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

From: [Gruver, Brad](#)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: [Tucker, Melissa](#); [Goff, Jennifer](#); [Hight, Jason](#); [Zambrano, Ricardo](#); [Hodapp, Marissa](#); [Ostertag, Tom](#)
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP comments
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 3:37:14 PM
Attachments: [Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan Comments.docx](#)

Please find attached comments from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Bradley J. Gruver, Ph.D.
Section Leader
Species Conservation Planning Section
Division of Habitat and Species Conservation
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
[REDACTED]



May 22, 2017

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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MyFWC.com

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta, GA 30345
crc_hcp@fws.gov
david_dell@fws.gov

RE: Draft Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment Comments, Miami-Dade County

Dear Mr. Dell:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) staff have received the referenced draft Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan (CRCHCP), accompanying incidental take permit (ITP) application, and environmental assessment associated with the Coral Reef Commons development proposed for Miami-Dade County. We offer the following comments and recommendations as technical assistance and in accordance with Chapter 379, Florida Statutes.

Project Description:

The CRCHCP is being submitted as part of an application for an ITP from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) pursuant with the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The requested duration of the ITP is 30 years from the date of issuance. The project site is located in the northern end of the Richmond Pine Rockland tract, one mile west of the Florida Turnpike on the south side of Coral Reef Drive in Miami-Dade County. The project footprint encompasses 137.9 acres, which includes development of 82.61 acres and 55.29 acres of on-site mitigation preserves. The proposal also includes 50.96 acres of off-site mitigation located on the University of Miami Richmond Campus one-half mile southeast of the project site.

Potentially Affected Resources

According to the draft CRCHCP, the issuance of the ITP would cover the effects of the proposed development on six species listed by the USFWS and three species listed by the FWC:

- Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly (*Strymon acis bartrami*, Federally Endangered [FE])
- Florida bonneted bat (*Eumops floridana*, FE)
- Eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon corais couperi*, Federally Threatened [FT])
- Florida leafwing butterfly (*Anaea troglodyte floralialis*, FE)

- Miami tiger beetle (*Cicindelidia floridana*, FE)
- Rim rock crowned snake (*Tantilla oolitica*, State Threatened [ST])
- White-crowned pigeon (*Patagioenas leucocephala*, ST)
- Gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*, Federally Candidate [FC] and ST)

Comments and Recommendations:

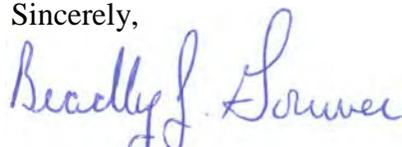
FWC staff supports the applicant's commitment to maintaining habitat onsite and on the mitigation parcel through an appropriate fire regime. The proposed, long-term prescribed burning regime that is required to restore and maintain the proposed on-site pine rockland preserves may be difficult to implement and maintain within this highly urbanized landscape. The addition of new residential and commercial development onsite and the proximity to the Florida Turnpike may be additional challenges to the burning regime. Miami-Dade County staff have also encountered these difficulties while managing their own properties in the area. Therefore, FWC staff will continue to coordinate with the applicant, the USFWS, and the Florida Forest Service to provide management alternatives and prevent the degradation of the unique pine rockland habitat within the project area and the Richmond tract.

A secondary concern lies with the "Stepping Stone" concept within the Preserve Management Plan. The relatively small acreage (3.88 acres), and long, thin shape (see Figure 7.1 of the CRCHCP) of the stepping stones raises concern due to the amount of created edge. A single, large stepping stone or large corridor may better augment the Southern Corridor and provide better connectivity between the East and West Preserves.

Three state-listed species are included in the species analysis within the CRCHCP: the gopher tortoise, the white-crowned pigeon and the rim rock crowned snake; please note that on page 8 of the document, all three species are included in the table, however the text above the table only identifies one State Threatened species. Although not documented on site, we support the inclusion of conservation measures intended to address potential impacts to these species in the plan. As discussed at the March 28, 2016 meeting with the applicants, the federal ITP cannot currently serve as state authorization for take as outlined in Chapter 68A-27, Florida Administrative Code for state-listed species. If take authorization is requested for any state-listed species, the CRCHCP can serve as the basis of the state application, and FWC staff are available to assist in the permit process.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on this important conservation effort. FWC is committed to utilizing incentive-based conservation programs, such as Habitat Conservation Plans, to provide conservation for listed species and their habitats. If you have any questions or need clarification regarding our comments or FWC's state listed species policy, please contact Tom Ostertag, at or via email tom.ostertag@myfwc.com. We look forward to further participation in this planning process.

Sincerely,



Bradley J. Gruver, Ph.D.
Section Leader
Species Conservation Planning Section

bjg/teo
Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan Comments

cc: Melissa Tucker, FWC, Meliss.Tucker@MyFWC.com
Jennifer Goff, FWC, Jennifer.Goff@MyFWC.com
Jason Hight, FWC, Jason.Hight@MyFWC.com
Ricardo Zambrano, FWC, Richardo.Zambrano@MyFWC.com
Tom Ostertag, FWC, Tom.Ostertag@MyFWC.com
Marissa Hodapp, FWC, Marissa.Hodapp@MyFWC.com

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP comments
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 12:08:11 AM
Attachments: [Coral Reef Commons HCP Comments Truglio.pdf](#)

Dear Ashleigh;

Please accept my attached comments (in red notation) for the Coral Reef Commons HCP. Also note these are my personal comments and do not represent my current or past employer.

As you know, I began working with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) in 2004 when I was charged with assisting in writing Florida's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). Specifically I was responsible for writing the Pine Rockland habitat chapter as well as the 2012 revision. While employed with FWC, I was therefore responsible for presenting critical information regarding pine rockland so learned very detailed information about various sites. This information allowed me to encourage FWC to prioritize pine rockland habitat and become one of the recognized 'Priority Habitats' which then allowed State Wildlife Grant funds to be allocated towards the imperiled habitat. This included a grant to Miami Dade County.

My vested interest in pine rockland led me to join the Steering Committee of the Pine Rockland Workgroup where I was able to coordinate and collaborate with all partners. I then began research in 2007 on four imperiled butterflies in pine rockland (including various sites throughout the Richmond tract). I have since begun to continue my research as of 2016 where my focus is on the Florida duskywing. I can attest that in surveying 42 Miami Dade sites, there are only 17 that may possibly be viable for the Florida duskywing but I have only found it in the Richmond tract which is alarming as they were much more abundant from 2007-2009 surveys.

While employed with FWC in 2015, I was invited to visit the proposed Coral Reef Commons sites so I was able to see first hand, the actual condition of these sites, what occurs there and the possibility of restoration to viable pine rockland habitat - most of which is very possible.

I have worked so closely with all partners involved in pine rockland efforts and have such a vested interest in this habitat with not only particularly the Florida duskywing but all butterflies as I have led the Imperiled Butterflies of Florida Work Group since 2008. Hence my comments include first hand knowledge of the sites, the species occurrence and histories and the concern for the future of this imperiled habitat. Please accept my comments in consideration of opposing the ITP for this project.

Sincerely,

Mary

*Please accept my apologies as the timeline was tight and this was many late nights of reviewing! :)

Mary R. Truglio
Butterfly Conservation Coordinator
McGuire Center for Lepidoptera & Biodiversity
Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida



Coral Reef Commons HCP Comments

The Applicant for this HCP includes Coral Reef Retail LLC, Coral Reef Resi Ph I LLC, and Ramdev LLC (collectively referred to as “Ram Coral Reef”) and University of Miami (UM). Ram Coral Reef and UM are collectively referred to as Applicant.

Why is a private company and a federally funded facility like the University of Miami applying together? The University of Miami receives over \$100 million annually in federal funding. That places them in the federal nexus.

The Off-site Mitigation Area, owned by UM and referred to as the “UM Richmond Campus”, is located less than ½ mile to the southeast of the CRC Property and is 50.96 acres.

The UM Richmond Campus should already be managed by UM with invasive control and prescribed fire regimes under the existing NFC permit P-391. The UM Richmond campus also receives large amounts of federal funding, has many federally listed species on its property, and should already be independently managing this property. This mitigation proposal for an already obligatory managed facility equates to no effective resultant mitigation for the take at the former UM South Campus.

Portions of the Project consist of habitat classified as pine rocklands, which have become degraded overtime as a result of lack of management.

The reference to degradation over time as a lack of management is referring to the applicants, both UM and RAM, as the parties who failed to properly manage. UM failed to properly manage the property for decades under NFC designation and being part of the federal nexus and RAM has been in violation of its NFC permit issued in 2013 and not fulfilled its management obligations. The applicants are recognizing their own lack of management.

1.1.1 HCP Plan Area – Includes CRC Property and Off-site Mitigation Area

“The Off-site Mitigation Area is bounded by residential development to the south, Zoo Miami to the west and southwest, and U.S. Coast Guard property to the north. The Mitigation Areas are depicted in Figure 1-A.”

According to other maps previously distributed and viewed, the adjacent properties to the southwest of the proposed off-site mitigation area include Zoo Miami and Larry & Penny Thompson Memorial Park. Figure 1-A and 2-1 also appear to incorrectly delineate property/parcel and habitat boundaries.

1.1.3 Permit Duration for Project

The Applicant requests an ITP duration of thirty (30) years for the Project. Following the 30-year permit duration, permit extensions in 25-year increments may be evaluated and granted by the USFWS in order to ensure habitat management activities remain in compliance with permit conditions.

A 30-year permit duration is too long for an entity that has not demonstrated an ability to manage the habitat and species held within the project area. UM has had ownership and responsibility for this parcel for the 30 years prior to the sale and showed no proper stewardship for the state and

federally listed species that occur on the property and have allowed the habitat to go without proper management. UM also illegally cleared 6 acres on the site without proper permitting during this period and improperly disposed of radioactive materials creating a Superfund site that the Department of Justice sued the university over. RAM Realty has since neglected to execute the conditions of their Miami-Dade County permit to properly manage the property. This precedent shows no willingness or previous ability to properly manage this parcel for that amount of time. A thirty year period with this continued management would further degrade critical habitat.

Eight wildlife species are analyzed in this HCP for potential effects of the action. These species are listed in Table 1-1, and include five federally-listed species, one candidate species, one federally proposed listed species, and one state threatened species. Of the eight species listed in Table 1-1, only the Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly (BSHB) and Florida bonneted bat (FBB) have been documented on the CRC Property.

How has the species selection occurred? Why are there some but not all federally protected species included? Why was only one state threatened species included when there are many other present within the Richmond Tract and on the property? There is no mention or plans for the federally threatened crested caracara (*Polyborus plancus audubonii*)

<https://www.facebook.com/ZooMiamiConservation/photos/a.1147279488715018.1073741828.141856249257342/1187664044676562/?type=3&theater>

or wood stork (*Mycteria Americana*)

<https://www.facebook.com/ZooMiamiConservation/photos/a.1147279488715018.1073741828.141856249257342/1196011580508475/?type=3&theater>

which has been documented and readily occurs on adjacent properties, or the state threatened Florida burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia floridana*), little blue heron (*Egretta caerulea*), southeastern American kestrel (*Falco sparverius paulus*), or tricolored heron (*Egretta tricolor*) that have also been documented and readily inhabit the Richmond Tract. These species need to be evaluated and the plan incorporate measures to avoid take and conflict as the others have been.

Gopher tortoises have been documented to occur on almost all of the sections of the Richmond Tract. They are incredibly cryptic in many of the fragments but are almost certainly present at the project site. They are present at Larry and Penny Thompson, Martinez Pineland, Zoo Miami, Robert Morgan, the DOD property, and just recently discovered at the Gold Coast Railroad and Military History Museum. If they have not been documented, a more thorough biological survey needs to be undertaken.

The rim rock crowned snake is also another cryptic species. Two documented occurrences of this species has occurred 725 yards immediately southeast of the site within the past few years. This was only done through the use of drift fences and pitfall traps in an array over a ten year period. No adequate biological survey for such a species has occurred at the project site to adequately determine whether this species is present.

The Eastern diamondback rattlesnake (*Crotalus adamanteus*) is also present within the Richmond Tract and is under review for federal threatened listing status and should be included in HCP.

The Applicant also will provide conservation measures for fourteen plant species listed in **Table 1-2**. The plants listed in **Table 1-2** either occur or could potentially occur within the CRC Property

following restoration activities. Based on USFWS direction, incidental take authorization is not required for plants in **Table 1-2**. The conservation measures for the plants are intended to demonstrate that the plant species are “adequately covered” and have a net conservation benefit in this HCP. As such, the plant species are considered “Covered Species” for the purposes of application of the “No Surprises” policy. The “No Surprises” regulations provide the permittee assurances that, assuming the HCP is being properly implemented, the USFWS will not require additional measures or funding beyond what was agreed to in the HCP without the permittee’s consent. The changed and unforeseen circumstances relevant to the “No Surprises” policy are addressed in **Section 12.0**.

This species list of federally or state endangered and threatened species is also lacking in coverage for all of the species present at, or likely at, the project location and found in adjacent properties of the Richmond Tract. A more thorough biologic survey and listing would also include the state listed species below. For this permit to cover all likely species in the next 30 years to become federally listed, it must include a more thorough plan. With the continued loss of habitat in the Keys and habitat transition in ENP that will occur over the next coming decades due to climate change and sea level rise, many of these species will have to have the Richmond tract as their critical habitat in order to persist. The ones in bold have been documented on the project property

Bracted colicroot	<i>Aletris bracteata</i>	Endangered
Little strongbark	<i>Bouyeria cassinifolia</i>	Endangered
One-nerved ernodea	<i>Ernodea cokeri</i>	Endangered
Keys thoroughwort	<i>Eupatorium villosum</i>	Endangered
Wild-potato morning-glory	<i>Ipomoea microdactyla</i>	Endangered
Rocklands morning-glory	<i>Ipomoea tenuissima</i>	Endangered
Skyblue clustervine	<i>Jacquemontia pentantha</i>	Endangered
Pineland lantana	<i>Lantana depressa</i>	Endangered
Wild sweet basil	<i>Ocimum campechianum</i>	Endangered
Everglades poinsettia	<i>Poinsettia pinetorum</i>	Endangered
Bahama wild coffee	<i>Psychotria ligustrifolia</i>	Endangered
Florida skullcap	<i>Scutellaria floridana</i>	Endangered
Pygmy spikemoss	<i>Selaginella eatonii</i>	Endangered
Wedgelet fern	<i>Sphenomeris clavata</i>	Endangered
Southern ladies’-tresses	<i>Spiranthes torta</i>	Endangered
Least halberd fern	<i>Tectaria fimbriata</i>	Endangered
Common wild-pine	<i>Tillandsia fasciculata</i>	Endangered
Giant wild-pine	<i>Tillandsia utriculata</i>	Endangered

Lamarck's trema	<i>Trema lamarckiana</i>	Endangered
Giant orchid	<i>Pteroglossaspis ecristata</i>	Threatened
Golden leather fern	<i>Acrosticum aureum</i>	Threatened
Pineland golden trumpet	<i>Angadenia berteroi</i>	Threatened
Pine-pink orchid	<i>Bletia purpurea</i>	Threatened
Locustberry	<i>Byrsonima lucida</i>	Threatened
Rocklands spurge	<i>Chamaesyce pergamena</i>	Threatened
White sunbonnets	<i>Chaptalia albicans</i>	Threatened
Satin-leaf	<i>Chrysophyllum oliviforme</i>	Threatened
Silver palm	<i>Coccothrinax argentata</i>	Threatened
Christmas berry	<i>Crossopetalum ilicifolium</i>	Threatened
Rhacoma	<i>Crossopetalum rhacoma</i>	Threatened
Blodgett's swallowwort	<i>Cynanchum blodgettii</i>	Threatened
Caribbean crabgrass	<i>Digitaria dolichophylla</i>	Threatened
Krug's holly	<i>Ilex krugiana</i>	Threatened
Pineland jacquemontia	<i>Jacquemontia curtisii</i>	Threatened
Small-leaved melanthera	<i>Melanthera parvifolia</i>	Threatened
Mangrove berry	<i>Psidium longipes</i>	Threatened
Bahama ladder brake fern	<i>Pteris bahamensis</i>	Threatened
Small-leaved snoutbean	<i>Rhynchosia parvifolia</i>	Threatened
Bahama sachsia	<i>Sachsia bahamensis</i>	Threatened
Chapman's sensitive plant	<i>Senna Mexicana</i> var <i>chapmanii</i>	Threatened
Everglades greenbrier	<i>Smilax havanensis</i>	Threatened
Mullein nightshade	<i>Solanum donianum</i>	Threatened
False buttonweed	<i>Spermacoce terminalis</i>	Threatened
West Indian mahogany	<i>Swietenia mahagoni</i>	Threatened
Florida clover ash	<i>Tetrazygia bicolor</i>	Threatened
Inflated and reflexed wild-pine	<i>Tillandsia balbisiana</i>	Threatened
Twisted air-plant	<i>Tillandsia flexuosa</i>	Threatened

Rocklands noseburn	<i>Tragia saxicola</i>	Threatened
Florida tripsacum	<i>Tripsacum floridanum</i>	Threatened
Porter's sandmat	<i>Chamaesyce porteriana</i>	Endangered

The majority of the Development Areas, 53.62 acres of the 86.49 acres (~62%), will consist of the redevelopment of previously developed areas and disturbed uplands, which are not pine rocklands. Habitat impacts were evaluated and quantified based on a functional assessment, which was applied to all land uses (not just pine rocklands).

This is not consistent with the biological assessment and classification of the property done by Steve Woodmansee and turned into Johnson Engineering referenced in the HCP Appendices A-E. Much of the Richmond Tract, in fact all pine rocklands, have been disturbed or scraped at some point in history due to it being on an upland position on the coastal edge of a peninsula. Much of the areas scraped for the formation of the Richmond Naval Air Base have recovered into some of the most biologically functional and diverse areas of the Richmond Pine Rockland complex. Previous disturbance is not a disqualifying characteristic of a pine rockland ecosystem for the plants or animals that inhabit it. Ecological functionality and species presence profile are more important for the ESA and the species contained within it. Habitat restoration, a significant aspect of many recovery programs for ESA listed species often involves disturbing or causing disturbance to form an ecologically functional habitat for the targeted species. The disturbed upland habitat shows a diverse native species plant profile containing 143 native species in their own biological assessment. This is only 8 less native species than what was documented in the NFC "pine rockland".

The biological assessment provides clues to corroborate the reports of the few pine rockland experienced biologists whom have been able to view the site, "Some areas that appear as empty mowed lawn, actually contain a significant number of pine rockland herb and grass species, with patches that are dominated by native vegetation (Figure 10). Some areas appear to have been scraped at one time, however the pine canopy was not disturbed (Figure 11). Some areas have a healthy shrub understory, containing saw palmetto, but possess little to no pine canopy (Figure 12).

The USFWS defines pine rockland as "Pine rocklands are dominated by a single canopy tree, South Florida slash pine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*), a diverse hardwood and palm subcanopy, and a very rich herbaceous layer. The flora of pine rocklands is composed of a diverse assemblage of tropical and temperate taxa. Many endemic plant taxa are also found in this community." Due to the influences of the prior property owners, some of the savannah areas lack the pine canopy that is easily visible and detectable from aerial views. But, the lack of a single canopy species from such a diverse endemic species assemblage should not be a disqualifying characteristic. Especially, since the functionality of pine rockland is often dependent on a sparse canopy to prevent overshadowing and obliteration of the subcanopy and open herbaceous understory. Many of the listed species of concern for this HPC require a more open pine rockland habitat and the thinning of the pine canopy and frequent burns suppresses recruitment and pine density as a proper management tool for the ecosystem.

The "Scraped Historic Pine Rockland", "Disturbed Upland with Pine Rockland Plants", "Pine Rockland, possibly once scraped with Pine Canopy", and "Pine Rockland with Burmared" as

described in the biological assessment are more functional in their current state, as described in the EA Attachment 5, for the species of concern in this HCP than the designated “Pine Rockland, Severely Fire Suppressed” being set aside for a reserve.

By 1991, the majority of the CRC Property was cleared of pines, additional primate cages had been constructed near the center of the property, an additional structure had also been constructed east of the new cages, and construction of the UM Research Compound had been completed (Figure 1-5).

The 6.6 acres affected by the construction of the primate cages was an unpermitted violation of the county NFC protections by the University of Miami. No mitigation ever occurred for this violation and should not be considered as historic disturbance in the calculation of activities prior to conservation restrictions being applied. This is an example of one of the parties filing this take permit disregarding the proper stewardship of this now critical habitat and sets a precedent for future actions.

MDC had designated a total of 49.44 acres as pine rockland Natural Forest Communities (NFCs) under the MDC Code § 24-5. NFCs are upland plant communities that are protected under MDC Code. MDC issued NFC Permit No. NFC2012-012 (the “NFC Permit”) in exchange for the land use approvals (Appendix B). The NFC Permit requires the preservation of approximately 39.64 acres of NFC Pine Rockland habitat and 3.72 acres of NFC Hardwood Hammock habitat (the “NFC Preserves”) and details the management and monitoring required for the preserves. The NFC Preserves are to be protected through a restrictive covenant. The NFC Permit authorizes site clearing for the development areas (including 3.2 acres of NFC impact), in exchange for the preserving the NFC Preserves (totaling 43.36 acres).

A review of the conditions put forth in NFC Permit No. NFC2012-012 shows that UM and RAM Realty has failed to satisfy the management and monitoring of the preserve deadlines set forth within the permit. Failure to show the ability to satisfy the requirements and management guidelines of such a local permit demonstrates an inability or unwillingness to execute a complex HCP as this is proposing.

Under the terms of the NFC Permit, three environmental groups entered into Confidentiality and Access Agreements and were allowed on-site in late June and early July of 2014 to harvest vulnerable plant species prior to clearing activities (Appendix C).

These are not environmental groups. Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden is a botanical garden and scientific research facility. Zoo Miami is a zoological and botanical park that is part of Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces Department. The Institute of Regional Conservation is a non-profit group of biologists that work on biodiversity research and habitat management.

Federally listed species

Summaries of the date and status of federal listing are provided as applicable in the species specific summaries below. Federally listed faunal species addressed in this HCP include: the FBB, the BSHB, the Florida leafwing butterfly, the eastern indigo snake, and the Miami tiger beetle. The FBB was federally listed as an endangered species in 2013 (DOI 2013b), the BSHB and Florida leafwing butterfly were listed as endangered species in 2014 (DOI 2014a), and the Miami tiger beetle was listed as an endangered species in 2016. While not required under the ESA, this HCP also requests incidental take authorization for the state listed rim rock crowned snake and the gopher tortoise, a

federal candidate species. The purpose in adding these additional species is to ensure that the Applicant will remain in compliance with the ESA should these species be listed in the future.

The federally threatened crested caracara (*Polyborus plancus audubonii*) was not included in the HCP even though it has been seen and photographed inhabiting the Richmond Tract. This photo was taken in 2014 and posted by a zoo employee on Instagram.

https://scontent-atl3-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t1.0-9/1532135_10153679607370112_1380384875_n.jpg?oh=f63905e7fff07dfdf6771bbf616aa370&oe=598AE848

The federally threatened wood stork was also not included in the HCP. Many are seen with great regularity in some of the open grassy areas of the Richmond Tract and near water bodies. The following photo was taken within the Richmond tract and posted on a website as an example.

<http://zoomiamiconservation.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Wood-stork-Mycteria-americana.jpg>

1.1.5 Project Purpose

“Without the combination of commercial and residential components of the Project, it would not be possible to fund the improvements to the spine road, off-site roadway and traffic improvements, other associated infrastructure, or the Conservation Program.”

UM had the responsibility to fund and manage these properties after they were acquired as surplus lands appropriated by the Federal government, including what were later delineated as NFC areas. In addition NFC lands were illegally cleared and required to be mitigated by Miami-Dade County prior to sale and development of this proposal and HCP.

“Habitat impacts were evaluated and quantified based on a functional assessment, which was applied to all land uses (not just pine rocklands). Of the 33 acres of pine rocklands within the Development Areas, approximately 11 acres were not previously classified as pine rocklands by prior mapping; however, they were conservatively mapped as pine rocklands for this HCP. Based on the habitat functional assessment, approximately two-thirds of the pine rocklands within the Development Areas have a low functional value.”

This is a completely artificially created functional value system which is not based on any peer-reviewed research or other documents related to on the ground management. Suggestion that this project is creating or adding habitat for the listed species should not be based on theoretical values or hypotheses.

1.2 Regulatory Framework

At the local level, the MDC Code of Ordinances (MDC Code) protects pine rockland habitat through its NFC regulatory program (MDC Code §24-5). Designation of a NFC requires a minimum community score of 60 points on the “EEL Tax Covenant Program and Natural Forest Community (NFC) Quantitative Evaluation Form” (Resolution No. R-1028-12). NFC maps designating covered forested communities that meet the minimum scoring are approved as NFCs by the Board of County Commissioners, pursuant to Resolution No. R-1764-84.

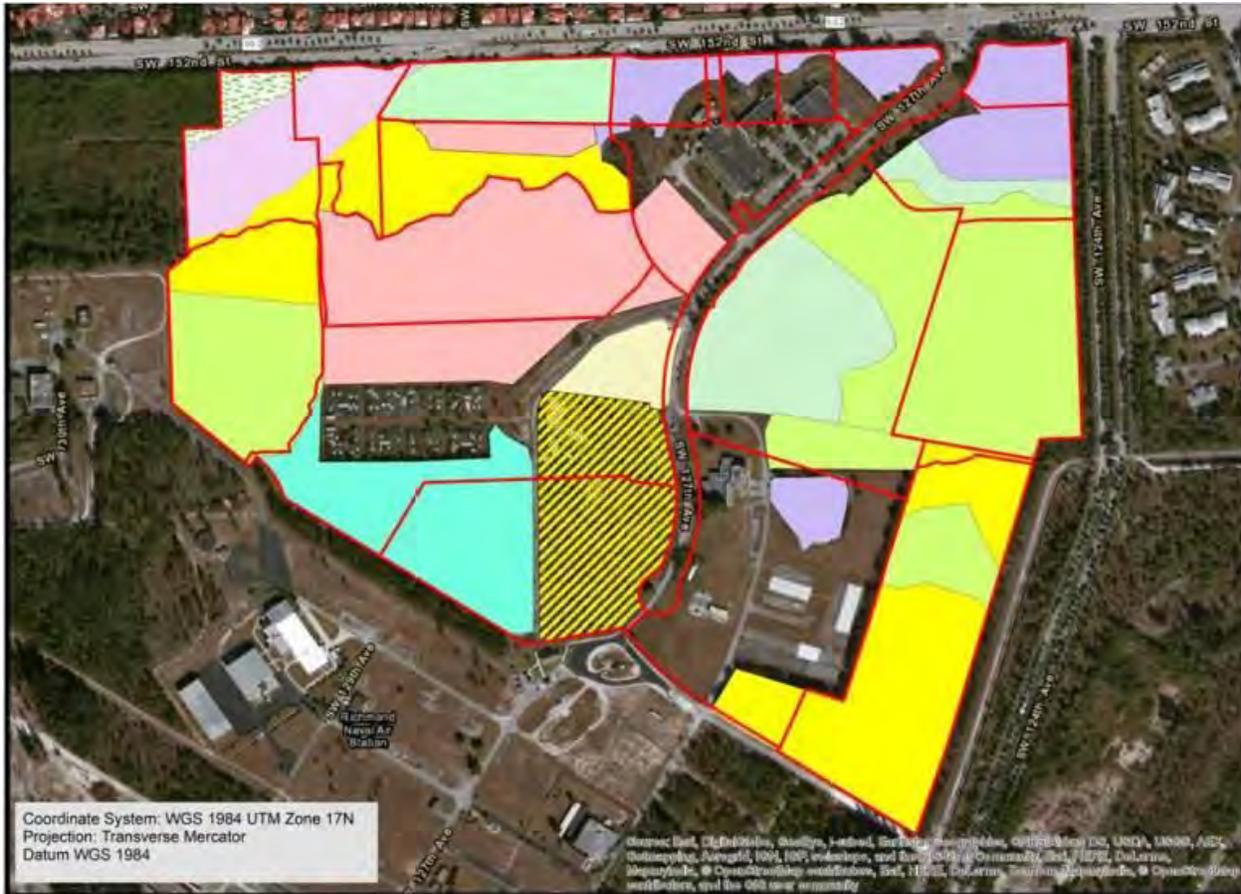
It is unclear how according to on the “EEL Tax Covenant Program and Natural Forest Community (NFC) Quantitative Evaluation Form” that many areas outside the designated NFC boundaries are not designated NFC according to the scoring system and the “Coral Reef Commons Rare Plant and Floristic Inventory and Assessment” in the Appendix A-E.

Pine Rockland severely fire suppressed – should have a score of 50 for factors 1, 2, 3, & 4 if only judged moderate diversity due to fire suppression. If given only medium scores for 5,6 & 7 would still put well over the 60 point minimum for an NFC. Further mitigation and reevaluation of what the property has as actual NFC has not been determined properly.

Pine Rockland, possibly once scraped but with pine canopy – should have a score of 55 for 1, 2, 3, & 4 if adequately assessed. So even if not a single geologic feature can still be found, 100% was heavily disturbed and even medium values were given for wildlife habitat and exotic coverage, it would still be far beyond 60 points to qualify as NFC according to the habitat assessment done. This also should cause for further mitigation and also surpass the amount allowable for destruction of NFC allowed under the Miami-Dade County statutes.

Pine Rockland with Burmареed - should have a score of 55 for 1, 2, 3, & 4 if adequately assessed. If that area has minimal to medium disturbance and undoubtedly some geologic features left since it was not scraped, then even with high coverage in exotics, it would still be far beyond the 60 points needed for NFC designation. A primary treatment with follow up for burmареed would likely turn that habitat into some of the highest quality pine rockland on the site within a single season. This also should cause for further mitigation and also surpass the amount allowable for destruction of NFC allowed under the Miami-Dade County statutes.

The area in the biologic assessment designated Pine Rockland outside the reserve boundaries appears to represent a large percentage of critical habitat that is not within the designated reserves. The development and permits should not allow the highest quality habitat to be destroyed in this large of a percentage and a redesign of the site plan should be advised to avoid that much take of critical habitat.



Map created by: C. van der Heiden for Pro Native Consulting

Map date: 10/30/2014

Legend

- Coral Reef Commons Parcels
- Exotics Dominated
- Scraped Historic Pine Rockland with some Burma Reed
- Disturbed Upland, with pine rockland plants (scraped)
- Pine Rockland (Severely fire suppressed)
- Pine Rockland, possibly once scraped but with Pine Canopy
- Pine Rockland
- Pine Rockland, Burma Reed
- Disturbed Upland, Burma Reed dominated, Historic Pine Rockland Marl Prairie Mixed
- Disturbed Upland, Exotic dominated
- Rockland Hammock
- Historic Marl Prairie

These inadequacies in evaluation of this habitat as shown in this biologic assessment shows a failure of Miami-Dade County to enforce and protect the critical habitat within its jurisdiction. Approval of these permits without adequate reevaluation of the property by Miami-Dade County is suspect. The USFWS should have pine rockland specialist biologists assess the boundaries of the true NFCs and critical habitat before allowing mitigation amounts to be judged on the applicant's pretense of what is functional habitat that is in conflict with their own biological assessment.

2.0 Environmental Settings of Project

Figure 2-1 map appears to show incorrect boundaries for L&P Thompson Park property, and should include all the portions of pine rockland habitat and critical habitat of the Zoo and Larry & Penny Thompson units.

2.3 Land Use/Vegetative Community Categories for the CRC Property

Statement of degradation and impossibility of restoration through fire or other means contradicts known accomplished and continuing activities on both public and private pine rocklands and marl prairies, as well as those proposed restoration practices included in this HCP.

Pine rockland and marl prairie are effectively restored through various techniques including: the removal of introduced fill (artificial soil), reduction of native and non-native species of hardwoods, reduction of large sabal palms and other ladder fuels, and use of appropriate prescribed fire. Other disturbed areas including paved or filled areas and those dominated by turfgrass may also be restored by scraping and removal of added fill soils and /or pavement.

Successful restoration can be evidenced on adjacent MDC owned lands within the Richmond Area as well as other pine rocklands both public and private throughout Miami-Dade County and the Florida Keys.

Many wildlife species utilize disturbed areas, including those previously scraped, filled, paved, exotics dominated or otherwise altered. In particular, highly adaptable species (such as coyotes, raccoons, various reptile species, and common avifauna) readily colonize/utilize these areas because they are not in use by other wildlife- including human dominated, paved urban and suburban areas.

3.2.2 Florida Bonneted Bat (FBB)

The CRC Property contains pine rockland habitat. The CRC Property is located within the USFWS Consultation Area and a Focal Area for the FBB. Acoustic surveys recorded the FBB flying over the CRC Property, but documented very limited foraging within the airspace over the CRC Property.

No disclosure of the amount of calls passes, frequency of call passes, number of social calls, duration of monitoring, season of monitoring, or types of calls are disclosed and the applicant's dismissal and conclusion is not supported in the application. Very few biologists are qualified to evaluate *Eumops floridanus* acoustic readings and their unique foraging behavior, calls, and habitat usage patterns require expert evaluations. Other acoustic studies within the Richmond Tract showed little to no *Eumops* call detection for an entire year of monitoring where foraging was not occurring. The detection of *Eumops* at all and indications by amateurs that foraging was occurring requires a more thorough assessment by an expert to evaluate the data to make a valid scientific judgment. Seasonal usage and roost switching has been demonstrated in the mixed urban environment of Miami-Dade County. The time of year and seasonality of the monitoring are not disclosed or referred to in the application. Since *Eumops* are shown to be reproductive throughout the year, a seasonally important roost or foraging area for nursing dams must be evaluated for and taken into consideration if there is activity in the area.

Provide restoration success criteria for on-site mitigation

The University of Miami should already be responsible for mitigation and habitat management due to prior activities on the grounds that included non-permitted removal of NFC. This component

should not be included in this application but should already be enforced by Miami-Dade County regulations and a lack thereof shows negligence by the University of Miami and Miami-Dade County. The USFWS should recognize this and not allow these actions for on-site mitigation to be included in the application for an ITP.

This HCP will result in implementation of the Conservation Program, which includes the mitigation plan for restoration, long-term management and protection of the On-site Conservation Areas.

Mitigation amounts should only be determined after the NFC communities and Eumops are thoroughly evaluated by expert biologists to determine the true extent of the functional habitat. The USFWS should recognize the inadequate evaluation presented in this applicant's own documentation presented. The on-site habitat management should already be occurring according to Miami-Dade County regulations and UM's past actions and NFC permit from 2013. The lack of proper management, and violation of NFC Miami-Dade County permits by UM and Ram Realty since 2013, UM prior to 2013, and Miami-Dade County's lack of enforcement for this federal critical habitat should be heavily weighed by the USFWS's consideration of granting such an ITP based on prior precedent.

The Off-site Mitigation Area

The Off-site mitigation area is already owned and managed by one of the applicants in the federal nexus, UM. They are already required to have a habitat management plan exclusionary of this ITP. The USFWS should recognize this factor and rule that the proposed off-site mitigation proposal is just a method to get a private development corporation a way to try off set part of its impacts through shifting funds between the co-applicants for a management effort that they should already be implementing.

The Conservation Program is expected to result in a net conservation gain for the Covered Species. The On-site Preserves total 51.41 acres and include approximately 47.43 acres of the pine rocklands and an additional 3.98 acres of associated habitat (3.72 acres of Rockland Hammock and 0.26 acres of other land uses).

According to their own biologic assessment, the "Coral Reef Commons Rare Plant and Floristic Inventory and Assessment" in the Appendix A-E, there can be no net gain of functional habitat for the covered species. If the requirements of the Miami-Dade County NFC Permit No. NFC2012-012 were not currently being violated, the results of the biologic assessment would have been much different and the referred to proportion of habitat loss would have to be figured differently. The USFWS needs to consider these factors and the need for expert evaluation of the habitats to accurately and objectively assess the impacts to functional habitat to the listed species.

The Conservation Program also includes enhancement through prescribed burning in the Off-site Mitigation Area (50.96 acres), which is also a benefit of the HCP, because it provides additional enhancement to pine rockland habitat in the Richmond Area.

This should already be part of UM's management activities for being within the federal nexus and having critical habitat on their property. This should not be allowed to be incorporated into the ITP. UM should already have instituted a prescribed burn management of the proposed project site according to the Miami-Dade County NFC Permit No. NFC2012-012 which conditions have not been fulfilled and they are currently in violation of.

Several of the land uses within the CRC Property are in various stages of succession to a “climax” hardwood forest community due to lack of fire, resulting in hardwood encroachment and invasive infestations.

These factors are due to the lack of proper management by one of the applicants, the University of Miami. The pine rocklands of this parcel were in kept in fairly good condition but have been seen to slowly allow invasives to take hold over the past 5-7 years due to no invasive control and an active burn schedule. The degradation degree referred to in this application as a justification to devaluing the functional habitat due to mismanagement by one of the applicants has to be considered when considering issuing this permit to allow one of the same entities and another with no management experience in this complex habitat to oversee further management of the same property.

Pine Rockland Category

Throughout the document they refer to areas of pine rockland and many other various subcategories based on levels of historic alteration, non-native species, hardwood hammock, and invasives present as a way to delineate. The MDC definition of pine rockland or NFC conditions does not define if an area is functional habitat for many of the listed species. The USFWS does not have a protected status for pine rockland or rockland hammock habitats. Delineation in this manner does not determine functionality for the species of concern.

Fire suppression was evident in all 79.97 acres of the CRC Property’s pine rocklands. The lack of fire, combined with the lack of invasive control, has resulted in the considerable degradation of 30.83 acres of the pine rocklands on-site and moderate degradation of 45.58 acres.

The lack of fire management, invasive control, and degradation used to justify a lower functional habitat is due to both the University of Miami’s historic and present lack of management under NFC permits and RAM reality’s lack of management and violation of NFC permit conditions since acquiring the property and permits. The precedent set by both displays a lack of ability to fulfill proper management or unwillingness to do so. Therefore, how does this documented management history vouch for the new application of proposed complex habitat management scheme under the same negligent parties with new obstacles and structures present that will make management even more difficult? This also demonstrates Miami-Dade County’s negligent or unwilling enforcement of existing permits in regard to maintaining this habitat for many listed species.

All pine rocklands on-site require mechanical or chemical treatment to address the overgrown vegetative structure and/or invasive plant infestations, in addition to prescribed burning.

All of these conditions were required to have already been done in accordance with the NFC permit issued in 2013.

Unfortunately, some of the pine rocklands have fallen into such poor condition, that restoration of these areas may not be feasible.

Again, this is due to both of the applicant’s inability or unwillingness to do so as demonstrated by their current state of management under their ownership. Heavily disturbed areas, including scraped, buried by nutrient rich fill piles, and plowed have been successfully restored to functional habitat and are now considered pine rockland with federally endangered species naturally returning when adjacent to existing habitat. This argument that restoration is not feasible shows no evidence for such claims. In fact, there is extensive evidence to the contrary within the

Richmond Tract and current restoration activities demonstrating the exact opposite of this statement.

With the exception of one small population of deltoid spurge, all documented occurrences of the federally listed deltoid spurge and tiny polygala occurred exclusively within the On-site Preserves.

Polygala smalli was discovered outside the On-site preserves as documented in the Appendix A-E. Given that deltoid spurge and *polygala smalli* are both fire dependent species and the applicants acknowledging that they have failed to properly manage the property up to this point and violate existing permit requirements, an assessment of the current extent of such species has no scientific validity. A proper assessment would have to occur after proper management steps have taken place to thoroughly assess these cryptic species and the dormant seed source.

3.1.3 FBB Survey Methodology

The survey methodology for the FBB is scientifically flawed in scope, duration, and execution.

Although roosts are important for this species, they are also known to switch between roosts as demonstrated by the FWC and UF studies and observations in Babcock Webb. This short sampling period does not allow for occupation of roosts on property during different cycles of the species life cycle. At this time, we do not know if this switching occurs due to seasonal, social, or environmental pressures or could be due to certain roosts being preferable as maternity roosts like other Mollosidae exhibit in Miami-Dade County.

It has been shown by documenting FBB foraging areas around Miami-Dade County that suitable and/or preferred foraging locations that are large open spaces, have appropriate prey present, and contain nearby appropriate freshwater sources appears to be a limiting factor this species persistence in this urban environment. Roosting locations do not yet appear to be limited for the species due to their adaptability to utilize artificial structures. Although, the practice of using artificial structures does predispose them to human/wildlife conflict. This survey appears to not include any points in the large open spaces of the property development site that could be important foraging area for the species. These leaves gaps of over 1500 ft in the monitoring that goes against the protocol guidelines mentioned. Given that Ridgley, Smith and Milk's report specifically mentions the perceived importance of open space and foraging for the species that this area was knowingly omitted from the acoustic survey.

3.2.1 Bartram's Scrub-hairstreak Butterfly (BSHB)

Salvato (1999) identified three major factors contributing to the population decline of BSHB; (1) loss of pineland habitat; (2) mismanagement of existing habitat resulting in decreased host density, and (3) use of chemical pesticides meant to control mosquitoes but with collateral effects on non-target arthropod species. The final rule published in the Federal Register also includes poaching, disease and predation, small population size and restricted range as threats. Future threats included loss of genetic diversity and climate change

This project contributes to the factors under the Federal Register factors for continued decline in this species. It adds no pineland habitat and decreases critical habitat for the species. The applicants are main contributors to the mismanagement of existing habitat and are proposing that they will change decades worth of precedent by executing an even more complex habitat management plan with no experience in doing so. It is highly likely that this development with

multiple individual residents, a school and several corporate entities will be practicing their own herbicide and pesticide usage practices that will impact the surrounding preserves and adjacent properties. Availability to the area for poaching will also be increased due to the increased public access to the area. Decreasing the size of functional habitat within the Richmond Tract will compound the effects of climate change on this species due to the Richmond Tract being higher elevation and the largest remaining tract outside of Everglades National Park. Knowing that moderate sea level rise predictions will cause destruction and severe alteration of 90% of pine rockland now existing even with no further development, this will cause further fragmentation of existing habitat, and the inevitable loss of the largest contiguous tract of pine rockland in Long Pine Key and Big Pine Key, makes this proposed impact likely to jeopardize this species with extinction.

Approximately 60% of the pineland croton documented on the CRC Property occurred within the On-site Preserves. Management of the On-site Preserves results in an increase and expansion of pineland croton within the On-site Preserves, increasing carrying capacity for BSHB.

This means 40% of the areas with pineland croton present will be lost to development and two of the three locations with functional habitat outside the proposed preserves where biologists have observed the species persisting in low abundance will be lost. The conclusion that management of the on-site preserves will result in an increase and expansion of pineland croton and increased carrying capacity for BSHB is based on the premise that the preserves will be managed adequately by the applicants. Both applicants already acknowledge in this document that they have not managed the property properly and led to its degradation to different degrees. This also assumes that pineland croton will recolonize the other areas of the preserve where it is currently not present. That could take much longer than the duration of the 30 year permit to occur even if proper management is executed. Further fragmentation and reduction in size of the functional habitat will make mosaic burns increasingly difficult due to the smaller footprint of each preserve.

The breeding season occurs in June through September (Marks and Marks 2008).

In the observations made by FWC and University of Florida researchers at Babcock Webb, new young have been observed at almost every month of the year during just a couple years of observation. The FBB are likely similar to other tropical species that have reproduction capability throughout the year and may be more dependent on social structure and food resource availability rather than seasonality.

Acoustic surveys recorded the FBB flying over the CRC Property, but only documented limited foraging within the airspace over the CRC Property.

This statement implies transitory occurrence over the property. The recording equipment specified in the application does not include directional equipment or simultaneous time sequencing to make a conclusion that this infers. Limited foraging for the entire property entails surveying the entire foraging. In the description preceding this statement, open spaces are described as important foraging locations yet no recorders were placed in the most open areas of the property where foraging would most likely occur. This appears to be grossly negligent in survey design to what a comprehensive acoustic survey for a species that forages in open habitat would entail.

The FBB was detected at all 25 recording stations (Figure 3-1) but it was not common at any location and comprised an average of 1.49% of all calls or call sequences recorded, or 334 of the 22,384 total calls (Table 3-2).

With the short duration of only 4 nights of recording, a lack of recording in the likely main foraging area, and during a limited part of the year to evaluate for seasonal variation, confirming that FBB were detected at all 25 recording stations is significant activity over the site. In Ridgley, Smith and Milk's study of the adjacent properties there were many locations that had no to only few recordings throughout the year sampling time. Their detection rate accounted for only 2.5 % of all calls and they included areas of active foraging where multiple call passes were included in their overall assessment. This again supports that this site likely represents a very active and essential location for FBB and foraging activity. Even with the very limited sampling, and limited time to account for seasonal shifts, and omitting of the open area where detection was most likely to occur, this survey still provides significant support of the site's importance.

The percentage of FBB calls to total number of calls by station ranged from a high of 6.79% at station 6 to a low of 0.19% at station 24. However, only 221 calls were recorded at station 6 and the higher percentage of FBB could be an artifact of our ability to detect their louder calls above other bat species. At the same time, 3,226 total calls were detected at station 24 and only six (6) were FBB. This may be a reflection of other bat species habitat preference for habitat near the historic marl prairie south of 152nd Street.

Station 6 is one of the stations near the largest open areas on the property that is confluent with the DOD open areas south of the project property. It is not surprising that this had the highest percentage of calls detected since it is close to the area that would likely have the highest likelihood of activity for the species in a fragmented urban area. That station was likely just capturing a portion of the activity in the nearby open space where no recorders were placed. If such high activity was detected at that location, why were there not other recorders placed out in the same distance as the others into the areas not sampled? Station 24 with the least recorded percentage of passes is also in a heavily wooded area of the property with little open space and adjacent to a busy roadway with abundant artificial lighting. Of the known foraging locations in the urban areas of Miami-Dade County that have favorable physical characteristics for foraging and confirmed foraging activity, Granada Golf Course, Kendall Indian Hammocks, Zoo Miami Parking lot, the lake at Larry and Penny Thompson Memorial Park, and the large lake at Zoo Miami, all have little to no artificial lighting present. Even though artificial lighting has not been evaluated for its effect on foraging for the species, the fact that all known urban foraging locations contain this parameter is significant to consider in this proposal.

FBB foraging calls were only documented at four (4) stations and were extremely rare.

FBB foraging calls are not commonly recorded, even in known foraging locations (Babcock Webb, Zoo Miami, Granada Golf Course). It took Skip Snow from Everglades National Park a few years of recording to confirm if the species even made feeding buzzes typical of bats foraging. It is likely that this species prefers larger prey and spends more time searching for prey of high reward value. The existence of any foraging calls is likely conclusive that this species is actively foraging in this location and not just traversing the property at high altitude to go to a foraging location. Given the lack of acoustic monitoring in the most probable locations for foraging on the property and still

detecting foraging calls at the periphery of this area adds to the evidence substantiating that this is likely a significant foraging location for the species.

To assess roosting locations, Ridgley et al. 2014 considered an early emergence call to be within 30 minutes of sunset and within one hour of sunrise.

Ridgley, Smith and Milk's report has not been peer reviewed. Conclusions on what is appropriate for roost detection based on the knowledge of the species at the time of that report and without peer review should not be used as a conclusion that roosts are not present. There have been many observations at the bat boxes at Babcock Webb and the roost at Alahambra Street in Coral Gables where bats did not emerge from the roosts at all on some nights or much later in the night. The short sampling period used in this acoustic study and only during one part of the year for a species known to seasonally shift activity and roost switch does not scientifically allow such a conclusion to be made.

The latest morning FBB calls were recorded at station #22 (06:25) station #10 (06:25), and station #23 (06:22) (over 35 minutes before sunrise) with all other calls recorded at 06:00 or earlier in the morning. Given the earliest evening calls were more than 45 minutes after sunset at stations closest to the property boundary (#23, #18 and #10) and latest morning calls were more than 35 minutes before sunrise also at boundary stations (#23, #22, and 10), would indicate that the FBB is commuting over the CRC Property from the developments to the north and the west.

Emergence for bats is usually compared to dusk and dawn, not sunrise and sunset. This makes the times from each event appear artificially long in this report. Also, directionality cannot be concluded using omnidirectional microphones and single recorders. There were references to directional microphones or time sequenced multiple recorders along a flight path referenced in the report to make such conclusions. Calls detected very soon after dusk or still present right before dawn might add support for a roost being in the area but bats can and will emerge later after dusk and return to the roost throughout the night and not always right before dawn.

However, given the very limited number of FBB calls that were attributed to foraging it would appear FBBs are opportunistically foraging as they commute over the site to forage in the open areas of Zoo Miami, rather than preferentially foraging within the CRC Property.

This is an inaccurate conclusion with no substantiation. With no monitoring on the flight paths to the zoo, directional or time sequenced recorders, or simultaneous recordings of adjacent foraging, one cannot make the conclusion that the bats are passing over the project property to another location for foraging activity. The location of large open areas on the DOD property adjoining the project property to the south could be part of a foraging tract for the bats but since no acoustic monitoring was conducted in the large open spaces of the project property, that leaves a significant gap in the data on making any conclusions of foraging activity for the property.

This study documented that FBBs had a noticeable preference for foraging over ZooMiami's largest lake and parking lot, over the smaller lakes or field areas (Ridgley et al. 2014). These areas had dimensions of 3,000 ft by 670 ft at widest location to 150-260 ft at narrow point (lake) and 2,000 ft by 2,500 ft (parking lot). Ridgley et al. (2014) concluded that FBBs prefer large unobstructed and unlit areas with lengths greater than 1,500 ft and a minimum width of at least 125-150 ft for foraging. No area within the CRC Property meets this criteria.

Again, Ridgley, Smith and Milk's report has not been peer reviewed for such conclusions about exact foraging location dimensions that they concluded. But, if these dimensions were shown valid, the southern portion of the project property with large unobstructed flyways that is congruent with the adjacent DOD property to the south does create a foraging area that meets those dimensions. The species does not recognize property ownership boundaries and only likely geographical and physical foraging characteristics, especially in an urban setting. Therefore, neglecting to recognize how development of a portion of a possible foraging location can impact the species in the greater context of adjoining properties is a poorly and unscientific conclusion.

The conclusion that the FBB was opportunistically foraging as it commuted over the CRC Property to forage in more open areas and over nearby lakes was also supported by the FBC (Letters from Cynthia Marks to JEI, 9/5/2014 and 10/8/2014 [**Appendix A**]).

The comments made in the letters were made with the data from flawed designed and brief acoustic survey detailed above with a lack of monitoring points in the largest open area of the project property likely to contain foraging activity.

Active Roost Surveys of Existing Structures - Active roost surveys were conducted on the CRC Property on September 2 and 3, 2014 by the FBC and JEI ecologists. These surveys included the interior and exterior of all abandoned buildings, the chimney site pending demolition, pines adjacent to open areas, and rock cavities within the Rockland Hammock area. Active surveys included visual inspections of the building interior and exterior, use of handheld bat detectors (Echo Meter Touch™ and AnaBat SD2™), and visual observations on the exterior of the buildings for one hour after sunset.

Two nights of acoustic surveys for only one hour after sunset (not dusk) is vastly inadequate for detection of roosts. The USFWS recently documented a complete lack of calls coming from roosting bats in the Alahambra house in Coral Gables with confirmed presence the following day. The work by FWC and UF at the roosts in Babcock Webb shows a wide variety of times of emergence after dusk for the species or sometimes not at all if human activity is present in the vicinity.

The eastern indigo snake was not observed during any of the surveys conducted within the CRC Property. Eastern indigo snake has not been documented on adjacent properties, including the Off-site Mitigation Area, per available data.

At least one eastern indigo snake was documented within the Richmond Tract per personal communication with Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Steve Conners.

The rim rock crowned snake was not documented within the CRC Property and has not been documented on the Off-site Mitigation Area. Literature review indicated this snake was documented in 2009 within the Zoo Miami area (FWC 2011).

The rim rock crowned snake has been documented twice on the adjacent Zoo Miami property within a three year period and reported to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The area for which both specimens were discovered were within a few hundred yards of the project area. This accounts for the most abundant vouchers obtained for this species within the last 20 years and the Richmond Tract likely remains one of the last stronghold for this species survival. The detection of this species required 10 years of continuous daily surveys at multiple trap arrays.

3.2.5 Gopher Tortoise

This species was not documented within the CRC Property during any of the surveys. Survey methodologies employed met the FWC gopher tortoise survey guidelines and also included two JEI ecologists who are Authorized Gopher Tortoise Agents. The USFWS has stated this species is present within the Richmond Area (Email Shawn Christopherson, USFWS 1/8/2015). However, based on documented soil and site conditions within the CRC Property and the Offsite Mitigation Area, it is unlikely this species occurs within the CRC Property due to the lack of suitable burrowing habitat.

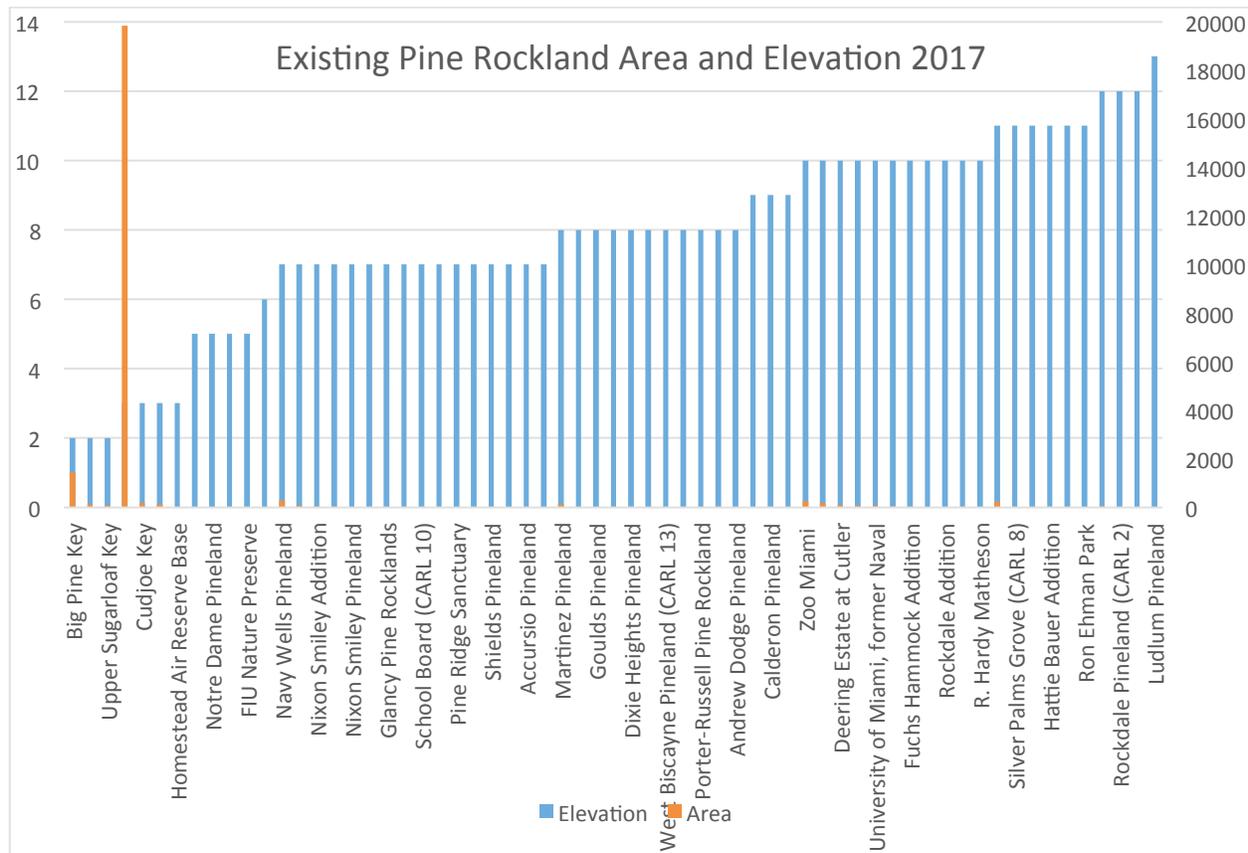
Gopher tortoises are present and reproducing on the adjacent properties of Larry and Penny Thompson Park, Zoo Miami, Martinez Pineland Preserve and have been documented at the Gold Coast Railroad and Military History Museum and reported to occur on the DOD property by security staff. The chain-link fences and gates between such properties have significant gaps and readily allow movement of tortoises of various ages between the adjacent parcels. This likely represents the most significant southern end range population for the species. Natural burrows occur in sandy patches within the pine rocklands or they utilize artificial fill mounds above the substrate level. They often venture into adjacent grassy areas and utilize trails, firebreaks and roads to go between parcels. The depth of the burrows in this substrate is often more shallow than what is typically described for the species in more northern ranges and reproductive activity appear to be year round. Tortoise burrow density in the pine rockland habitat is far less than in more ideal habitat in northern parts of their range. They also respond favorably to fire management practices to keep the understory open. It is highly likely that gopher tortoises do occur on the CRC property or frequent it from adjacent properties.

The gopher tortoise council has concluded that the minimum viable size for a gopher tortoise population to be 250 adults. Reports to FWC from Zoo Miami property monitoring has identified only around 50 individuals of varying age found within their acreage. The gopher tortoise council concluded that a minimum reserve size of superior quality, and maintained at this level, would be 247 acres. Pine rockland obviously supports this species but would not be considered "high quality" habitat for the species and would have far less density per acre. Given the current connectivity with the CRC property and the DOD and Zoo Miami properties, gopher tortoises need to be evaluated more thoroughly for their per acre habitat requirements in this ecosystem and the effect that this development would have on further fragmenting the existing connectivity that this species might need to be able to genetically persist. The loss of connectivity, increased road traffic, increased domestic predators, human take, and loss of connection to properties in the northwest section of the Richmond Tract, and loss of habitat that this project will entail might functionally cause the extinction of this species from its largest southernmost population. A more detailed evaluation and compensatory strategy is gravely needed for this candidate species in this HPC. There is no discussion of the impacts even addressed in the HPC and the USFWS must educate the applicants that these actions are far reaching even if a single survey failed to find one of these cryptic species in the pine rockland. New young tortoises are still being found at Zoo Miami in some of the most frequently monitored sites by FIU interns working with the species over the past couple years.

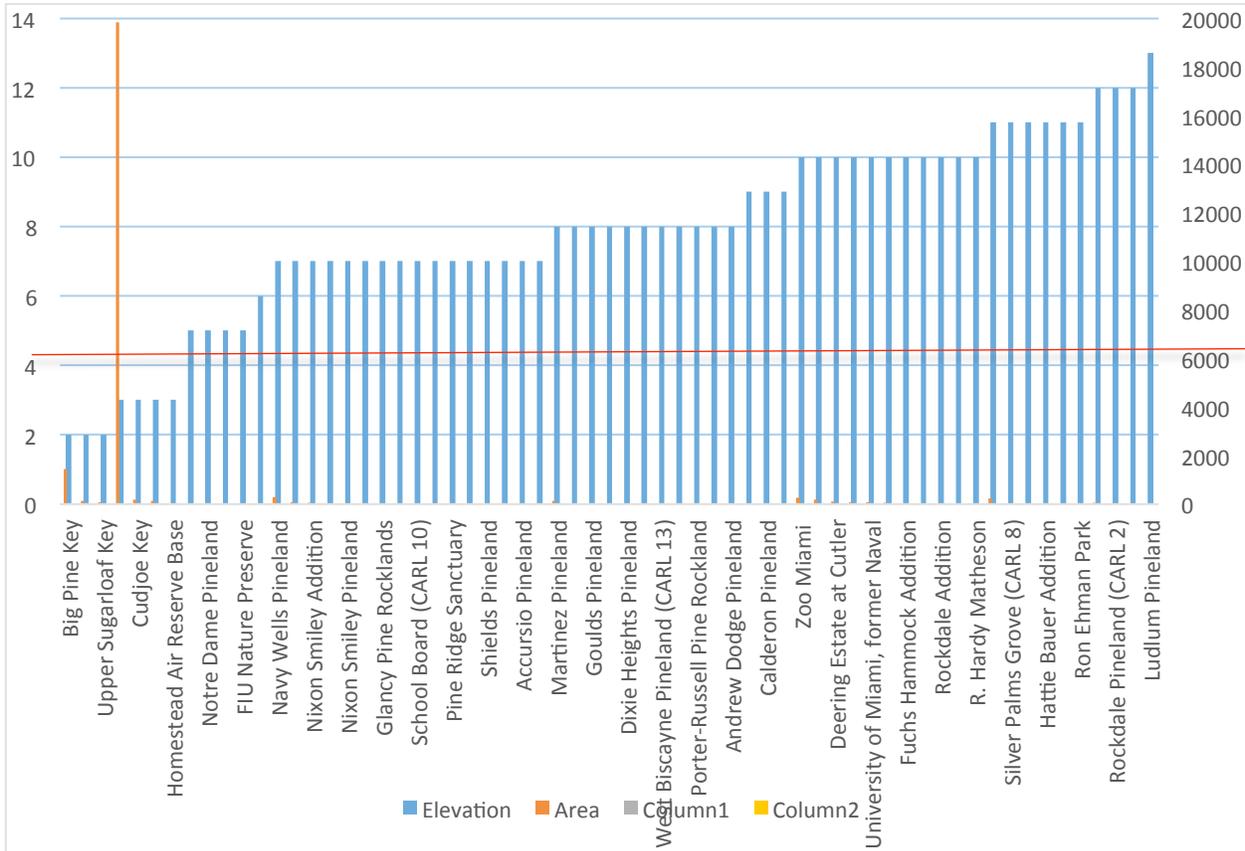
3.2.6 Florida Leafwing Butterfly

Similar to the Bartram's hairstreak butterfly, this species survival will depend on the preservation of all of the Richmond Tract's remaining pine rockland habitat due to the inevitable loss of its last remaining location on Long Pine Key due to climate change, sea level rise, and succession of this low elevation pine rockland within ENP. The next largest fragment is the Richmond Tract and its relative high elevation will be the only habitat left for recovery efforts when the others are lost. This loss of at least 90% of critical habitat with no other development to occur in the next few decades has to be viewed in the larger perspective. Salvato has even questioned at meetings that all the current habitat left at the Richmond Tract will be enough to sustain a population if reintroduced. So, any further loss of area to development in the Richmond Tract and only with further habitat restoration would this not justifiably constitute a likely jeopardy determination for this species.

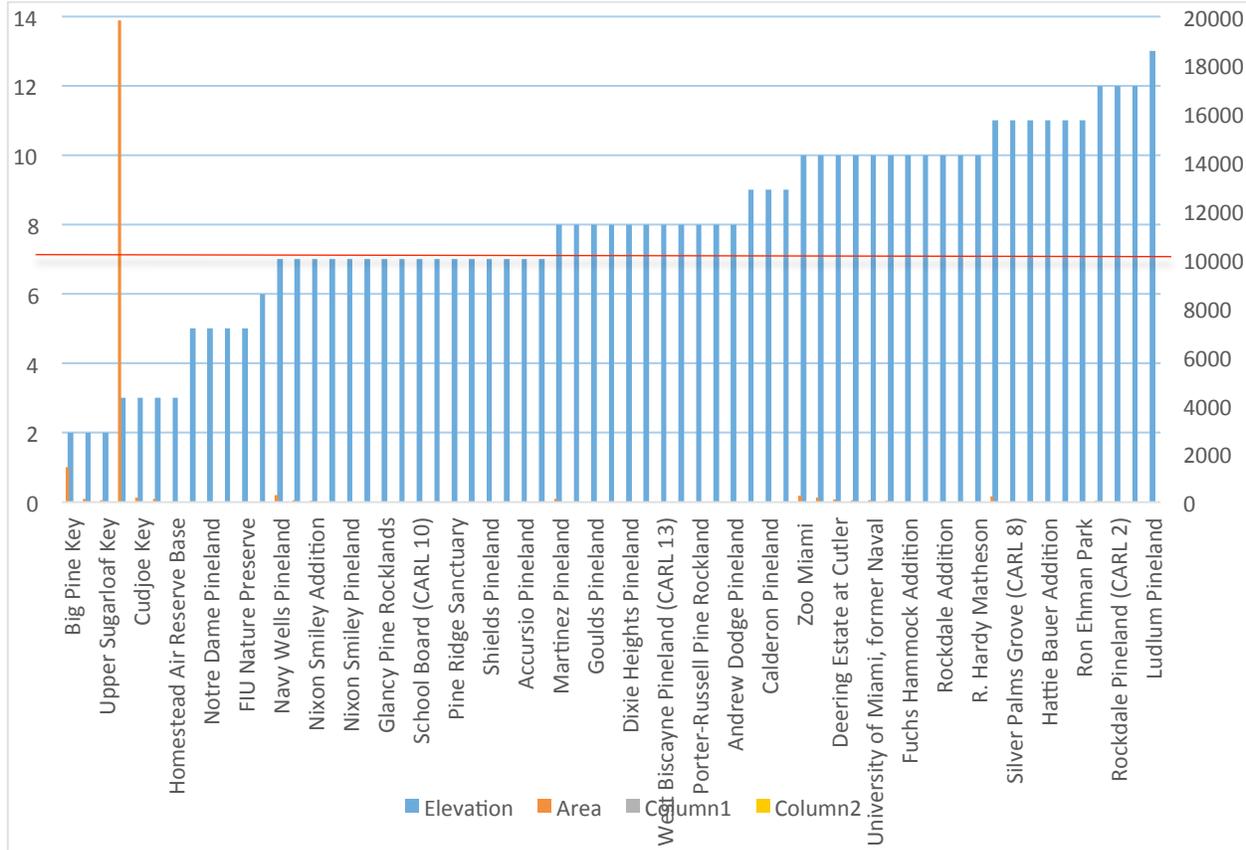
If you plot the elevation of the remaining pine rockland habitat area and elevation against the modest sea level projection rises prepared by a task force for Miami-Dade County, you get the resultant graphs demonstrating the likely dire conclusion.



In the short term, sea level rise is projected to be 6 to 10 inches by 2030 and 14 to 26 inches by 2060. Unified Sea Level Rise Projection for Southeast Florida. A document prepared for the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact Steering Committee. That is a loss of 90% of existing pine rockland in 2017 due to rising seas alone by 2060. Salt water inundation and tidal surges would lead to greater losses of pine rockland than this projection alone.



Long term, by 2100, sea level is projected to rise 31 to 81 inches above 1992 mean sea level. A document prepared for the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact Steering Committee. That is a loss of 93.5% of existing pine rockland in 2017 due to rising seas alone by 2100. Salt water inundation and tidal surges would lead to greater losses of pine rockland than this projection alone.



Fragment	Elevation	Area
Big Pine Key	2	1438
Little Pine Key	2	132.7
Upper Sugarloaf Key	2	74
Long Pine Key	3	19840
Cudjoe Key	3	174.7
No Name Key	3	140.6
Homestead Air Reserve Base	3	3
Sunny Palms Pineland (NAVY Wells 32)	5	40

Notre Dame Pineland	5	32
Florida City Pineland	5	19.75
FIU Nature Preserve	5	1
Retreat Construction Corp	6	13.5
Navy Wells Pineland	7	291.5
Camp Matecumbe	7	77
Nixon Smiley Addition	7	63
Boystown Pineland	7	30
Nixon Smiley Pineland	7	26
A.D. Barnes Park	7	24
Glancy Pine Rocklands	7	20
Palm Drive Pineland (Carl 16)	7	20
School Board (CARL 10)	7	19
Northrop Pineland	7	16
Pine Ridge Sanctuary	7	14
Navy Wells #2, School Board	7	10.8
Shields Pineland	7	6.3
Tropical Park	7	6
Accursio Pineland	7	4.8
Pino Pineland	7	2
Martinez Pineland	8	131
Goulds Addition	8	35.8
Goulds Pineland	8	33
Kings Highway (CARL 14)	8	31.1
Dixie Heights Pineland	8	27
Seminole Wayside Park	8	21
West Biscayne Pineland (CARL 13)	8	19
Eachus Pineland	8	16

Porter-Russell Pine Rockland	8	8
Seminole Wayside Park Addition	8	5.5
Andrew Dodge Pineland	8	5
Wilkins-Pierson	9	20
Calderon Pineland	9	17.5
Bowers	9	10
Zoo Miami	10	252
DOD Pine Rocklands	10	177
Deering Estate at Cutler	10	108
U.S. Coast Guard	10	81
University of Miami, former Naval Observatory	10	67
University of Miami South Campus	10	65
Fuchs Hammock Addition	10	14.8
Ned Glenn Nature Preserve	10	11
Rockdale Addition	10	11
Ingram (CARL 12)	10	10
R. Hardy Matheson	10	3.9
Larry & Penny Thompson Park	11	231
Silver Palms Grove (CARL 8)	11	20
Railroad Pineland	11	18
Hattie Bauer Addition	11	7.8
Black Creek Forest	11	7
Ron Ehman Park	11	4
Quail Roost Addition (CARL 7)	12	48
Rockdale Pineland (CARL 2)	12	26
Trinity Pineland (CARL 1)	12	10
Ludlum Pineland	13	10
		24102.05

Projections of sea level rise are based off of the October 2015 Sea Level Rise Work Group Southeast Florida Regional Compact

<http://www.southeastfloridaclimatecompact.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/2015-Compact-Unified-Sea-Level-Rise-Projection.pdf>

Acreage is based off of the Miami-Dade County EEL records

<http://www.miamidade.gov/environment/library/maps/endangered-lands.pdf>

Average elevation is available from multiple topographic sources and pine rockland is assumed to be able to persist at a minimum of 1ft above sea level. It is likely that this estimate is far too conservative with storm surges and salt water intrusion factored into the calculations.

Portions of the CRC Property were surveyed by Dr. Barry Knisley during USFWS funded surveys. Knisley stated that tiger beetles were not documented within the CRC Property during any surveys and his “previous surveys provided a pretty good indication that this site was not suitable habitat” (Email Knisley to USFWS 7/25/2014 [**Appendix A**]; Knisley 2013). Knisley (2013) stated an extensive survey of the area west of the zoo entrance (CRC Property) produced no tiger beetles. This report goes on to say this area seems to have marginal or unsuitable habitat and although there are some smaller and/or connected bare patches, these were probably too limited to support beetles.

Dr. Knisley only surveyed an area immediately to the west of the Zoo Miami entrance drive where no fence exists dividing the properties of the project site unknowing of the zoo’s property boundaries. This does not represent a comprehensive survey of the site for the presence of the Miami Tiger Beetle. Dr. Knisley’s surveys were brief and inconsistent throughout the adult season even in the known locales due to his residence distance from the sites. The habitat characteristics that Dr. Knisley originally described have not held true in subsequent surveys as new knowledge and observances have been made in mowed grassy areas and native substrate roadways serving as functional habitat for foraging and ovaposition. A more thorough survey during peak adult presence times are needed to evaluate if a population exists in the project boundaries to prevent take that might occur on a species whose genetic viability and total population extent has yet to be determined due to restricted access to some properties. The description of the project site by the biological assessment includes habitat characterizations of sandy substrate, pine rockland, and mowed grassy areas where they have been found on immediately adjacent properties.

3.2.7 Miami Tiger Beetle

“The Miami tiger beetle does not currently receive protection status on either the state or federal level.”

This statement should be removed as it has been officially listed under the ESA and is contradictory to statements further down in the paragraph.

7 The Applicant seeks incidental take coverage for Miami tiger beetle in this HCP because it has been raised by USFWS in meetings and communications regarding the CRC Property. Ram Coral Reef has submitted formal comments to the USFWS raising concerns regarding the listing of the

Miami tiger beetle, including taxonomy concerns. In moving forward with this HCP and including the Miami tiger beetle, Ram Coral Reef retains all rights to contest the **potential** listing of the Miami tiger beetle. Ram Coral Reef also objects to characterization of the CRC Property as suitable habitat for the Miami tiger beetle. All of our comments were submitted into the administrative record for the Proposed Rule to list the Miami tiger beetle and were added to the HCP record.

Regardless of objections raised by RAM Coral Reef, the Miami tiger beetle (*Cicindelidia floridana*) has been listed as an endangered species in its own right, not as a sub-species. Limited surveys of adjacent lands cannot indicate or disprove the suitability or characterization of the CRC property as habit for the Miami tiger beetle.

3.2.8 White-crowned Pigeon

The white-crowned pigeon was not documented within the CRC Property during any of the site surveys, and it is unlikely to occur at the CRC Property or the Off-site Mitigation Area because neither the CRC Property or the Off-site Mitigation Area contain tropical hardwood hammock areas that are greater than 12 acres in size.

While the Richmond Tract may not contain a tropical hardwood hammock greater than 12 acres in size, it does contain significant densities of poisonwood (*Metopium toxiferum*) throughout, which is a known food source for this species.

3.3.1 Tiny Polygala

A second smaller population of nine (9) plants was found within pine rocklands that occur within Development Areas. This population was also encountered during a plant relocation that occurred in June 2014 by staff at FTBG, during which time three (3) tiny polygala specimens were removed (Appendix D). **Seedling, flowering, and fruiting plants were all observed within this smaller population.**

This species has been documented to be ephemeral and to increase dramatically in population numbers in response to fire. The occurrence of only 9 plants observed on one particular date in this parcel does not mean that this is not a functional population or sub-population, particularly with the observance of plants at all stages of growth and reproduction. In addition, if this area were restored with the proper fire regime it would be of significant value to the individual population (or sub-populations) and meta-population of this plant within the Richmond Tract. Destruction of this particular area should therefore constitute “intentional destruction” of the population, not “incidental take”.

4.1 Alternatives

The existing restrictive covenant for the management and preservation of 39.64 acres of pine rocklands and 3.72 acres of hardwood hammock would be vacated and not required; and

The On-site Preserves would continue to degrade with some areas likely losing their NFC designation and existing pine rockland characteristics could be lost or diminished.

The Conservation Program includes perpetual preservation of 51.41 acres of On-site Preserves, restoration of the On-site Preserves, and habitat enhancement for the Covered Species through creation of 3.88 acres of Stepping Stones, public education and outreach, and creation of roosting opportunities for FBB through installation of bat boxes. These efforts are above and beyond the functional assessment and provide additional value beyond the 3.10 HVU discussed above. Also, the addition of 50.96 acres of Off-site Mitigation Area and conservation measures

provides additional value beyond the 3.10 HVU discussed above and results in a substantial conservation benefit to the Covered Species.

This is not verifiable or necessarily true. What would cause the restrictive covenant to be vacated and not required?

Again, the habitat functional values are artificially created and do not represent a true valuation of the subject property. Development of any kind, regardless of the current state of the parcels will result in a negative habitat loss in acreage and connectivity.

Proposed "Conservation Program" components will add little if anything to habitat or conservation for the listed species. In addition, proposed management activities, particularly prescribed fire, will be nearly impossible to initiate and maintain with a development of 900 residences and a commercial center between conservation units. Development will further impede the proper management of the adjacent properties within Richmond that are currently in conservation status, due to limited resources and weather conditions available for such activities to be undertaken by any group, organization, or company.

Also, how does management of an off-site area that is already being protected and managed constitute mitigation for this development? It is well documented that fire is an essential component of any management and conservation program. Prescribed fire has been conducted on the off-site parcel at least once in previous years- this is not a new component.

4.3.2 Conservation Program - Land Management Actions

Restoration activities in the On-site Preserves will include prescribed burning, exotic removal via chemical and mechanical means, hardwood removal of canopy and subcanopy, **mechanical disturbance** treatments, and supplemental pine rockland plantings in the Southern Corridor and Stepping Stones.

Per the attached NFC permit (Appendix B) and deed restrictions, mechanical disturbance or clearing is not allowed within NFC areas.

6.1 Biological Goals and Objectives

Provide connectivity from On-site Preserves to adjacent pine rocklands and serve as a potential site for recruitment of pine rockland species, thereby assisting in expanding population of listed species both on-site and in adjacent habitats.

How does this plan provide for connectivity from on-site preserve to adjacent pine rocklands? This statement is purely speculative that these would serve to "expand" populations of listed species on-site and on adjacent parcels.

Goal 2: Preserve and manage pine rocklands and rockland hammock within the CRC Property in perpetuity.

Objective 1. Establish Master Association to administer the On-site Conservation Areas and all actions related to habitat management consistent with the ITP.

Objective 2. Dedicate funding resources adequate to achieve and maintain the Conservation Program over the life of the Project.

Objective 3. Implement long-term habitat restoration and management in the Mitigation Areas.

Objective 4. Minimize pesticide use to extent practicable by CRC/Master Association within the On-site Preserves and Stepping Stones.

Goal 3: Restore the On-site Preserves and enhance the Off-site Mitigation Area to promote recruitment and support long-term viability of pine rockland species.

Objective 1. Implement a Burn Plan for the On-site Preserves and Off-site Mitigation Area.

Objective 2. Implement Adaptive Management Plan to balance burning and non-burning applications to meet success criteria on CRC Property.

Objective 4. Implement a biological monitoring program for Mitigation Area

How will a Master Association provide the necessary expertise to provide for restoration and management of preserves and mitigation areas in perpetuity, including minimization of pesticide use, monitoring and prescribed fire?

How will documentation and enforcement be conducted to provide evidence that these objectives are being met over the life of the permit request, let alone in perpetuity?

6.2.2.2 Construction Worker Education and 6.2.2.3 Construction BMPs

Construction personnel will be made aware of the requirements contained in the HCP. The general contractor will be provided with a copy of the ITP and identification material on the Covered Species. A copy of the HCP and identification material will be included as an attachment to all sub-contractors' contracts.

Who will provide supervision and enforcement for violations caused by construction personnel?

6.2.3 Community (Residential and Commercial Operations) Minimization

Measures and BMPs, 6.2.3.2 Firewise Community for CRC Property, 6.2.4.2 General On-site Preserves BMPs

It is unlikely that any association will be able to provide necessary expertise and to perform and enforce complicated restoration and management activities as described in the HCP. What is the process that will provide for qualified expert execution and oversight for this project over the life of the ITP and in perpetuity?

How will subsequent purchase contracts and leases, once the developer turns over initial management and ownership, be required to have language that recognizes and supports the restrictions of the ITP and HCP documents? How will this occur and how will this be enforced?

6.2.4.4 BMPs for On-site Conservation Areas Land Management Activities

Any equipment used for mechanical treatments of hardwoods within the On-site Preserves will utilize rubber tracked vehicles, if available, otherwise the use of rubber tired vehicles will be selected

Mechanical treatment is prohibited in the NFC per the existing 2013 permit.

6.2.4.5 Smoke Management

The requirements and proposed actions for this section are outside of the typical scope of Florida Forest Service practices. They are also beyond the ability of most contractors due to specialized training, knowledge and equipment necessary. The conditions and requirements for prescribed burns and smoke mitigation in a highly urbanized area/wildland interface- surrounded by major roadways, homes, a school, and commercial properties make the feasibility of this highly unlikely.

8.2 Beneficial Effects of the Conservation Program on Covered Species

Regarding the BSHB, the On-site Preserves and Stepping Stones will be managed to provide pineland croton and other species that will support the lifecycle, as well as foraging opportunities, of the BSHB.¹⁰ To ensure pineland croton is available for the BSHB life cycle, croton density was included in the success criteria. When managed at the optimum success criteria (Level 3), the On-site Preserves are anticipated to serve as a source population of BSHB to the adjacent pine rocklands.

What research or evidence backs up the claim that these plantings and fragmented preserves will provide a source population of BSHB for adjacent pine rockland habitat?

8.6.1 Action Area

While it is unlikely that the effects of the Proposed Action will affect species within the larger Richmond Area, the Applicant, has conservatively analyzed the pine rocklands in the Richmond Area as the action area in this cumulative effects analysis. (Figure 2-1). This conservative analysis provides assurances that the cumulative effects analysis is comprehensive, despite the unlikelihood that the Proposed Action will have direct or indirect effects on pine rocklands within the Richmond Area.

What is the basis for this analysis? The CRC development will have a direct effect on the management of adjacent parcels within the Richmond Tract because of the specific conditions and requirements necessary to conduct prescribed burning- including the same or similar wind conditions, FFS staff and equipment for support needed for adjacent parcels.

8.7.1 Impact of Potential Take

Based on comments to sections in the document referenced above, the project will absolutely have an impact on the population of tiny polygala and likely the Miami tiger beetle, gopher tortoise, and other listed species that require a very specific substrate/vegetative combination and/or specific size of contiguous habitat parcel in relation to home range and habitat availability.

10.0 INCIDENTAL TAKE PERMIT ADMINISTRATION, DATA MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

Comments above already question the validity of compliance for restoration and management of the preserves under the term of the ITP and in perpetuity as described. The developer only specifies a time period of two-five years maximum prior to relinquishing the property to a master association. This is not acceptable due to the required specialized knowledge and equipment necessary to not only understand the requirements, but to create adequate future bids, proposals, contracts, leases and other legal documents as well as the management of such properties under the proposed HCP conditions.

11.0 COST ESTIMATES, FUNDING ASSURANCES AND LONG TERM ASSURANCES

Again, comments above reference the inadequacy of an association to manage the requirements of this ITP and HCP as proposed-funding is just one more obstacle in this completely unjustified proposal. The responsibility for funding the continued management of the development itself, stepping stones and the preserves will assigned to a Master Association with no guarantee of expertise or compliance with regard to the ITP and HCP documents to maintain any level of the proposed success criteria.

Pine Canopy/Hardwood Reduction

In preparation for burning, hardwood removal (primarily pine thinning) must be conducted to reduce fuel loads to allow the reintroduction of fire.

Pine thinning and hardwood reduction are two different activities. Pine thinning is not absolutely necessary prior to prescribed burning and is not allowed using mechanical methods under the NFC permit. Pines are thinned through the action of the fire as applied to the habitat. Hardwood reduction may be required if the canopy structure will reduce the potential of fire ignition or carrying capacity within a unit. This activity greatly increases costs and should only be used when absolutely necessary to achieve prescribed fire objectives or for safety purposes.

Table 11-1. Summary of On-Site Conservation Program Initial Work Cost Estimates

What are the cost estimates based on? They seem unrealistically low based on known costs for previous management activities of other pine rockland habitat preserves. Also, they are generated with the assumption that all conservation goals are reached within a 2-5 year time frame.

11.3.2 Special Taxing District will be a Contingent Assurance for Perpetual Maintenance of the CRC Property

This provides a mechanism for the developer and/or the master association to put responsibility for management of the property and the preserve areas onto the County and is stated to be a required condition of the HCP.

12.2 Adaptive Management Strategy for Conservation Program and Changed Circumstances

All of the initial land management activities for the Conservation Program will be completed by the third year, by which time there should be an overall trend of the Mitigation Areas toward meeting the Level 3 success criteria, as applicable.

Assumption that all management activities including prescribed fire and transfer of management obligations will be completed within three years is unrealistic.

Additional tools that are available for assessing potential effects of sea level rise are consistent with the vulnerability analysis, and it is unlikely that sea level rise would affect the CRC Property, even at predictions of potentially two to three feet of sea level rise.

These predictions only take the subject parcel into account. They do not account for a loss of any other pine rockland habitat in MDC or the Florida Keys due to sea level rise. Loss of other parcels would be significant based on measured elevations throughout Miami-Dade and the Keys and would leave the Richmond Tract as one of the few remaining pine rocklands in existence anywhere.

Biology and Site-Specific Information for Plant Species Subject to the No Surprises Policy (Table 1-2)

For the 30-year term permit for this proposed project, a more comprehensive imperiled species list needs to be included with measures for all of the documented present species on the Richmond Tract in adjacent properties or at the project site that could or will likely become listed during the length of the permit. A more comprehensive list is below and can be referenced via IRC's floristic inventory, FNAI listings, and IUCN Red List range maps. There appears to be no plan to reclaim the property and return to prior condition if the applicants fail to meet the requirements of the permit as they have demonstrated in previous permits. This should be given substantial weight in consideration of past management and enforcement by the University of Miami, RAM, and Miami-Dade County.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal	State	FNAI
Eastern indigo snake	<i>Drymarchon corais couperi</i>	Threatened	Threatened	Rare
Gopher tortoise	<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	Candidate (Eastern)	Threatened	Rare
Rim rock crowned snake	<i>Tantilla oolitica</i>	Candidate	Threatened	Critically Imperiled
Audubon's crested caracara	<i>Polyborus plancus audubonii</i>	Threatened	Threatened	Imperiled
Florida burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia floridana</i>		Threatened	Rare
Little blue heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>		Threatened	Secure
Southeastern American kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius paulus</i>		Threatened	Rare
Tricolored heron	<i>Egretta tricolor</i>		Threatened	Secure
White-crowned pigeon	<i>Patagioenas leucocephala</i>		Threatened	Rare
Wood stork	<i>Mycteria americana</i>	Threatened	Threatened	Imperiled

Florida bonneted bat	<i>Eumops floridanus</i>	Endangered	Endangered	Critically Imperiled
Bartram's scrub-hairstreak	<i>Strymon acisbartrami</i>	Endangered		Critically Imperiled
Cassius blue butterfly	<i>Leptotes cassius theonus</i>	Threatened (S/A)		
Ceraunus blue butterfly	<i>Hemiargus ceraunus antibubastus</i>	Threatened (S/A)		
Florida leafwing butterfly	<i>Anaea troglodyta floridalis</i>	Endangered		Critically Imperiled
Miami Tiger Beetle	<i>Cicindelidia floridana</i>	Endangered		Critically Imperiled
Amorpha crenulata	<i>Amorpha crenulata</i>	Endangered	Endangered	Critically Imperiled
Florida Brickell-bush	<i>Brickellia mosieri</i>	Endangered	Endangered	Critically Imperiled
Deltoid spurge	<i>Chamaesyce deltoidea</i> ssp. <i>deltoidea</i>	Endangered	Endangered	Critically Imperiled
Small's milkpea	<i>Galactia smallii</i>	Endangered	Endangered	Critically Imperiled
Carter's small-flowered flax	<i>Linum carteri</i> var. <i>carteri</i>	Endangered	Endangered	Critically Imperiled
Tiny polygala	<i>Polygala smallii</i>	Endangered	Endangered	Critically Imperiled
Bracted colicroot	<i>Aletris bracteata</i>		Endangered	Imperiled
Blodgett's wild-mercury	<i>Argythamnia blodgettii</i>	Threatened	Endangered	Imperiled
Little	<i>Bourreria</i>		Endangered	Critically

strongbark	cassinifolia			Imperiled
Florida pineland crabgrass	Digitaria pauciflora	Candidate	Endangered	Critically Imperiled
Everglades bully	Sideroxylon reclinatum austrofloridense	Candidate		Critically imperiled
One-nerved ernodea	Ernodea cokeri		Endangered	Critically Imperiled
Keys thoroughwort	Eupatorium villosum		Endangered	Imperiled
Wild-potato morning-glory	Ipomoea microdactyla		Endangered	Imperiled
Rocklands morning-glory	Ipomoea tenuissima		Endangered	Critically Imperiled
Skyblue clustervine	Jacquemontia pentantha		Endangered	Imperiled
Pineland lantana	Lantana depressa		Endangered	Rare
Sand flax	Linum arenicola	Endangered	Endangered	Imperiled
Wild sweet basil	Ocimum campechianum		Endangered	
Everglades poinsettia	Poinsettia pinetorum		Endangered	Imperiled
Bahama wild coffee	Psychotria ligustrifolia		Endangered	Critically Imperiled
Florida skullcap	Scutellaria floridana		Endangered	Imperiled
Pygmy spikemoss	Selaginella eatonii		Endangered	Imperiled
Wedgelet	Sphenomeris		Endangered	Imperiled

fern	clavata			
Southern ladies'-tresses	<i>Spiranthes torta</i>		Endangered	Critically Imperiled
Least halberd fern	<i>Tectaria fimbriata</i>		Endangered	Imperiled
Common wild-pine	<i>Tillandsia fasciculata</i>		Endangered	
Giant wild-pine	<i>Tillandsia utriculata</i>		Endangered	
Giant orchid	<i>Pteroglossaspis ecristata</i>		Threatened	Imperiled
Lamarck's trema	<i>Trema lamarckiana</i>		Endangered	Imperiled
Golden leather fern	<i>Acrosticum aureum</i>		Threatened	Rare
Pineland golden trumpet	<i>Angadenia berteroi</i>		Threatened	
Pine-pink orchid	<i>Bletia purpurea</i>		Threatened	
Locustberry	<i>Byrsonima lucida</i>		Threatened	Rare
Rocklands spurge	<i>Chamaesyce pergamena</i>		Threatened	
White sunbonnets	<i>Chaptalia albicans</i>		Threatened	
Satin-leaf	<i>Chrysophyllum oliviforme</i>		Threatened	
Silver palm	<i>Coccothrinax argentata</i>		Threatened	
Christmas berry	<i>Crossopetalum ilicifolium</i>		Threatened	Rare

Rhacoma	Crossopetalum rhacoma		Threatened	Rare
Blodgett's swallowwort	Cynanchum blodgettii		Threatened	
Caribbean crabgrass	Digitaria dolichophylla		Threatened	
Krug's holly	Ilex krugiana		Threatened	Rare
Pineland jacquemontia	Jacquemontia curtisii		Threatened	Imperiled
Small-leaved melanthera	Melanthera parvifolia		Threatened	Rare
Mangrove berry	Psidium longipes		Threatened	Imperiled
Bahama ladder brake fern	Pteris bahamensis		Threatened	Rare
Small-leaved snoutbean	Rhynchosia parvifolia		Threatened	
Bahama sachsia	Sachsia bahamensis		Threatened	Imperiled
Chapman's sensitive plant	Senna Mexicana var chapmanii		Threatened	
Everglades greenbrier	Smilax havanensis		Threatened	
Mullein nightshade	Solanum donianum		Threatened	
False buttonweed	Spermacoce terminalis		Threatened	
West Indian mahogany	Swietenia mahagoni		Threatened	Rare
Florida clover ash	Tetrazygia bicolor		Threatened	

Inflated and reflexed wild-pine	<i>Tillandsia balbisiana</i>		Threatened	
Twisted air-plant	<i>Tillandsia flexuosa</i>		Threatened	Rare
Rocklands noseburn	<i>Tragia saxicola</i>		Threatened	Imperiled
Florida tripsacum	<i>Tripsacum floridanum</i>		Threatened	Imperiled
Porter's sandmat	<i>Chamaesyce porteriana</i>		Endangered	Imperiled
Florida duskywing	<i>Ephyriades brunnea floridensis</i>			Imperiled
Martial Scrub-Hairstreak	<i>Strymon martialis</i>			Imperiled
Cuban Crescent	<i>Anthanassa frisia</i>			Critically Imperiled
Statira sulphur	<i>Aphrissa statira</i>			Imperiled
Florida White	<i>Appias drusilla</i>			Critically Imperiled
Atala Hairstreak	<i>Eumaeus atala</i>			Imperiled
Malachite	<i>Siproeta stelenes</i>			Imperiled
Miami Cave Crayfish	<i>Procambarus milleri</i>			Critically Imperiled
Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake	<i>Crotalus adamanteus</i>			Rare
Limpkin	<i>Aramus guarauna</i>			Rare

Short-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo brachyurus</i>			Critically Imperiled
Swallow-tailed Kite	<i>Elanoides forficatus</i>			Imperiled
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>			Rare
Louisiana Waterthrush	<i>Parkesia motacilla</i>			Imperiled
American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>			Imperiled
Painted Bunting	<i>Passerina ciris</i>			Rare
Yellow-crowned Night-heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>			Rare
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			Imperiled
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>			Imperiled
Great White Heron	<i>Ardea herodias occidentalis</i>			Imperiled
Big Brown Bat	<i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>			Rare
Narrowleaf Carolina scalystem	<i>Elytraria caroliniensis</i>			Imperiled
Pineland milkpea	<i>Galactia pinetorum</i>			Imperiled
Trapdoor Spider	<i>Ummidia sp.</i>			Just discovered 2016

In the final plan decided that would achieve financial stability and some habitat preservation, there appears to be a lack of acknowledgement of a prescribed/arson/natural fire occurrence with respect to the layout of businesses, school, vehicles, and residential property that would be on the

property. The intense heat and embers that will come from fire within the preserves will consist of a substantial risk to life and property with the resultant layout. It is often seen during the dry season with high winds and heavy human interaction with pine rocklands that wind driven wildfires can become explosively dangerous and become crown fires that will ignite areas hundreds of yards away. This has to be considered into the plans and firebreak buffers should be included within the development footprints outside any habitat boundaries to protect public safety. This is a repeated mistake made by Miami-Dade County when issuing permits for structures to be constructed near a pine rockland. It is either the habitat becomes severely fire suppressed due to lack of fire and creates an even greater risk, or unexpected fire creates a danger to the public and property held within that Miami-Dade County and insurance carriers must burden the loss.

Appendix A:

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING AND REPORTING BOTANICAL INVENTORIES FOR FEDERALLY LISTED, PROPOSED, AND CANDIDATE PLANTS

“List every species observed and compile a comprehensive list of vascular plants for the entire project site.”

“9. Adverse conditions may prevent investigators from determining presence or identifying some target species in potential habitats of target species. Disease, drought, or herbivory may preclude the presence or identification of target species in any year. Additional botanical inventories in subsequent years may be required if adverse conditions occur in potential habitats.”

Given the extended lack of fire and invasive species management of the property parcels, a thorough assessment of plant species present in such a fire/disturbance dependent habitat is impossible in its current state. Many of the federally protected species being surveyed for are likely present in the seed bank that would appear after fuel reduction and proper prescribed fire is applied. Many species presumed extirpated, or in low occurrence, in the Richmond Tract have been documented present or in richer abundance after fire has occurred. Examples are deltoid spurge (*Euphorbia deltoidea subsp. deltoidea*), tiny polygala (*Polygala smallii*), pine hyacinth (*Clematis baldwinii*), and Brickell Bush (*Brickellia mosieri*). For a proper biological survey to properly judge the impact of the proposed development, exotics removal to reduce fuel must occur and then prescribed fire in mosaic burns over a couple years should occur with surveys done a few months after each burn. This protocol is insufficient for such a specialized habitat.

September 5, 2014 Letter

From: Cynthia Marks (Florida Bat Conservancy)

To: David Ceilley (JEI)

HCP Relevance: Site Inspection Summary

Observations for only two subsequent nights Sept 2 & 3, 2014 for only one hour at each location is inadequate to properly assess the presence of *Eumops* in this facility. *Eumops* have shown to delay emergence for many hours after dusk or not emerge at all if weather conditions or unusual activity is occurring at the roost site. *Eumops* have also demonstrated roost switching behavior. The factors for roost selection is poorly understood but could be due to weather or

reproductive conditions. The lack of observations during this very brief period is not sufficient for determining presence or absence for these abandoned buildings.

No mention of weather conditions during the nights of observation were mentioned. These factors can greatly influence detectability. High winds and a drop in ambient temperatures have been shown to inhibit *Eumops* emergence. This has been documented in roosts in Babcock Webb and Coral Gables.

Although staining of areas around entrances and the presence of guano are good general indicators of the presence of a possible roost location, they have not been shown to be reliable indicators for certain types of roosts that *Eumops* have occupied. The best of example of this would be a roost found in Coral Gables in a private residence that has been well observed and studied. There was no obvious staining at the entrance of this roost. Guano, though infrequently found near the known entrance to the roost, was difficult to detect and preceding weather conditions would make it unapparent at times.

October 8, 2014 Letter

From: Cynthia Marks (Florida Bat Conservancy)

To: David Ceilley (JEI)

HCP Relevance: Expert opinion on potential FBB utilization of CRC

Bats are possibly the most abundant mammals in urban areas. The Family Molossidae in particular appears to be successful in urban areas and populations may have increased along with availability of manmade structures in which they commonly roost. However, their populations are vulnerable in urban areas due to illegal killing by homeowners and pest control operators, improper exclusions from buildings, and pesticides. Because of their tendency to roost in manmade structures, loss of natural habitat is not as important of an issue for molossids as it is for other species, however good sources of water and availability of insect prey is critical.

These remarks for Molossidae in general may hold true for other well studied small Molossidae, like *Tadarida brasiliensis*, due to their adaptability to even small architectural imperfections on artificial structures. This has not been shown to be true of *Eumops* throughout its range. *Eumops* appear to require much larger cavities, elevation, and lack of physical obstructions for their roosts in artificial structures. An assessment of available suitable artificial roosts throughout their range in urban areas that used to have large tracts of pine forests with pine snags has not been done. Therefore, to imply that this may not be as important of an issue is an unsubstantiated statement in regards to the molossid *Eumops*.

In conversations with Dr. Ted Fleming at the University of Miami about the Florida bonneted bat in Coral Gables, he stated that you can often hear their calls over traffic while sitting at stop lights. Of the three recordings of *E. floridanus* I collected in Homestead, two were in the Miami Speedway/Homestead Sports Complex area, which is well lit. The road leading into the Speedway had tall lights and we observed a large number of Night Hawks foraging in the lights, indicating an

abundance of insect prey. The third recording was along a road bordered by two residential subdivisions.

The statements that Eumops calls were collected near well-lit areas does not imply that the bats are actually utilizing those areas for either roosting or foraging. Eumops are often recorded in transit over populated well-lit urban areas due to their calls being detectable by human ears. But, a lack of characterization of these calls as isolated constant frequency, social calls, or frequency modulated calls, frequency of detection, and directionality in context to the activity detected adds no scientific or behavioral evidence to these claims. Since most acoustic recording equipment is not directional in nature and no reference to the equipment utilized in these detections makes the claims scientifically invalid in the context of the implying this species is utilizing these areas in a biologically significant way.

After visiting the Coral Reef Commons site and looking at the *E. floridanus* calls that were recorded there by Johnson Engineering, I believe that this species would not be impacted by development of the site. In my opinion, the Development will not impact or impair the ability of the bat to continue its essential behavioral patterns such as roosting, foraging or breeding.

No comments to the characterization of the calls were discussed in regards to the types of calls that were detected. Since roosting was improperly evaluated at the buildings, reference the above statements, this statement has no scientific weight in regards to roosting.

The central open corridor coursing from SW 152nd street to the southwest has physical characteristics in width and length that appears important for Eumops to utilize for foraging behavior. Given that large areas of the Richmond tract have been surveyed acoustically and showed no Eumops acoustic activity due to canopy density and smaller open spaces at other localities yet this site had significant acoustic activity implies that the finding that foraging may not be impacted needs further evaluation. Disclosure of the calls recorded by Johnson Engineering to be able to properly evaluate the types and frequency of the calls by experts with this particular species to indicate what activity is actually occurring is needed. The length of time for the recordings and seasonal conditions needs to be evaluated in the proper context for these recording to make a proper evaluation. Eumops have been shown to be more seasonally dependent on different foraging areas within the Richmond tract and comparison of the activity at this site in context to all of the Richmond tract needs to be evaluated as a whole to make any scientifically sound statements in regards to this property.

With respect to roosting, the calls recorded, based on time and call type, did not indicate that a roost was nearby. The number of sites where detectors were placed should be more than sufficient to determine if there is a roost on the site and none were detected.

What were the type of calls recorded? At what times were they recorded in relation to sunset, dusk or dawn to make this conclusion? What were the weather conditions during the sampling period for Johnson Engineering? There is no reference of the possibility of roost switching and that this sampling period could have occurred at a time when a roost being utilized on property was not currently be utilized but could be during another time of the year (i.e. maternity season).

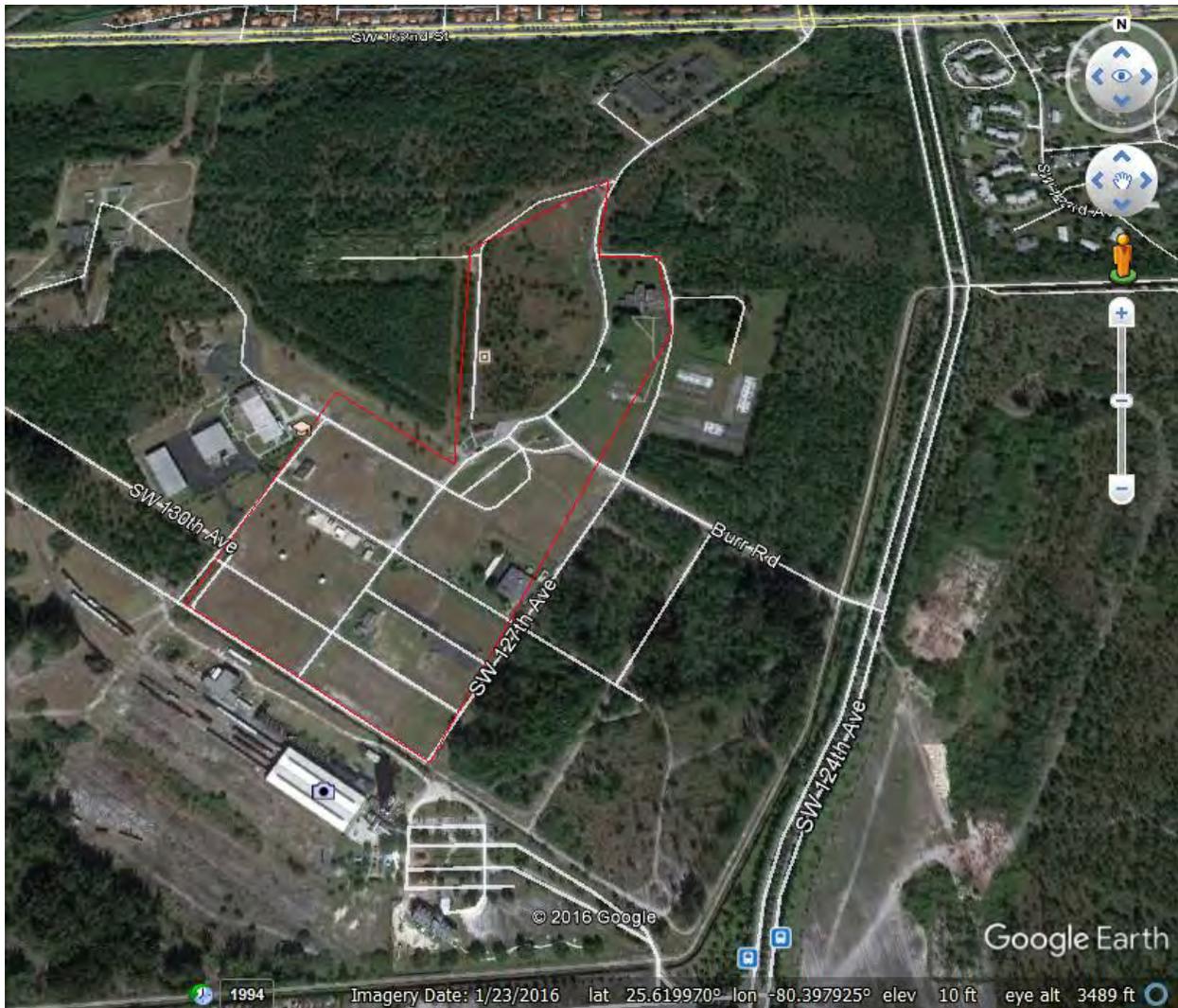
With respect to foraging, while bat species in general forage around water sources, molossids are also commonly found foraging over parking lots, golf courses, and other urban landscapes. During

surveys, I have often found the greatest activity of *Tadarida brasiliensis* and *Molossus molossus* over large parking lots. Molossids are less likely affected by fragmentation as other species because they fly high and commute and forage over cleared and open areas. The site does not currently contain the type of foraging habitat that is preferred by the bats (open area, parking lots, and freshwater lakes) and therefore does not provide preferred foraging habitat for the bat. *E. floridanus* is likely commuting over the site to forage in more open areas and over nearby lakes. This is also indicated by the types of calls recorded at the site.

This site does contain the type of foraging habitat that is preferred by *Eumops*. A large portion of the proposed development site is open and contiguous with the adjacent property open spaces to the south that creates a large open foraging location like this species prefers. Similar to the large parking lot at Zoo Miami in the adjacent property to the south of the site which *Eumops* utilize for foraging during a large part of the year. Development of the northern portion of this corridor could render this foraging location unusable by the species. It has been shown that *Eumops* shift between foraging locations throughout the year on the Richmond tract. This could be due to available preferred insect resources that change with the current seasonal conditions on the larger geographic area. Elimination of this foraging location could be deleterious to the species continued persistence at the Richmond tract if it seasonally depends on this area for needed resources. Unless a multiyear evaluation of this site in relation to the rest of the Richmond tract is done, such statements as it would not affect foraging ability of the species cannot accurately be made.

Feeding buzzes detected through acoustic recording for *Eumops* have proven to be difficult across their range. The species prey base still requires further study but it is theorized by other *Eumops* and their unique anatomy that they prefer larger prey. They may invest a larger amount of time and cover a larger area in search of the correct high reward prey item. Previous studies in urban areas have shown that extended recordings of *Eumops* foraging areas are needed to enable recording of feeding buzzes. In urban areas where there are frequent constant frequency calls are being detected over an extended period of time in a distinct open geographic area, this may be an indicator that they are actually foraging and given the detector location feeding buzzes may be missed or take a long time to capture.

Since a full disclosure of the type of calls, frequency, location, and environmental conditions are not disclosed, this statement cannot be scientifically validated.



Natural Forest Community (NFC) Management Plan

Property Folio(.): 30-5926-000-0060, 30-5925-000-0015 and 30-5925-000-0025

Property Address: 12500 SW 152 Street and 15657 SW 127 Avenue

NFC Permit No.: NFC1012-012

Date: JULY 2013

This document indicated a binding habitat management plan as of 10/17/2011 which the University of Miami failed to implement and allowed the habitat on their property to continue to deteriorate. It also recognizes previous unauthorized clearing of 6.6 acres on the property showing disregard for the importance of the habitat and measure to be proper stewards.

The main objective of the NFC Pine Rockland and NFC Hardwood Hammock management plan is to maintain the NFC preserve areas with less than 3% exotic vegetation cover, in perpetuity, as required by the NFC Covenant referenced below.

This agreement was made in July 2013. To date, the property owners have neglected to fully implement the requirements of this permit with only doing primary clearing of the exotics of the hardwood hammock section of the agreement and the habitat has continued to be allowed to decline in condition. These are indications of the University of Miami and RAM Realty lack of respect and adherence to the conditions of proper habitat management and should inform policy makers that this past and current practice should give precedent for future management of this parcel.

Why were there no mandatory mitigation requirements for the previous illegal clearing of 6.6 acres of the pine rockland on the University of Miami property?

Within 60 (sixty) days following the final and non-appealable approval of the Miami-Dade County zoning application referenced by RER hearing number Z2006-129, but, in no event, later than two hundred seventy (270) days following the execution of the NFC covenant associated with this management plan and prior to site development, the property owner shall coordinate with FFS to perform a controlled burn of the pine rockland preserves. The property owner, in conjunction with FFS, shall use its reasonable efforts to perform a licensed and permitted Controlled Burn within one and a half years of the execution of the NFC covenant.

Within the sooner of ninety (90) days of (i) completion of a Controlled Burn of the pine rockland or a determination RER, after consultation with the property owner and FFS, that a Controlled Burn is not reasonably feasible (which determination shall not occur sooner than 240 days following the execution of the NFC covenant associated with NFC permit NFC2012-012). The property owner shall initiate an intensive exotic plant eradication event (utilizing chemical and manual removal) over the pine rockland preserved, in order to achieve a less than 3% exotic plant cover.

- Perform a controlled burns throughout all pine rockland preserve areas every three to seven (7) years.
- Annually remove and chemically treat all exotic plants. This shall be performed by a certified applicator, with the first treatment occurring in accordance with the Initial Exotic Management timelines stated above, then yearly (at a minimum) thereafter.
- Hand remove and herbicide treat of native hardwoods (except State-listed species) on a yearly basis, at a minimum.
- Monitoring reports tracking elimination of exotic and prohibited vegetation and re-growth of native vegetation shall be submitted to Miami-Dade County on a yearly basis (see monitoring program below).

These conditions of the permit requirements have also failed to be implemented by the permit holders and should be grounds for revocation of the NFC permit.

Coral Reef Commons Rare Plant and Floristic Inventory and Assessment

December 12, 2014

Steven W. Woodmansee

Pro Native Consulting

Page 21 of 42

Carter's small-flowered flax (*Linum carteri* var. *carteri*) a small annual forb which can occupy pine rockland, but more typically occupies fire breaks and scraped areas adjacent to pine rockland. It reproduces year round. It is a small wildflower which can easily go unnoticed, or confused with the more common wildflower Pitted stripeseed (*Piriqueta caroliniana*), which greatly resembles

Carter's small-flowered flax, and is abundant at Coral Reef Commons. Knowing this, determined searches were made in the appropriate areas to no avail. The closest natural population occurs at a county owned natural area roughly three (3) miles to the east. Never reported for the Richmond Pine Rockland Complex, it is possible that Carter's small-flowered flax has never occurred at Coral Reef Commons.

An intermediate form of *Linum carteri* var. *carteri* and *smallii* is present in the adjacent property of Martinez Pineland.

Sand flax (*Linum arenicola*) is a small annual forb which can occupy pine rockland, but more typically occupies fire breaks and scraped areas adjacent to pine rockland. Despite some of the literature, It reproduces year round (personal communication with Craig van der Heiden). It is a small wildflower which can easily go unnoticed, or confused with the more common wildflower Pitted stripeseed (*Piriqueta caroliniana*), which greatly resembles Sand flax, and is abundant at Coral Reef Commons. Knowing this, determined searches were made in the appropriate areas to no avail.

This species is incredibly cryptic and flowering peaks at different times of the year allowing better detection. Two new small populations never before detected in the well surveyed Zoo Miami Pinelands were only discovered in the last few years. It is also found in the other adjacent properties, Martinez Pineland.





This survey reflects the actual impact to pine rockland habitat that would actually occur if this development was to progress. The proposed reserve areas that contain some pine rockland and hardwood hammock are less than half of the areas that are actual pine rockland in different states. There are also disturbed upland tracks that contain a large diversity of native plants that often compose a pine rockland midstory and understory. The diversity of disturbed upland has 143 native species present that is only surpassed slightly by the 151 native species documented in the areas designated as pine rockland.

This survey correlates with on the ground eyewitness accounts of the property that convey that the same neglect of the property that the University of Miami did for many years that caused many of the areas of pine rockland to become overgrown with exotics, shade out the diverse understory, and become fire suppressed has allowed the cleared areas visible from aerial photographs to return to a rich and diverse native pine rockland understory lacking a pine canopy and palm midstory. A large area of the area being designated as “developed” has actually reverted to valuable habitat and could become good quality pine rockland with minimal treatments and time. Very few sites within Miami-Dade county have this potential to add back to the total acreage of pine rockland, especially with it being contiguous with the remaining pine rockland of the Richmond tract.

The marl prairie and hardwood hammock interface to the pine rockland is also an important transition environment for many species that thrive on the interface between these habitats. Most of these areas where these different ecosystems abut have been lost.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 2:45:37 PM

I'm writing as a concern citizen and pine rockland researcher. I request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons. Without this habitat, these species are doomed for extinction - all because we need another Walmart and apartment buildings? This to me is just unacceptable. This last significant pine rockland remnant NEEDS to be protected, not paved over and destroyed.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat is absolutely not good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. In addition to much of their habitat being destroyed, it has also been extremely fragmented making them genetically isolated pools without any breeding/crosspollination. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed. Without the Richmond pine rockland, many plant/animal species will simply be doomed for extinction.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Meike de Vringer

Meike de Vringer

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fwc.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 4:48:25 PM

First let me say that I am very angry and disturbed that the process of eliminating such an endangered area has gotten this far.

It is important for you to know that I have restored pine rocklands in the past without burning, although I know that prescribed burning is the best way to manage pine rocklands. I know first hand that it is not absolutely necessary. I also know that a degraded and disturbed pine rock land can be returned to a thriving environment with hands on care.

I do know what "Take" means, it means kill and I can not understand how any endangered or threatened species is allowed to be killed off in order to progress with development of such endanger lands.

Years ago, I was in charge of a project to restore a few small parcels of pineland at Leewood Elementary school at 10343 SW 124 st Miami. It is in the middle of a residential area that prior to development was a pine rockland. To make a long story short, a band of parents, teachers, students and boy scouts cleared out the invasive species and planted several pine trees and other native plants indigenous to pine rocklands in the area. Within weeks of completing our task, Atala butterflies began to arrive and make the pineland their homes. The Atala has been found to be pretty resilient but other animals like the hairstreak or plants like the deltoid sperge are not. They need pine rocklands to live in and can only live in pine rocklands. Nowhere else!

There is less than 2% of pine rocklands left. EVERY piece of land that has pineland plants and animals on it must be saved. It is the only home they have.

We people can move anywhere and shop anywhere. We do not have to do it on their land!

I will not shop on that land and will boycott all companies associated with this project and I will not vote for any politician who votes in favor of this project.

I believe that you will find many more people that feel the way I do about this project that in my opinion should not have gotten this far and should be stopped right now!

Sincerely,

Donna Kalil
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 11:59:46 AM

Dear U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services:

I am writing to strongly oppose the development of Coral Reef Commons project.

Pine Rockland forests are a rare and natural habitat for countless natural species, plant, insect and forest wild life; Wild habitat being the very cornerstone on which these precious species thrive and have their being. To develop a mega complex in this fragile region could potentially disturb and threaten the delicate balance on which these species thrive and survive.

Please be the voice for these fragile species that depend on humanity's prudence, wisdom and care for their protection and conservation. Please protect rare Pine Rockland forests and all the species that inhabit them through intervention in this matter. Any project that threatens or imposes on this should not be allowed to move forward.

Furthermore, the proposed habitat conservation plan simply does not appear to offer adequate protection to these fragile species. In a known habitat of rare and endangered species, an over abundance of care and protection is needed to ensure survival. Please be the voice for this beautiful and natural region. Please intervene on behalf of nature and wild life. Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns.

Sincerely,
D.M. Hunter

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:38:10 PM
Attachments: [IMG_6859.JPG](#)

David Dell

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Southeast Region, Ecological Services

1875 Century Boulevard

Atlanta, GA 30345

Ashleigh Blackford

South Florida Ecological Services Office

1339 20th Street

Vero Beach, FL 32960

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Incidental Take Permit (ITP) application that is being sought by Coral Reef Retail LLC, Coral Reef Resi Ph I LLC, Ramdev LLC, and The University of Miami. I understand that the issuance of an ITP is something the USFWS undertakes with the utmost care to ensure that species of concern and critical habitat are protected to the greatest extent possible, and I am grateful to USFWS for their continued care and protection of our most vulnerable and rare nature and wildlife.

I am a lifelong resident of Miami-Dade County and grew up in a neighborhood near the Richmond Tract. I have fond memories of going to these pine rocklands as a youngster to explore, later as an adult learning about their importance and vulnerability. As an avid Naturalist, I still continue to spend as much time as possible enjoying and learning about these special forests. Fragmented as they may be, they still represent important sanctuaries for threatened and endangered species, but are also important habitats for nesting native and migrant species, as well as important natural corridors for wildlife increasingly displaced due to overdevelopment and urban sprawl. These fragmented pine rockland and rockland

hammocks are like islands in the midst of busy roads, shopping centers and neighborhoods. To walk in them is an escape to the Miami of old. Entering these lands of pines and palms you are immediately greeted by the sounds of songbirds and the flutter of butterflies. The scent of the understory and pines is intoxicating to the senses. In the last couple of months, I have been fortunate to observe the courtship and nesting of a pair of Cooper's Hawks (photograph enclosed). Not a species of concern, but nonetheless an example of the importance of these pine rocklands for so many species of South Florida's native and naturalized wildlife.

There are several areas of concern that I have with the current habitat conservation plan (HCP) submitted by the parties seeking an ITP from the agency. I will address these individually:

On page 3 of the HCP it states that the "*ITP, which will cover both construction and activities for Mitigation Areas,*" referring to the University of Miami's (UM) property along SW 168th Street and SW 117th Avenue that is slated to become 50.96 acres of mitigation area to SE of Coral Reef Commons (CRC) project area. For this reason they are considered a co-applicant on the HCP. As stated in Appendix J1, there are only truly 47.36 acres since 3.6 acres contain "*existing facilities of the UM Richmond Campus*". This reduces the conservation footprint since these 3.6 acres have structures on them and have degraded this area of the pine rockland. In the HCP, they propose a burn plan, which under the current deed is already required for protection of Deltoid Spurge. Therefore, UM is already under obligation to maintain these natural areas and are required to implement a "conservation management plan" regardless of whether this ITP is approved for CRC. UM is bound to maintain the habitat, it is required under the agreement between them and the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, a pre-existing condition in place prior to sale of the other parcel of the land to CRC. If managed in accordance to the conditions of this agreement, they will not need an ITP. What is not clear in this HCP is why they will need an ITP and what other uses such as the aforementioned construction and activities will be undertaken. This needs to be defined and available for public review and comment before this ITP is approved. It is not acceptable that UM be a co-applicant of CRC's HCP given the lack of clarity or purpose of use for this proposed mitigation area, and they should be required to submit their own HCP before ITP is considered, and should be removed from consideration under the CRC HCP. Removing them from this HCP obligates CRC to submit a new HCP to exclude UM as co-applicant.

The density of the construction on the proposed development of 86.49 acres is also

of concern despite the applicant's proposed onsite mitigation and stepping stones. It lacks full and transparent disclosure of what imperiled species may also be present on CRC site. Being a designated Natural Forest Communities (NFC) there can be other species of concern present not disclosed in HCP. It is imperative that independent consultants with access to peer and public review be undertaken. Applicant has not demonstrated willingness to allow these assessments to be undertaken in the hopes to procure an ITP and fast track the project. This is unacceptable when considering the delicate status of the NFC and the endangered species it houses.

Lastly, since under NEPA, USFWS is required to conduct an environmental analysis before a final ITP decision, as stated in the HCP, the CRC property is a focal area for the Florida Bonneted Bat, as well as designated critical habitat for Bartram's Scrub Hairstreak and Florida Leafwing Butterflies, Carter's Small-Flowered Flax and Florida Brickell-Bush. The surveys confirm the presence of other species of concern not documented in the application. It is of utmost importance to ascertain what species will be impacted by this development. Given the low number of some of these species and plants due to loss of critical habitat, it is essential that future survivability be determined if this parcel is permanently altered and destroyed for the sake of a development project that can be undertaken in land that is not as ecologically fragile or rare as this tract. Pine Rocklands previously degraded can be restored as can be observed in EEL properties such as Rockdale Preserve, which was once eyed for a similar development project, but was preserved.

I understand the role of USFWS and the limitations placed on the agency, but I am hopeful that the USFWS will understand the importance of this parcel to the community and the need to protect it beyond what is being proposed by the applicants. There are other options that given more time can be considered to incentivize the applicant to reconsider their development plans in favor of conservation, such as working with local and state officials for a possible land swap, or sale of the property. There are multiple and significant concerns from the communities near the development, but many such as I are very concerned that the surveys undertaken in the preparation of this HCP are not impartial and do not with full accuracy reflect what endangered species might be severely impacted by the development plans presented in this HCP. The on-site and off-site mitigation areas do not afford protection for all species, such as the discussion which proposes relocation of Florida Bonneted Bats from proposed development areas, the removal of Croton within the development footprint that directly affects the Bartram's Scrub Hairstreak & Florida Leafwing Butterfly, or permanent alteration and elimination of

the needed soils for the successful recovery of the Miami Tiger Beetle; all practices that can have serious implications for the future survivability of these species.

For the reasons I have expressed, I respectfully ask that this ITP be rejected as presented in the HCP, in the hopes that a more permanent and restorative plan be implemented to ensure that this important tract of Miami's Pine Rocklands be preserved and restored. Thank you.

Regards,

Carmen Ferreiro

Naturalist, Florida Everglades



From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP: Bad Deal for ALL Species
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 1:37:32 PM

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Also, this area does not need another Walmart and the multi-unit housing that is being proposed for that tract of land will only bring further congestion to an already over populated and over congested area of town.

Thank you,

Javier Prat
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP: Bad Deal for Species and Groundwater
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 1:37:12 PM

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

In addition to the threat to the wildlife in this area, the rocks and limestone filters rainwater helping to our clean our groundwater naturally. This is vitally important so we can avoid adding even more chemicals and cost to purifying water.

Thank you,

Sharyn Marks
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP: Bad Deal for Species, bad for community
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 12:01:20 PM

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

I CAN NOT believe this is even under consideration. This is not why I moved here. I moved here for a green neighborhood, not Walmart

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. REALLY? Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Gloria Cantens
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP: Bad Deal for Wildlife species, for just another development scheme.
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 1:05:17 PM

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Sheryl Leigh-Davault

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP: Please DENY this permit
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:40:09 AM

Hello,

To get right to the point, allowing this tract of rare natural pine rockland to be developed is a terrible idea. We need all the pine rocklands we can get, there is hardly any of it left! This habitat and associated ecosystem is a national treasure, that is now almost completely gone due to poorly planned and massive overdevelopment. We can't undo all that now, but we can hold onto what little we have left.

Therefore, I strongly urge you to DENY any permit to develop this land. It needs to stay wild.

We simply cannot afford to lose any more of this habitat, especially any tract large enough to support sustaining populations of wildlife. Keeping this unique parcel viable as a natural area is clearly the highest and best purpose for this tract, and the broad public interest demands that you strongly support that goal.

Thank you.

Mike Whaley
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP: Save the forest
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:09:21 AM

There are few chances left to save what remains of our native forests. Rather than cutting them down for commerce we should be preserving them for future generations to experience, not to mention the very unique set of creatures that call Pine Rocklands home. I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Jason Lopez

[REDACTED]

ZXF1YXRlIHh1YnN0aXR1dGUgZm9yIGZpcmUuPGJyPjQuICJObyBHb29kIEFsdGVybmF0aXZlcy4i
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From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 8:46:31 AM
Attachments: [Coral Reef Commons.pdf](#)

Good morning Mr. Dell/Ms. Blackford:

I hope this email finds you well. Please see attached letter of support for RAM Realty Services and Coral Reef Commons project.

Thank you,

Tammy McNair
President
Construction Elements





May 16, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 30345

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960

RE: CORAL REEF COMMONS HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

Dear Sir/Madam:

We write to you today in support of the development of a 137-acre commercial and residential site in South Miami known as Coral Reef Commons.

Having read the habitat conservation plan, it is our belief that the developer, RAM Realty Services, has demonstrated their understanding and sensitivity of the environment and protected species class; we believe all necessary precautions have been considered to protect and minimize the impact if any, of proposed construction and development activities.

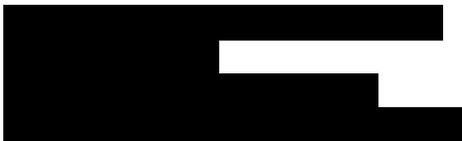
We urge you to grant all necessary permits to facilitate the project.

Thanking you in advance for expediting their submission.

Cordially,

Tammy McNair

Construction Elements



From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Miami-Dade County, Florida
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 8:48:24 AM

Dear Representatives of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,

I urge you to conduct a further study of the impact of the proposed development of 900 apartments and a Walmart Shopping Center on the site one of the last fragments of the endangered Pine Rocklands in world. This acerage is one of the last refuges of endangered species such as the Atala Hairstreak Butterfly and the Bonneted Bat.

This unique habitat should be preserved not only to protect these small creatures but to preserve a part of the ecological heritage of Miami-Dade residents. This small tract is the largest remnant of 186,000 acres of Pine Rocklands that used to exist. Once it is paved over it cannot be saved.

The Service should conduct a full public hearing on this matter. I have attended several community meetings on this issue and attendance has been robust. We need a full public hearing to allow residents as well as experts to testify.

Today is the last day for public comment on this matter and my hope is for the Service to listen to the many voices being raised.

Respectfully,
Sharon Van Smith

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Miami
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 11:06:49 AM

Good morning,

I have been a resident of south Miami Dade County for more than 40 years. Though I am now retired, I worked for the Miami Dade County Public Schools during that time, both as a teacher and as a school social worker. More than half of that time, I worked in the immediate area of Coral Reef Commons including before there was a zoo and before Hurricane Andrew. I have a long and deep history there and know the area very well. As a social worker, much of the time involved driving in the area of Coral Reef Drive. Every year, the traffic got heavier. It is now to the point where you would mostly describe it as gridlock. Not only does this imperil the fragile Pine Rocklands where this oversized project will be built, but the extreme increase in vehicle traffic will damage the people, plants, and air for miles and miles surrounding this project. Asthma has increased. Heat from all those cars has raised the temperature so a/c use has to increase. It impacts all of us trying to live healthy lives here.

Our State is a gift from nature. The green space of the Pine Rocklands is a gift that once is gone will be gone forever.

Please do not allow this.

Thank you.

Jane
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Pine Rockland
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:40:58 AM

To whom it may concern,

I am writing you to voice my opposition to development at the Coral Reef Commons site. Please stop development at this site which is a little piece of endangered pine rockland habitat that is left in south Florida.

Please prepare the full EIS report required by NEPA for major federal action.

Thank you.

Warm regards,

[REDACTED]

Warm regards,
Robin Sexton
727-560-5927

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Project
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 9:57:12 PM

As a lifelong Floridian I've seen the quality of life decline measurably. People sit in much more traffic than they used to and the sprawl is painful.

I work four miles from my home. I sit in traffic for 30 minutes, 40 minutes. Higher and higher would the time sitting in traffic inch up. This development on Coral Reef Drive will increase the time sitting in traffic EVEN MORE!

There is so little natural beauty left in South Florida. Please stop this last remaining bit from being turned into another strip mall. Our county is absolutely full of malls. Once a natural area is gone, that's it.



Respectfully,

David Freer

From: [Pete Gonzalez](#)
To: david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Public Comment
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:29:15 PM

Good evening,

My name is Pete, I am Chairman of the Board and Director of Policy for Urban Paradise Guild.

The Pine Rocklands habitat was my first true experience with nature. My birth home was located just South of 152nd Street, almost directly South of what is now Coral Reef High. Then at about age 8, just a few months before Hurricane Andrew, I lived at [REDACTED], Miami, FL 33177 (Just East of Robert Morgan).

My Tia and cousins lived in the area as well, and we spent many days together at Larry & Penny Thompson Park riding the water slides and (my favorite) exploring nature.

THE MYSTERY, THE WONDER!

One moment I'd be utterly entranced by the varying viscosity and hue of sap, then a snake would slither by and scare the bejeezus out of me, while simultaneously fascinating me. Then a moth or butterfly would flutter in my peripheral vision and steal my attention.

My cousins would grab the scary creatures to get a closer look, I was grateful because I was never brave enough, yet no less intrigued. Nature was something that bonded us. When we were outside, getting dirty, exploring, and discovering new frontiers together, those were the moments we were most connected.

This common interest transcended the differences of our personalities and interests.

I never felt as alive as when I was exploring the Pine Rocklands. I would dizzy myself, gazing upward at the gracefully giant pines dancing with the clouds.

When Hurricane Andrew decimated the area, the destruction of these graceful giants hurt me most. I never stopped visiting them until I left for college. I watched them heal slowly, but surely.

Today when I drive by I am elated to see how the area has bounced back.

Now I do not share this anecdote because I want to specifically save the Pine Rocklands because of what it means to ME. I share it because I want you to consider what precious habitats like the Pine Rocklands mean to children's education and connection to nature.

This is what agencies like the Fish & Wildlife Service are meant to preserve, protect and when possible expand. A healthy and robust respect for and understanding of natural habitats. The case is self-evident that it is your duty to prevent this project from proceeding.

With only 2% left of a habitat and its creatures, it is time to say “when”. Truly it is heartbreaking that this is reduced to a plea.

It should be enough in and of itself, that the Coral Reef Commons project is an audacious disregard for the value of the habitat – there are no substantial mitigation measures incorporated. These people aren’t out to benefit a community; they are after profit, period.

Right now, the ball is in your court, and we need some heroes in key government agencies right now. Remember that your children’s children will inherit this Earth, and you play a role in how this rare slice of Earth will look when they do.

Will you do the right thing and stop the Coral Reef Commons Project? You are our last hope at a miracle.

Respectfully,

Pete Gonzalez

Director of Policy & Chairman of the Board
Urban Paradise Guild



"Creating Sustainable Paradise, One Habitat at a Time."
<http://urbanparadiseguild.org/>

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From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons comment
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 6:41:38 PM

A full Environmental impact study should be carried out. Our Pine Rocklands habitat should be given the outmost consideration, protection, and should be made a conservation priority over any & all development.

Please consider the safety of the Environments habitat & wildlife a priority, & apply its protection to the fullest extent of the law.

Appreciate your consideration.
Carmel Severson.
Pembroke Pines Florida.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons development
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:47:10 AM

Do not allow any destruction of pine rockland! It is estimated that less than 2 percent of this endangered habitat outside the borders of Everglades National Park still remains. The Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) provides a brief description:

"Pine rockland is characterized by an open canopy of South Florida slashpine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*) with a patchy understory of tropical and temperate shrub and palms and a rich herbaceous layer of mostly perennial species including numerous species endemic to South Florida."

Underlain by oolitic limestone - which often breaks through the surface in beautiful and craggy formations - this landscape is like no other in the State of Florida. It is also home to numerous plants and animals - many of which, such as the Florida bonneted bat, Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly, and the Florida brickell-bush, are listed as "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act.

Have we not destroyed enough of our beautiful state?

Respectively,

Catherine Kesler
CATS

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



Virus-free. www.avast.com

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons habitat
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:54:11 PM

I write this email in protest of the proposed development on the last remaining pine rocklands in south Miami Dade. As such, this remaining 2% outside of the Everglades would be the only space for endangered/threatened species of animals and insects to find refuge. The whole business of developing a community in the space is undoubtedly due to the very nature of it, however, the development itself would disrupt the whole point of it. Build your project somewhere else and then give it to a true conservation manager (NOT Uof M). Put in boardwalks and let people get their nature on without driving the nature away.

Claire Measel

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons in the pine rocklands of South Miami-Dade
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:01:27 AM

FWS,

Please deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 acres of intact or restorable pine rockland habitat for a shopping center and apartment complex. This is irreplaceable habitat.

Please prepare the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan.

We only have this land, nothing else once its gone.

Sincerely,
Michelle Aaron

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Coral Reef Commons proposed project: Public Comment
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:53:09 PM

May 22, 2017

DISTRIBUTION TO:

David Dell

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Atlanta Regional Office, Ecological Services

1875 Century Boulevard

Atlanta, Georgia 30345

Ashleigh Blackford

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

South Florida Ecological Services

1339 20th Street

Vero Beach, Florida 32960

Via e-mail (with and without letterhead attachment)

RE: Coral Reef Commons Development and Richmond Pine Rocklands

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford:

In reference to the Richmond Pine Rocklands and the proposed “Coral Reef Commons” development, I wish to add my research and opinions to your professional review of this project.

Specifically, I deal with evidence issues on a daily basis, and I testify as an Expert Witness on such matters in Federal, State and local courts. With regard to the Richmond Pine Rocklands, there is no shortage of evidence regarding the value of this habitat and the need to preserve it.

In fact, study after study, symposium after symposium, decade after decade have all concluded the same thing: there are unique qualities in Pine Rocklands, and Miami-Dade’s rocklands are the jewels of the environment.

The FWS website itself has a 34-page, highly detailed report on the Pine Rocklands, concluding “**Finally, formal and informal public awareness programs to promote pine rockland conservation are very important and should be promoted.**”

SOURCE: “Pine Rocklands... Multi-Species Recovery Plan for South Florida”

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

(includes and extensive bibliography of other related titles)

http://www.fws.gov/southeastfire/documents/MSRP_PineRocklands.pdf

I wish to add the following document links and content to the public record and your review of the proposed development. Each publication includes language supporting pine rockland preservation, reducing or halting pine rockland land development, and recognizing the unique environmental value of pine rocklands, regardless of the rockland parcel size:

Richmond Pine Rocklands Document Research

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<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/ocas/pdfs/theact/daa05.pdf>

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- [if !supportLists]--> · <!--[endif]-->Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- [if !supportLists]--> · <!--[endif]-->University of Florida IFAS
- [if !supportLists]--> · <!--[endif]-->Florida International University
- [if !supportLists]--> · <!--[endif]-->Miami-Dade County
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Submitted to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Cooperative Grant #14-16-0004-91-951

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“Management Plan for the Richmond Pine Rocklands”

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<http://irmafiles.nps.gov/reference/holding/496726?accessType=DOWNLOAD>

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Miami-Dade County Natural Areas Management Working Group

Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM)

Technical Report Number 2004-1

References Miami-Dade County Resolution #R-841-02

<http://regionalconservation.org/jrcs/NAT%20AREAS%20MGT%20PLAN.PDF>

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<http://www.miamidade.gov/planning/cdmp/metrozoo/MetrozooRevisedRecs.pdf>

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OTHER PUBLICATIONS

1996

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“The Pine Rockland Initiative Program; ARRA* Cooperative Agreement ARRA-R4FD-RJ012; Final Report”

Prepared by: Keith A. Bradley and Sarah V. Martin

Submitted by: The Institute for Regional Conservation, 22601 S.W. 152 Avenue, Miami, Florida 33170; George D. Gann, Executive Director

Submitted to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Coastal Program, 1339 20th Street, Vero Beach, Florida 32960

* ARRA = American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

http://regionalconservation.org/ircs/pdf/publications/2012_2.pdf

2012

“Zoo Miami Entertainment Area: Revitalization Through User Experience; An Undergraduate Thesis in Landscape Architecture; College of Design, Construction and Planning; The University of Florida”

By Emilio R. Fuster

Prepared for: Zoo Miami, Miami-Dade County Parks and Recreation Department

http://ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/AA/00/01/33/28/00001/Fuster_E_Capstone_Book.pdf

WEBSITE NARRATIVES

“South Florida Rocklands” and “Rockland Ecosystems: Pinelands”

University of Florida, IFAS* Extension, Florida Forest Stewardship

* IFAS = Institute of Food and Agricultural Science

http://sfrc.ufl.edu/extension/florida_forestry_information/forest_resources/south_florida_rocklands.html

“Conservation Fact Sheet: Pine Rockland Restoration”

Zoo Miami

<http://zoomiamiconservation.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Pine-Rock-Land.pdf>

“Pine Rockland”

Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI)

Florida State University

http://www.fnai.org/PDF/NC/Pine_Rock.pdf

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The evidence and conclusions presented by government, academic and private sources is overwhelmingly in

favor of preservation and restoration of all pine rockland parcels. If FWS allows Coral Reef Commons to move forward, 30 years of publications presented herein are made null and void. Such an action will diminish the integrity of FWS and the entire developmental review process, nationwide, for decades to come.

Respectfully prepared by:

Robert Wyman

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Coral Reef Commons proposed project: Public comment
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:57:40 PM
Attachments: [FWS Response with Letterhead.pdf](#)
[Untitled attachment 00358.htm](#)

Please see my attached letter on this matter.

Respectfully,

Robert Wyman

[REDACTED]

Attachment:

- Public comment response to FWS (PDF file)



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- 3-D Scaled Models
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- Code & Statutory Research
- Engineering & Safety Research
- CLE & CEU Educational Presentations

May 22, 2017

DISTRIBUTION TO:

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta, Georgia 30345

Ashleigh Blackford
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Respectfully prepared by:

Robert Wyman
3626 Coral Springs Drive
Coral Springs, Florida 33065
786-246-8100

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons public response letter
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 6:59:23 AM
Attachments: [CRC Public response letter.pdf](#)

My name is Grant Steelman. I am a Certified Burn Manger and have worked with several landowners in south Florida with the management goal of improving conservation lands. I have had an opportunity to review the public documents regarding the Draft Habitat Conservation Plan and the Fire Reintroduction and Prescribed Burn Plan for the Coral Reef Commons property. I have also conducted over 140 prescribed burns in the state of Florida on over 40,000 acres in the last 17 years as a certified prescribed burn manager while working for the State of Florida and also as A Prescribed Burn Boss 2 on the Federal qualifications level. During that time I have had the opportunity to burn in highly populated areas with smoke concerns and temporary impact to the neighboring property owners. I have had the opportunity to teach Ecological Effects of prescribed fire, how to manage the fire behavior to achieve the desired effects on flora and fauna, achieving land management goals through systematic treatments aimed at reducing fuel loads while restoring fire to the ecosystem, and promotion of prescribed burns through the Florida Burn Councils. Through my experience on prescribed fires and the ecological effects of wildfires, Ram requested I assist in implementing the return of fire on the landscape on the on and off-site parcels. I have been asked to use my experience to achieve the objectives of a healthier pine rockland habitat on the conservation areas of the project. While I am contracted to assist in the successful completion of fire management activities, I am writing on my personal behalf of reintroduction of prescribed fire on the landscape.

Prescribed burning in urban locations has become more accepted in the last decade with the increased understanding of ecosystem management. Pine rocklands, like most of Florida's ecosystems, benefit from the interactions and nutrient cycles gained by a prescribed fire. The interactions of the nutrient cycles, heat released, mid-story reduction, and bare ground exposure are vital to the overall health of the system. The majority of the conservation lands bought by various governmental entities (including state, counties, and cities) since 1995 have had the funds to purchase but not manage the habitat. The unfortunate results have been low frequency high severity wildfires that require heavy usage of tractor plow units leaving scars on the landscape for decades. The wildfires cause immediate habitat conversion without the mosaic patterns that offer seed sources to recolonize burned locations. Wildfire suppression equipment have the high potential to spread invasive plants both on-site and from off-site sources usually leading to permanent habitat loss to the species that require this unique ecosystem. Other effects of loss of fire on the landscape have been seen in Sebastian State Preserve, Jonathan Dickinson State Park and most county parks in south Florida in which several decades passed between prescribed fires. This increases the opportunities for catastrophic wildfires and overstory mortality prescribed fires resulting from low intensity, high severity fire management. High severity is normally caused by fire consuming a heavy duff layer and killing the feeder roots or girdling the tree and cutting off the nutrient cycle. We have seen these effects on conservation lands due to several reasons ranging from ample start-up funds but little management funds to hire personnel to conduct a burn and mop-up the burn appropriately; high risk to the land manager if the burn has problems or smoke complaints; high rotation of people within agencies so that land managers do not have the opportunity to get familiar with the fire behavior on-site; little backing from upper management for the use of prescribed fire among the other daily activities possible on the site. The benefit of the Coral Reef Commons site being managed with legal requirements is that the owners now and in the future will have to conduct prescribed fires to meet the legal requirements in the Habitat Conservation Plan. The current condition of the site is an example of lack of fire and lack of invasive plant treatment.

Lack of fuel and fire management for any reason leaves the property open to wildfires either by nature or arson. The level of arson fires this year alone is 40% higher than the previous year and arsonists seek out conditions that restrict fire suppression forces. Fire suppression forces have to suppress a wildfire by the quickest and safest means possible and in Florida that dictates tractor-plows scarring the landscape and heavy fire department brush trucks running over burned and unburned vegetation to extinguish the fire. These activities can occur anytime day or night and have detrimental effects on low mobility fauna which could lead to overall habitat loss and individual animal loss of the highly threatened species. Arson events usually do not have the benefit of proper smoke planning to mitigate the effects of smoke released from the site to the neighboring homes and persons who have medical reasons to avoid the particulate matter. Additional mitigation factors can be in place for prescribed burns that have little to no functionality in a wildfire such as minimum impact techniques for heavy equipment operation barring the training and expertise of the tractor-plow operator.

The requirements set forth in the Draft Habitat Conservation Plan mandate the best management practices possible for the pine rockland habitats. Based on review of the Draft HCP, conducting prescribed burning on the property appears feasible, even in an urban environment, because the Burn Plans employ small burn units that will allow for better burn management. The certified prescribed managers that will conduct the operations on-site will be able to manage the fuel consumption and fire behavior to mitigate most of the smoke impacts while providing an ecosystem benefit for the flora and fauna. Fuel consumption can be managed through environmental factors such as seasonal rainfall, days since rain, relative humidity, wind speed and direction, and dispersion index. Fire behavior can be managed by ignition techniques, days since rain, relative humidity, fuel loading, wind speed and direction, seasonality. Optimum prescribe burn conditions exist with relatively high frequency in Florida due to the peninsular effects of air currents over land and water, which gives the prescribed burner the opportunity to create mosaic patchwork within the burn units creating high habitat quality for the flora and fauna on the site and possible dispersers from other sites. Proper smoke management plans and environmental conditions along with notification of neighboring properties should reduce the impacts of smoke production to a minimal level. Coordination procedures outlined in the Draft HCP will assist in notifying neighbors and the proper authorities to ensure the prescribed burning anticipated and the neighbors can prepare accordingly. These management practices are incorporated into the Draft HCP.

The correct management of fire through the best management practices and techniques allowed certified burn managers to reintroduce fire into sites near Disney, beside John Young Parkway in Orlando, inside the city limits of Titusville, University of Central Florida in Orlando, the Miami Zoo, and several county parks in and around the cities of West Palm Beach, Ft. Lauderdale, Miami, Ft. Myers, Tampa, Orlando, Gainesville, Ocala, and numerous other cities in the southeastern United States. These examples demonstrate the increasing acceptability of prescribed burning in urban areas. The alternative of non-management of conservation lands and risk of loss to wildfire has increased the ecosystem management ability of land managers with the end goal of making the most productive habitats out of fragmented landscapes caused by decades of human development and habitat alteration. The certified burn manager will be required to coordinate all burning activities with surrounding properties, including local fire departments, Florida Highway Patrol, County Sheriff, and local Florida Forest Service Forest Area Supervisors and Senior Rangers. Proper coordination in conjunction with Florida Statutes and Regulations regarding prescribed fire management should allow the property manager to begin and continue a successful prescribed burn program in an urban environment. The current HCP and burn

plan shows a high level of commitment to uphold the spirit of the certified burn manager regulations, landowner rights, and landowner's desire to improve the conservation lands while providing an environmental benefit to the residents of the property and the general area.

Having seen and been a part of successful prescribed burns in urban locations, it is my opinion that prescribed burns on the Coral Reef Commons property can successfully be implemented. Proper smoke, fuel, and fire behavior management is the key to successful treatments to meet the desired future conditions. Use of wildland fire to meet the habitat goals and objectives in the near and distant future are not an issue, but rather a proper smoke management plan in which the smoke produced diminishes over time until burns can be conducted with virtual no thermal signature evident to neighboring property owners. The current plan to manage the properties' conservation lands are a far better management strategy than waiting on an arsonist or lightning to trigger a habitat degrading response focused on immediate fire suppression through tractor-plows and heavy brush trucks with no attention to habitat alterations resulting from the suppression actions. Overall the HCP is challenging for the property owner, but the expertise in fire management exist both within the Florida Forest Service to provide assistance, and also with private contractors with decades of experience and thousands of acres of fire management to impart the proper management techniques to accomplish the goals and objectives.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:41:05 PM

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am writing in opposition to the proposed development called Coral Reef Commons. I have reviewed the map and read scientific. I also recently flew over South Florida to the airport in Ft. Lauderdale. It was stark to see the divide between the remaining green, natural areas and the intense development that we have experienced in South Florida. I also recently toured Vizcaya and drove through less dense areas of Coral Gables. And I study the water situation for our area.

In light of the scarcity of remaining undeveloped land and the dramatic impact this development would have on endangered and rare species in what was once the lush natural land of South Florida, I urge the Service to refuse to issue permits for the proposed project. Once the remaining bit of Pine Rocklands are gone, we will have damaged our eco-system, made ourselves more vulnerable to hurricanes and taken away from the natural diversity so critical to all living beings, including humans.

Sincerely,

Helen Starr
Palm Beach, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:41:36 AM

Please provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive. Many of these species are found only in the endangered pine rockland forests, including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The loss of this land would be a death sentence for these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that there's simply nowhere else to live these species. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

I was immensely disappointed to learn that the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida, least of all another wal mart. We need to protect the few remaining wildlife habitats on our great state.

Thank you,
Paul Kemp

Paul Kemp

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: Crc_hcp@fws.gov; David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 2:48:39 PM

Good day,

My name is Susan F. Lewis, a resident of southern Miami-Dade County since 1969. When we arrived here in July of that year, there were numerous stands of pine and natural areas throughout south Miami-Dade, but as more people have moved here construction has taken many of those areas. We have now reached a point where there is less than 1% of the critically endangered pine rockland ecosystem left. Because of this, I request that a full Environmental Impact Study be conducted for the Coral Reef Commons before this threatened ecosystem be torn apart for the construction of apartments, a Walmart, a public school, and a small area of preserved land.

There was never a proper survey of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the property. The two butterflies, the beetle, and the two snakes were not completely surveyed as no one was allowed on the property for years . The pine rocklands need periodic burns to retain that ecosystem. Burns would be impossible on the area designated as a preserve with apartments, a store, and a school in close proximity. The burns cannot be duplicated chemically so setting a small portion aside for a preserve would be a joke. The University of Miami should be ashamed for betraying their public duty to use the land for educational purposes as per the original agreement, but you have the opportunity to do a full Environment Impact Study which may result in saving this rare ecosystem for future generations to study.

Please do your duty.

Thank you.

Susan F. Lewis
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 7:48:59 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
José Bueno
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 2:09:57 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

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This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
(Sign here)
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 1:24:05 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

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This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Jochy Peña
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: Crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 1:16:34 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

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This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Ulises Almonte

Kendall, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:47:15 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

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This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Leticia Cruz
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:26:56 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

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This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Gabriela Molina
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:24:33 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

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This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Gabriela Molina
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:22:08 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Gabriela Molina
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:18:21 PM

Hello,

I am writing to you in order to express my concern regarding the proposed Habitat Conservation Plan for the Coral Reef Commons in Miami-Dade County. As a 5th generation Floridian, I consider the pine rock lands precious. It is estimated that less than 2% of this habitat type remains outside of Everglades National Park.

I request that you deny this proposal, and that you require the preparation of a full Environmental Impact Statement, as required by the National Environmental Protection Agency.

Thank you.

Morgan Bennett
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: Alanacollante@gmail.com; Emonzonaguirre@evservicesinc.com
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:15:58 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Jonathan Rivas
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:14:22 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Rosalva Cruz
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: Crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:12:39 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Yovanny Rivas
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:10:19 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Scarlet Marmol
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: Crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:09:51 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Johanna Rivas
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 11:39:18 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
(Sign here) Sabrina Cabral
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 11:21:32 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Shaina Montalvo
Hammocks, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; [REDACTED]
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 11:13:31 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Alfonso Cabral
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 11:05:32 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Adriel Urena
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 10:57:26 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Nicole Peniche
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 5:58:11 PM

To whom it may concern,

I must implore you in the strongest to disallow any development on the Coral Reef Commons in south Miami-Dade County. It would serve no legitimate purpose to destroy this endangered habitat for another shopping center,

Seeing this ground was donated to the University of Miami and no appreciable maintenance was performed, I feel that if control of the land should be turned over to Miami-Dade County to be incorporated into the Zoo Miami / Larry and Penny Thompson Park complex.

I respectfully ask that you reconsider and block any destruction of this land.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

Timothy M. Hayden

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 10:51:23 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

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This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
(Adavel Peniche)
Miami, FL

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 10:36:20 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
CHABELY GOMEZ
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 10:05:01 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
(Sign here)
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; [REDACTED]
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Wednesday, May 17, 2017 10:45:41 AM

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for the preservation of this habitat. Right now it is an eyesore filled with trash and actually doing more harm to the environment. This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future. Additionally, it would also provide opportunities for employment *and added commercial services. I hope you will approve the plan.*

Thank you

Jose L. Toledo

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 1:02:35 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 9:04:15 AM

Dear Mr. Dell, Ms. Blackford:

I am writing to support the development of Coral Reef Commons, a 137-acre commercial and residential site in South Miami.

I have read the habitat conservation plan, and believe that the developer, RAM Realty Services, has taken all measures to protect the environment and habitable species from construction and development nuisances.

Please issue ITP to move the project forward.

Thank you,

Evans Thermilus
VP Business Development
Construction Elements

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 4:48:08 PM

I am very opposed to the Coral Reef Commons Development. We need to preserve the pine rocklands and associated species. Please intervene in this bad project and help save green space in the Miami area. The process used here has ignored important ecological facts.

Please help.

Kelly

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 12:42:09 PM

Dear Sirs and Madams,

First let me say that I am very angry and disturbed that the process of eliminating such an endangered area has gotten this far.

It is important for you to know that I have restored extremely degraded pine rocklands in the past without burning, although I know that prescribed burning is the best way to manage pine rocklands. I know first hand that it is not absolutely necessary. I also know that a degraded and disturbed pine rock land can be returned to a thriving environment with hands on care. And each acre that we save, saves countless lives of endangered, threatened and extremely vulnerable plants and animals. We are talking about thousands of lives that live in each acre of pine rocklands and they have no where else to live. Nowhere!

I do know what "Take" means, it means kill and I can not understand how any endangered or threatened species is allowed to be killed off in order to progress with development of such endanger lands.

Years ago,I was in charge of a project to restore a few small parcels of pineland at Leewood Elementary school at 10343 SW 124 st Miami. It is in the middle of a residential area that prior to development was a pine rockland. To make a long story short, a band of parents, teachers, students and boy scouts cleared out the invasive species and planted several pine trees and other native plants indigenous to pine rocklands in the area. Within weeks of completing our task, Atala butterflies began to arrive and make the pineland their homes. The Atala has been found to be pretty resilient but other animals like the hairstreak or plants like the deltoid sperge are not. They need pine rocklands to live in and can only live in pine rocklands. Nowhere else!

There is less than 2% of pine rocklands left. EVERY piece of land that has pineland plants and animals on it must be saved. It is the only home they have.

We people can move anywhere and shop anywhere. We do not have to do it on their land!

I will not shop on that land and will boycott all companies associated with this project and I will not vote for any politician who votes in favor of this project.

I believe that you will find many more people that feel the way I do about this project that in my opinion should not have gotten this far and should be stopped right now!

Sincerely,

Donna Kalil



From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:13:05 AM

Please do not approve further development of the remaining Pine Rocklands ecosystem at Coral Reef Commons. At the least, require a full Environmental Impact Statement be completed and reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures, to include no-development, are explored.

Thank you -

Thomas Mitchell

[REDACTED]

From: 
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:47:05 AM

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my vehement opposition to the unnecessary development of the 86 acre pine rockland tract in question in south Miami-Dade.

Despite the obvious load to the already strained and poorly allocated transportation infrastructure in the area, the economic benefit would be marginal at best at the expense of an ever fleeting ecosystem.

As responsible and principled Americans it is our duty and privilege to protect the downtrodden and vulnerable. This duty and privilege extends to our environment as well. Giving way to the avarice of irresponsible development is not the way forward.

At the very least, please prepare the full EIS as required by NEPA for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan.

Thank you,

Lexy Semino

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:45:32 AM

I'm not very good at writing these letters of protest, nor am I advocating for a return to pioneer days. I am, however, a 79 year old, fourth generation native Floridian who has watched the gradual destruction of much of what made Florida beautiful and wild. The pine woods where I played as a child now has a convenience store and a gas station covering all the gopher holes we loved as kids. The wonderful wild brackish creek that we explored to our parents consternation, is now a ditch, in which no wild thing could live. The chuck-wills widow no longer sings all night, nor the mockingbird all day. It's a ghetto of tiny houses, row after row. I weep for the young children who will never experience the magic of that Florida I once knew so well.

I will not wax on and on about our tendency toward overpopulation and it's attendant disaster-in-waiting. I won't talk about the endless miles of unattractive shopping centers which now threaten to make a state long highway through Florida. Nor will I expound on all the creatures endangered or extinct now that made up some of my magical childhood. It is enough that I ask that one small piece of out of all the other destruction going on be saved for the original inhabitants of my once lovely state. We can make do without one more shopping center I am sure. We don't need another people residence built on what the wild things call home. Surely the wild things need a chance at survival too.

Joan Hamilton Morris

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:01:34 AM

I am asking the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 acres of intact or restorable pine rockland habitat for a shopping center and apartment complex. Though the plan also envisions setting aside about 100 acres for non-development (onsite and off) I believe that does not compensate for the irreplaceable habitat which will be lost in the process.

At the very least, I ask you to prepare the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan.

"Pine rockland is characterized by an open canopy of South Florida slashpine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*) with a patchy understory of tropical and temperate shrub and palms and a rich herbaceous layer of mostly perennial species including numerous species endemic to South Florida."

I believe that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's review (and acceptance or denial) of this plan constitutes "a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment."

This major project on one of the last sizable portions of pine rockland in our area fits all of those criteria. Any development which takes place should at the very least receive a full review under the required Environmental Impact Statement.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:23:49 PM

PLEASE deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 acres of intact or restorable pine rockland habitat for a shopping center and apartment complex. I believe that does not compensate for the irreplaceable habitat which will be lost in the process. At least prepare the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan. Please also submit your name and contact information. More discussion below.

Folks who have followed this story from the beginning are familiar with the background. Briefly stated, pine rocklands that were donated to the University of Miami by the Department of Defense (a portion of the former Richmond Naval Air Station - a WWII blimp base) were sold to a private developer (Ram Realty) as soon as the 30 year restriction that the land only be used for educational purposes had expired. The University turned down requests by Miami-Dade County to allow the county to manage the property under its "Environmentally Endangered Lands" program - as are similar restored and intact pine rocklands on the nearby Zoo Miami property and the Larry and Penny Thompson Memorial Park. Nor did the university take any steps to maintain the pine rocklands as intact habitat with periodic burns and invasive species removal.

Once covering a long strip along the southeast coast of the Florida peninsula, this high, well-drained pine rockland habitat was among the first to be converted to agriculture, housing and commercial uses once settlement by non-native peoples took hold in south Florida about 100 years ago. It is estimated that less than 2 percent of this endangered habitat outside the borders of Everglades National Park still remains. The Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) provides a brief description:

"Pine rockland is characterized by an open canopy of South Florida slashpine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*) with a patchy understory of tropical and temperate shrub and palms and a rich herbaceous layer of mostly perennial species including numerous species endemic to South Florida."

Underlain by oolitic limestone - which often breaks through the surface in beautiful and craggy formations - this landscape is like no other in the State of Florida. It is also home to numerous plants and animals - many of which, such as the Florida bonneted bat, Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly, and the Florida brickell-bush, are listed as "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act.

A coalition of environmental organizations are preparing a complete review of the submitted Habitat Conservation Plan or HCP. It will be submitted today. One of our key demands is that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's review (and acceptance or denial) of this plan constitutes "a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment." This is the language of the National Environmental Policy Act. The term "significantly" is further clarified by the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (see <https://goo.gl/zEW4W5>)

Thank you

Cynthia Tarwater

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Pine land development
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:24:08 PM

I am opposing to the propose of Walmart and housing project. This is destroying our environment and natural resources.

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef commons project
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:18:44 AM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this e-mail to protest the approval of the Coral Reef commons project. There are many endangered plants and animals who live on this tract of Florida pinelands. the proposals to save only small portions of this pineland will not be sufficient to protect them. That plus the amount of traffic and congestion that such a project will cause. There are many other areas that this project could be built on farther west on SW 152nd Ave. I ask you to vote NO on this project.

Sherrye Troy

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:17:26 PM

Please don't let the Coral Reef Development over the pine rocklands go through. Thank you.
Michelle Berndgen

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reefs Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 10:03:40 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Lisa Bueno
Miami, FL

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 9:19:16 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

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This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Damaris Castro

Miami, FL
Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Coral reef commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:01:53 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

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This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Oliver Tio
Miami, FL

Enviado desde mi iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral reef commons draft habitat conservation plan available for public review and comment
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 2:29:01 PM

Please do not open this land for any type of development.
It is vital we save all the nature that we can for our protection and their's.

Amy Deane
Scientist
Save the Wild Chinchillas, Inc.
www.wildchinchillas.org
International Union for the Conservation of Nature
Species Survival Commission
<http://www.iucn.org/>
Small Mammals Specialist Group
<http://www.small-mammals.org/>

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral reef commons draft habitat conservation
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:00:17 AM

Us Fish and Wildlife please hear our voice and deny the proposal to develop and Destroy approximately 86 Acres of intact and restorable pine for a shopping center

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral reef commons draft habitat conservation
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:59:18 AM

Us Fish and Wildlife service please hear our voice and deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 Acres of intact or restorable pine Rockland habitat for a shopping center.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral reef commons draft habitat conservation
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:06:10 AM

Us fish and wildlife please hear our voices and deny the development and destruction of intact restorable Pine for approximately 86 Acres of a shopping center

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral reef commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:15:51 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Stephanie Castro
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral reef commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 2:12:07 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

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This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Noah Morisete
Miami, FL

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From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral reef commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 2:04:15 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Gianna Rivas
Miami, FL

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral reef commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 2:02:41 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Yanet Garcia
Miami, FL
Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Coral reef commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:15:59 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Andrea Peralta
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Coral reef commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:12:02 PM

De: Mariel collante [REDACTED] >
Enviado: jueves, 18 de mayo de 2017 4:10:23 p. m.

[REDACTED]
Asunto:

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Mariel Collante
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Coral reef commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:34:02 AM

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provided sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat,
and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative)
are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."

7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Deny development of Richmond Pine rock land
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 8:15:08 PM

Please deny approval for the plan to develop The Richmond tract, a remnant of Miami's Pine Rockland. Miami residents need less development, less retail (which ultimately becomes landfill), less concrete, less asphalt. We need more CONTINUOUS areas of restored and protected native habitat for beautiful and rare plants and creatures of Miami's pine rockland--Bartram's scrub-hairstreak, the Miami tiger beetle, bonneted bats, Brickell bush Fragmented, small habitats lead to extinctions.

Please prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement as required by law, before moving forward with the plan to develop Coral Reef Commons. To protect, preserve, and restore the rare and beautiful habitat is the responsible way forward.

In hope,

Mary Rankin Jackson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Deny the current proposal for developing Coral Reef Commons!
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:02:57 PM

The current HCP for the Coral Reef Commons development in Miami Dade's pine rock lands is irresponsible, short sighted, and negligent. Development in this case without FULL EIS review, including rigorous Section 106 NHPA review, will be in violation of federal requirements, and will represent an assault on Florida's natural systems, its economy, and its culture.

Kendal Jackson, MA, RPA

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Destroying Remaining Pine Rockland for Coral Reef Commons HCP is a Bad Deal for Species
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 2:55:15 PM

Dear Sir/Madame-

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Sincerely-

Shawn Meyer-Steele

shawn meyer-steele
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Destruction of Rockland habitat
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 7:24:11 AM

I respectfully request that no further permitting should be allowed on remaining Rockland habitat near Zoo Miami. For those of us who currently live in this Pine Rockland efforts are in place to restore to the greatest extent possible to bring our native ecosystem in balance

Please NO new developments on Pine Rocklands.

Thank you,
Dr. Francisco & Candace Borja

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Development of Coral Reef property is a disgrace and a terrible idea
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 11:23:47 AM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)

Hello – I STRONGLY disagree and protest destroying imperiled Pine Rockland habitat for (of all things) yet another Walmart. This is a typical example of greed and willful ignorance of anything other than giving yet another developer what they want. Further, University of Miami has been a terrible steward of this Federally owned property. It is up to YOU to protect it and give the community what it actually wants. I go into further detail why development of this tract is a disgracefully TERRIBLE idea.

1. The developer's **"science" is flawed and incomplete**. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed **mitigation is markedly inadequate**. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas: developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is, at best, 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" especially when compared to other HCPs, and especially for a project that contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally imperiled ecosystem that is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. **Burning is crucial, but impossible**. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pineland and depends entirely on a robust and periodic burn regimen, which would not be feasible, especially with approx. 2,000 people (900 apts), a Walmart and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas that must undergo burns. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pineland is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. **"No Good Alternatives."** All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally imperiled habitat, and, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative), are either "straw men," or, in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative), seek to get mitigation credit for property that is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. **"Success" is illusory**. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are, in essence, "funny money."
6. **No penalty for failure**. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."
7. **Failing grade for UM**. By their consultant's own admission, the University of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the Federal government (read: U.S. Taxpayers!) for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of

the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect this rare resource.

Thank you and I trust you will make the right decision and say NO.

Ian Simpkins

Deputy Director for Horticulture & Urban Agriculture

Vizcaya Museum and Gardens







From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Do not allow development near or in the Pine Rocklands of Miami-Dade County
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 7:58:44 AM

To whom this may concern:

I would like to express my complete opposition to any development in or near the Miami-Dade Pine Rocklands. The value of this area should not be measured by the dollar cost that can be squeezed out of every acre, but by its invaluable natural heritage as the pine rocklands in our County have been diminished to practically nothing due to thoughtless development.

There is so much talk about how we live in South Florida because of its natural beauty, but very little will to preserve it. Please do what is right, and not permit the destruction of one of the few remaining pine rockland areas left in Miami-Dade.

Thank you,

Simon Rose
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Do not destroy Pinelands near Miami Metro Zoo
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:54:04 AM

I am a Pinecrest resident emailing to advocate for rejection of any permitting for the last remaining pinelands preserved land in the area of MetroZoo. Please reject the application. Other less pristine property can be found!

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov; [REDACTED]
Subject: Docket FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 3:01:24 PM

Good afternoon,

This letter is in regard to Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.

The HCP fails to adequately protect this priceless tract. These are some of the reasons:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is 1.23:1 at most. This is not within the "range of reason", especially for a project that amounts to the taking of a major remnant portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is essential to this habitat, but it is not feasible with the planned 900 apartments, a Walmart, mall, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." No proposed alternatives provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative). Off-site mitigation is not acceptable, since no habitat restoration can fully replace such priceless natural resources.

Large tracts of Pine Rocklands - with their greater capacity for biodiversity - are priceless. This is the last and largest tract outside the boundaries of Everglades National Park. Please take all necessary steps to stop this development from moving forward. It must be preserved for future generations.

Sincerely,

Kevin Hitt

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Florida has a very broad public records law. As a result, any written communication created or received by University of South Florida employees is subject to disclosure to the public and the media, upon request, unless otherwise exempt. Under Florida law, e-mail addresses are public records. If you do not want your email address released in response to a public records request, do not send electronic mail to this entity.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Don't allow the pine rocklands to be destroyed
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 10:36:06 PM

your job is to protect Florida's environment - not build another Walmart. So do your job. The Coral Reef Commons land grab is a bad deal and you know it. The area is already clogged with traffic, adding more traffic serves no purpose. We do not need another Walmart. They can build that somewhere else.

These are some of the last remaining pine rocklands in the world. And you know the "preservation" plan is a joke - might as well just develop the entire plot for all the good that will do.

Do not allow the pine rocklands to be paved. If you do that then I say we don't even need the US Fish and Wildlife service, we can eliminate your job. Maybe you can get an awesome job at that Walmart?

James Carlin

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: Crc_hcp@fws.gov; David.dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh.blackford@fws.gov
Subject: EIS NOW!/Coral Reef Commons
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 11:12:29 AM

To whom it may concern:

I submit this public comment in demand that a full Environmental Impact Statement be conducted before the Coral Reef Commons development destroys more of the globally critically endangered pine rockland ecosystem. With less than 1% of this endangered ecosystem left it is unconscionable that an EIS is not in the plans before a decision will be made.

I base my demand on the following criteria:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for as nobody was allowed on the property for years.

2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.

3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed as a pine land depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.

4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat. Except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative), the others are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").

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6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."

7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

If we use the math within this model that FWS suggests here to protect this critical habitat, by showing no significant impact, we would ultimately eradicate Pinerocklands or all identified critical habit completely.

Again I demand a full EIS before a decision is rendered and before this environmental crime is allowed to proceed further.

Thank you,

Beth Kibler



From: [REDACTED]
To: Crc_hcp@fws.gov; David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: EIS NOW!/Coral Reef Commons
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 11:59:52 AM

To whom it may concern:

I submit this public comment in demand that a full Environmental Impact Statement be conducted before the Coral Reef Commons development destroys more of the globally critically endangered pine rockland ecosystem. With less than 1% of this endangered ecosystem left it is unconscionable that an EIS is not in the plans before a decision will be made.

I base my demand on the following criteria:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for as nobody was allowed on the property for years.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed as a pine land depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat.
Except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative), the others are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."
7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so

they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

If we use the math within this model that FWS suggests here to protect this critical habitat, by showing no significant impact, we would ultimately eradicate Pinerocklands or all identified critical habit completely.

Again I demand a full EIS before a decision is rendered and before this environmental crime is allowed to proceed further.

Thank you,

Beth Kibler



From: [Ashleigh Blackford](#)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: FW: Comments: Coral Reef Commons HCP /EA
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:48:38 AM

From: Gary Milano [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Sunday, May 21, 2017 7:54 PM
To: Ashleigh.Blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Comments: Coral Reef Commons HCP /EA

RE: Comments: Coral Reef Commons HCP /EA

To Whom it may concern,
The developer EA conclusion that there will be no significant impact to the listed species and their habitat is not supported by the information presented in the HCP and EA.

The habitat model in the HCP is bogus (not supported by science).

I strongly recommend that that your Agency reject the self-serving model that was created by the developer, and recommend that a new model be developed by objective unbiased experts with input from local regulatory specialists and local knowledgeable scientists. If impacts are realized with the new model then an EIS should be conducted.

In addition, if the proposed school is built in the NW section of the site, maintenance burning of the Pine Rockland will not be allowed. There are other schools very close to the referenced site, therefore, the school does not have to be built.

The proposed mitigation for the proposed impacts is not adequate.

Please do the right thing and reject the flawed Coral Reef Commons HCP /EA submitted by the developer.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Gary Milano

████████████████████

████████████████████

From: [REDACTED]
To: ["crc_hcp@fws.gov"](mailto:crc_hcp@fws.gov)
Subject: FW: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 10:51:37 PM
Attachments: [2017-5-19 Letter to USFWS - BC Edits FINAL\(111727599_1\).DOCX](#)

Pls see attached.

Rgds, DJO

Dennis J. Olle
Director of Conservation Programs
Miami Blue Chapter
North American Butterfly Association

[REDACTED]

**Miami Blue Chapter
North American Butterfly Association
P.O. Box 141667
Coral Gables, FL 33114**

May 19, 2017

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
David_dell@fws.gov
Crc_hcp@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford:

On behalf of The Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association we offer these comments to the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan (revised Feb. 2017) and the related Environmental Assessment. We write to oppose the acceptance and approval of the HCP and EA as submitted. For the reasons stated below, we respectfully request that the USFWS deny this application. Based on the comments below and applicable law, it is clear that the USFWS should evaluate the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the subject project in an Environmental Impact Statement. Except as otherwise provided herein, the defined terms used below shall have the same definition as set forth in the HCP and/or EA.

1. The "surveys" conducted for the Covered Species (except, perhaps, with respect to the Florida bonneted-bat) were fundamentally flawed: Of the total of 16 site visits, 14 were conducted in a (mostly cloudy) 39-day period in Sept. and early Oct 2014 (see Table 3, at 36 of HCP). Based on the way the surveys were conducted, there is no basis to expect to find the five diurnal Covered Species (two butterflies, a beetle, two snakes). Further, not only were the survey dates contrived, but there was no evidence that qualified persons were looking for the snakes or the butterflies. And as a result there is no wonder few if any of the Covered Species were found on the CRC property. Further, with respect to the Miami tiger beetle, the expert (Dr. Knisley) ventured onto what he thought was ZooMiami property, unaware he was on a small portion of the subject property then owned by the Univ. of Miami; he randomly surveyed only a few acres. There has been no thorough biological survey of the entire CRC Property (including the Off-Site Mitigation Area) with respect to each of the Covered Species.

2. The On-Site and Off-Site Mitigation Plans are overwhelmingly based on the ability to routinely burn the mitigation areas for the period of the ITP (30 yrs). Without fire these plans fail, rendering the mitigation plan illusory. Based on prior history at this site (see App J.) is no reason to believe prescribed fire as a reasonable possibility. [We understand that the co-Applicant (Univ. of Miami) has not burned the pinelands subject to the NFC (the pineland portion of the Mitigation Areas) required thereby, based on written advice by Miami-Dade Co. that burning in those locations was not to be feasible. How can the proposed mitigation be more feasible after you add ~2000 people (900 apts.), a Wal-Mart, and a

public school, all immediately proximate to the Mitigation Areas? Chemical and mechanical procedures, in lieu of fire, are not valid substitutes for the preservation of a healthy pineland. For specific comments to the proposed goals and mitigation plans (secs. 6 and 7 of the HCP) see schedule A, attached.

3. The most if not all of the six Alternatives (see Sec. 4 of the HCP and EA) are not “reasonable alternatives” as required by applicable Federal regulations; instead, the Applicants excluded the Alternatives 1 -3 by their own motion: Per the HCP, these alternatives did not meet the “project’s [financial] purpose”; if so, then those Alternatives should never have been proposed – they were “straw men.” With respect to Alts. 4 and 5, virtually all of the acreage proposed development property (~94 and 91 acres, respectively) is in Critical Habitat, and when compared to the amount of acreage set aside for mitigation (43 and 49 acres, respectively), the resulting ratio of mitigation to development is only 0.4725 : 1 for Alt. 4, and 0.538 : 1 for Alt. 5. To our knowledge, mitigation ratios in this range (~ 0.5 : 1) is not remotely consistent with any previous HCP accepted by the FWS and clearly represent arbitrary alternatives, not based on reason. Finally, Alternative 6 (the Preferred Alternative) is an attempt to salvage one ostensible “reasonable” alternative, but even that is tainted, and even with “full credit” for the Off-Site Mitigation Area (~51 acres) the mitigation ratio is unreasonably low: 1.23 : 1.

The additional mitigation land (Off-Site Management Area) is already under an environmental restriction and the additional promises made by the Applicants only give rise to “double counting”: It gives the Applicants credit for a pineland “restoration when it is already under a legal duty (deed restriction) to the USFWS to manage the subject site for the federally-endangered Deltoid spurge, a pineland specific plant species. Further, neither the Applicant nor the USFWS has made any attempt to survey the Off-Site Management Area for the Covered Species. So there is no baseline against which mitigation benefits to the Covered Species can be measured.

4. The “habitat functional assessment” set forth in Sec 5 of the HCP is ultimately based on so-called “habitat value units” (HVUs) which are a concoction to try to ascribe “value” to subjective conditions. This is no more than a mechanism to attribute value to the proposed mitigation areas in order to mask the fundamental truth: Based on the Alternatives submitted by the Applicants, there is a significant lack of available lands for full and appropriate mitigation in an amount which would reasonably justify the level of proposed development for this project. Further, the mitigation formula and the scoring metrics (see Table 5-1, at 83 of HCP) are made up and have no basis in science. The “HVUs” are arbitrarily concocted and submitted on behalf of the co-Applicants) and the values ascribed each enhancement are no more than “cryptocurrency.” The USFWS’s acceptance of this methodology would be capricious, and not based in fact or science. Accepting the HCP’s scoring tomfoolery, we believe the scoring of the baseline conditions (the so-called “existing condition habitat functional value” = 40.72 HVUs) is undervalued, and the “cost” of fragmentation is also undervalued. And with respect to Alternative 6 – the Preferred Alternative specifically, even if one accepts the HVU “currency” and resulting scoring, the Applicants’ conclusion is that the “net” increase in HVUs, i.e., the net “benefit” to the subject property, is only 3.10 HVUs (43.83 HVUs - 40.72 HVUs) or an increase of ~7.6%. This delta is statistically insignificant and woefully insufficient to justify the destruction of one acre much less ~91 acres of what is globally-imperiled habitat, as well as designated Critical Habitat for certain Covered Species.

5. “Success Criteria” (see Sec 7.7 at 118 and Table 7-3 at 119 of HCP) are fundamentally flawed for reasons set forth in Item 4, above, and below. The Applicants’ “Success Criteria”, specifically Levels 1-3 as set forth in sec 7.7 of the HCP, are arbitrarily set so as to create a “low bar” for determining success, and this determination is made in the sole opinion of the Applicants (or successor(s)). As discussed

above, the cyptocurrency of HVUs is nothing more than Applicants' consultant's concoction (which has never been used in a multi-species HCP with this scope, complexity and vulnerability). Any determination based on this "funny money" with a self-grading process is equally as flawed. More important, for purposes of determining the significance of this federally-permitted action regarding a suite of federally-endangered and threatened species, et al., (the Covered Species and beyond) use of HVUs sets a dangerous precedent. We note that the line items set forth in table 7-3 are interesting but "canopy cover" and "croton density", while noteworthy, are merely derivatives. The line items should include the actual presence of Covered Species, with a view to the restoration of their numbers. Further, the sheer number of crotons present is irrelevant if the Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak population is not maintained and increased, and the Florida Leafwing restored. Not to use the metric of the presence/numbers of at least a majority of the Covered Species is to entirely miss the point of successful mitigation. We note that the line items titled "total cover of non-native species" and "composition PR desirable herbaceous species" appears to cover essentially the same metric. Simply put, the proposed line items for determining successful mitigation all the while are deficient and paves the way for an easy determination of "success" by the Applicants.

6. Indeterminate Financial Assurances. The HCP in Section 11.2 states that "it will take five years [to achieve] long term maintenance condition"; however, there are no facts or science to support this assertion. This calls into question the financial calculations made in Chapter 11. With respect to evidence of the financial wherewithal or commitment of Applicants: Ex. L is merely a form of letter of credit with no details and no amounts., and App. N (the Draft Conservation Encumbrance- On Site CRC) is deficient in several ways, see sections 7 and 21 thereof. This funding information (amounts and sources) is crucial to any successful mitigation plan; however, the essential details ae totally missing. Instead, the Applicants have stated that they will provide draft documents demonstrating their "financial assurance" will be provided to the USFWS for its "review and approval." The public should have the opportunity to review and comment not only on the form of these documents, but also the proposed amount(s) of and "vehicles" for providing such funds.

7. Violation of Local Environmental Laws. The Applicants are in violation of the subject NFC Permit (App B) for failure to timely conduct a "controlled burn" and failing that, to "initiate and extensive exotic invasive plant eradication event" on the pinelands located in the CRC Property. Further, the applicants are also in violation of the landscape provisions relating to invasive plants and the "developed areas" of the CRC Property (see Ch. 18.1 of the Miami-Dade Co. Code). Finally, we note that the CRC Property appears to be in violation of the County's Comprehensive Management Plan (CDMP), see Policy CON 8, and we note that the CDMP expressly prohibits the issuance of any further permits for this project except in compliance with Policy CON 9 of the CDMP.

* * * * *

Under the National Environmental Policy Act, the USFWS is duty-bound to require the preparation of an EIS in these circumstances. There is no question that the proposed project is a major federal action affecting the quality of the human environment, and based on the above, its "significance" is established by any one of the following facts:

1. The development of CRC is highly controversial, as evidenced by the previous and pending comments to the HCP.

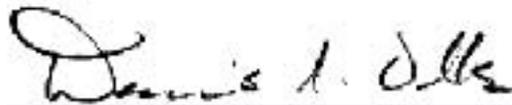
2. As set forth in the HCP and relied upon in the EA, the Habitat Functional Assessment and the use of HVUs to establish “success criteria” in the context of a globally-imperiled habitat currently used by many federally- protected species, sets a precedent for future actions, which may have significant effects, especially with respect to the preparation and consideration of future habitat conservation plans.
3. The loss of any of the federally-protected species, which occupy the subject project (especially those with designated or proposed Critical Habitat) may directly result in a corresponding loss of significant scientific resources.
4. There will be material and repeated adverse effects upon (material “take” of) a number of federally-endangered or threatened species resulting from the CRC.

* * * * *

Simply put, if the HCP is approved, the largest parcel of pine rockland in Miami-Dade Co. (outside Everglades National Park) will be further fragmented and in the case of the developed portions lost forever, and the purported salutary effects of mitigation plan set forth HCP will not be realized because of the infeasibility of prescribed burning, which will only be heightened because of the increased proximity of humans and human structures. The cumulative result of these events will constitute more than the “incidental take” of several endangered and threatened species, the very species the ESA was designed to protect. What is more, if no EIS is required in contemplation of this proposed action, then the USFWS will be in breach of its duties under NEPA.

If you have any questions in this regard, please feel free to contact the undersigned at:

Sincerely,



Dennis J. Olle
Director of Conservation Programs
Miami Blue Chapter
North American Butterfly Association
Phone: 305-539-7419
Email: dennisolle@me.com

SCHEDULE "A"

Comments to HCP Sec 6 Biological Goals and Objectives:

6.1 Biological Goals.

Goal no. 1 relies, in part, on objectives 1 and 5 which require (i) achieving so-called "success criteria" described in Secs. 7.7 , which are "made-up" by Applicants (as discussed below) and not scientifically verifiable, and (ii) the validation by the "biological monitoring program" which is inadequate (as discussed below).

Goal no.2 relies, in part objectives 1 and 2 which contemplates the creation of a Master Association, but insufficient details have been provided to evidence the workings of this funding source. Further, insufficient details have been provided to determine the viability of the other dedicated funding sources for maintenance of the preserves in perpetuity. (Note financial details are missing in in Apps to HCP).

Goal no. 3 does not sufficiently prioritize the use of prescribed burns for maintaining the Preserves; instead, there is a reference to the "balance of burning and non-burning applications" (see objective 2) which belies the extraordinary difficulty the project will encounter when it tries to burn various preserves.

6.2 Measures to Minimize Impacts of the Project.

Re 6.2.2.1 Simply making construction personnel "aware" of HCP requirements is insufficient; there need to be meaningful penalties set forth in any demolition/construction contracts for violations by contractor (construction personnel) of any HCP requirements.

Re 6.2.2.3 There is no reference as to who will monitor and enforce the Construction BMPs. An independent third-party needs to be on-site during demolition construction with the obligation and authority to stop construction or demolition if there is a violation. It is not meaningful to expect construction workers to report the presence of Covered Species, instead an on-site trained biologist (knowledgeable re all Covered Species) needs to be on-site at all-times during demo and construction. Further, simply posting no-access signage around the preserves is hardly enough protection. What will the effect of construction lighting be on the FBB if construction is performed at night; there should be science to back-up this determination?

Re 6.2.3 "All pets on lease" rule should include cats. Feral cats are a huge and insidious problem in south Florida natural areas, which is compounded by humans living in close proximity thereto. A comprehensive and strictly-enforced set of rules that eliminates any threat from feral cats is crucial to any effective restoration maintenance of small animal populations. Simply requiring tenants /owners to sign documentation re pet wastes, etc., should include notice and waiver re fire regimes. Insufficient detail is provided as to how Property Management is going to enforce the BMPs, and who will be on-site to insure that Management is actively and vigorously enforcing same? If no third-party, then this is a fundamental flaw. What are the financial and legal consequences of the failure to enforce? Can third-parties bring legal actions in this regard? The reference to use of "native and non-invasive plants" for landscaping means that the subject plants satisfy both criteria. Tenants should be encouraged to report

the observation (presence) of any and all Covered Species, not just Indigo Snakes. Why should the design of buildings be such to discourage their use by bats? The presence of nature in the “built environment” should be encouraged.

Re 6.2.3.1 Street lighting needs to be in “compliance” with recommendations by bat experts selected by the USFWS. We question the impact of lights (both during construction and thereafter) upon the FSB.

Re 6.2.3.2 Specific details with example of form of “acknowledgment of fire management activities” needs to be provided for public comment. The use of fire to maintain the pineland Reserves is crucial to the successful maintenance of those pinelands; without it the pineland will fail. The document needs to be detailed, legally enforceable and acceptable to the USFWS. Please note that sufficient legal funds should be budgeted for any litigation that may ensue when and a prescribed fire is contemplated near human habitation; insufficient funds should not be an excuse used by the Applicants to avoid their obligation to vigorously pursue the stipulated burn regime.

Re 6.2.3.3 Any use of pesticides, whether by the community or the local mosquito control authorities, should be strictly limited if not prohibited. With respect to the latter party, there should be an agreement in place so that no inadvertent anti-mosquito spraying (or resulting drift) is done by the authorities. Will any anti-mosquito spraying be allowed on or near the Preserves, under any circumstances? If so, then the presence of an additional 2000+ humans plus Walmart and public school students will severely compromise the ability to properly manage the conservation and restoration of the Covered Species, esp. the two butterflies and the beetle and, assuming collateral effects as well as the FBB. The effects of spraying (either by truck or aerially) on those Covered Species needs to be fully understood and considered.

Re 6.2.4.1 There needs to be significantly better controls on public access to the Preserves; the proposed signage is not enough. How will the BMP restrictions on contractors “conducting land management” within the Preserves be enforced?

Re 6.2.4.3 How will the Preserve Biologist be selected? What are the required credentials? Who will insure that the minimum criteria are satisfied? What are the duties and authorities of the Preserve Biologist; to whom do they report? What are the circumstances, if any, in which the Preserve Biologist has the ability to stop demolition/construction on the project: If none, why not?

Re 6.2.4.4 The identification (flagging) and other BMP protections afforded federally-listed plants should be extended to pineland croton, especially if its presence is been used as a surrogate for the two Covered Species that are butterflies. No insecticides/pesticides should be allowed within the Preserves except to treat exotic ants. Who determines the feasibility of hand removal v. mechanical removal? What BMPs have been established for the hand removal and relocation of BSH eggs and caterpillars in Preserve areas about to be burned?

Re 6.2.4.5 Have you considered the requirement of the presence of smoke for some of the federally-listed plants to properly germinate? In light of the burn history for this overall area (Richmond Pineland) as noted in App. J, and given the increased presence of humans and buildings resulting from the proposed project, please explain, in detail, the basis to believe that there is a reasonable likelihood that there will be successful and timely, periodic prescribed burns on the Preserves?

Comments to HCP Section 7 On-Site and Off-Site Mitigation

While noted as a point to realizing “conservation “gains”, implementing an prescribed burn plan for both the On-site and Off-site Preserves is the single most important point; it is not of the same tenor as 6 bat boxes or the proposed “public education.” If fire cannot be used, for whatever reason, then mitigation will be failure; what are the practical implications for the recovery management of the Covered Species? And the resulting penalties upon the Applicant (or its successor(s)); if none, why not?

Re 7.5.1 No reference is made to the existing management obligations with respect to invasive plants (see NFC permit and applicable portions of the Miami-Dade Co. Code) and the status of Applicants’ compliance therewith. Generally, any proposal for future work on the On-Site Preserves should be understood in conjunction with Applicants’ history of compliance (or not).

Re 7.5.2 The stated “trigger” for selecting mechanical treatment rather than burning is “feasibility”, which is too vague; further, we note prescriptive burning is often a function of costs (see sec. 2 of App. J.).

Re 7.5.3 With respect to App J, the size and frequency of planned prescribed burns for the management areas of the Preserves (see table J4-1) is unrealistic. The ~18+ acres prescribed to be burned annually (see table J4-1) equals the total amount of acreage subject to prescribed burning in the entire Richmond Area for the preceding five-year period: 6/17/12 – to date (see table J2-1).

Re 7.5. The plantings within the southern boundary are should be exclusively not “primarily” native plants from the referenced Miami-Dade Co. plant list.

7.6 Given the imperiled nature of the habitat and the intrusion contemplated, the so-called “short-term monitoring should be done no less than quarterly, and probably monthly during demolition and construction of the project. Monitoring annually (once a year) is by definition not “short-term.” Too much can go wrong over the months, much less 12, which would render many, if not most, of the proposed mitigatory effects ineffectual. There is no mechanism for the reviews and comment on the reports with penalties for failure to submit in format acceptable. The determination of the when the “success criteria” (discussed in more detail elsewhere herein) are met, should be made by USFWS, and clearly subject to public review, input and challenge. Long-term monitoring with reporting every 5 years is indefensible given the precarious nature of the natural resources. We note that there is no clear explanation of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative monitoring. The use of the Preserve Biologist or HCP Coordinator to prepare “annual work plan” only contemplates the submission and review thereof by the USFWS. The USFWS should have final approval of such work plans and there should be meaningful financial penalties for the failure to timely deliver or have obtained an approved plan, by certain prescribed dates.

7.7 The “success criteria” specifically levels 1-3 are arbitrarily set so as to create a “low bar” for determining success, which determination is made in the sole opinion of the Applicants (or successor(s)). As discussed above, the cyptocurrency of HVUs is nothing more than a consultant’s concocted currency (which has never been used in a multi-species HCP with this scope, complexity and vulnerability). So the determination based on this “funny money” and using the self-testing process is equally as flawed. More important, for purposes of determining the significance of this federally-

permitted action regarding a suite of federally-endangered and threatened species, et al., (the Covered Species and beyond) this sets a dangerous precedent. The line items set forth in table 7-3 are interesting but “canopy cover” and croton density are derivatives, the line items should include the actual presence of Covered Species, with a view to the restoration of their numbers. For Example, the sheer number of crotons is irrelevant if the BHS population is not maintained and increased and the FL restored; not use this metric (for each of the Covered Species is to entirely miss the point of successful mitigation. We note that the line items re “total cover of non-native species” and “composition PR desirable herbaceous species” appears to cover essentially the same metric. Simply put, the proposed line items are deficient and paves the way for an easy determination of “success.”

7.9 App. N (Draft Conservation Encumbrance - On Site CRC) is deficient in several ways including most particularly sections 7 and 21 thereof re financial obligations which are crucial to any successful mitigation plan. The public should have the opportunity to review and comment not only on the form, but also the proposed amount(s) of such obligations.

7.10 We are not aware of any recently-conducted thorough biological surveys for the Covered Species, or beyond including the Deltoid spurge, the species which is the subject of the existing deed restriction (App O). How can any value be ascribed to the proposed mitigation offered by the tender of the Off-Site Management Area without a series of thorough, competently-led surveys to establish an appropriate baseline? Further, we have seen no evidence in the HCP regarding the status of compliance with the terms of the referenced deed restriction (re fire, reporting and access) on the Off-Site Mitigation Area (which the Applicants have elected to make part of the CRC Project). Also, since the subject off-site property is already subject to an environmental deed restriction, we are nonplussed why the Applicants should get any much less full credit for tendering this property into mitigation. Finally, we note here (sec. 7.10., and 7.10.1) and elsewhere in the HCP (at 3), the Applicants repeatedly state that the deed restriction “provides the landowner [the University] with the ability to vacate the [environmental] restriction.” This is disingenuous: The University may vacate such restriction, but only with the consent of the USFWS.

From: [Ashleigh Blackford](#)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: FW: Coral Reef Commons HCP
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 8:14:41 AM

From: Arlene Ferris [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2017 12:32 PM
To: Ashleigh.Blackford@fws.gov; David.Dell@fws.gov; verobeach@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP

Dear Ms. Blackford and Mr. Dell,

I am writing to request the denial of the permit to develop the Coral Reef Commons property in Miami. Our comments are due tonite by midnight, and I want to be sure I reach you. This morning I sent you both an email using the link on the Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition website (which also went to crc_hcp@fws.gov). But for various reasons I wasn't sure that went through to you. I hope so, but if not, I am going to try to restate my impassioned plea.

I have lived in Miami for 40+ years, availing myself of all the natural wonders South Florida possesses. I was employed as volunteer director in a botanical garden (Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden) for 31 years, recently retired, and I currently volunteer in the Everglades teaching school groups about sawgrass and periphyton, and also, with a STEM program growing native Florida orchids. I am an ardent conservationist, but I know there are many competing interests at work here and everywhere.

We know that South Florida has a extraordinarily unique and fragile web of life. For 25 years at Fairchild we taught our volunteers "Natural History of South Florida" and it is now drilled into me just how unique our habitat is. Yet the development pressures are massive. It is my long-held belief that the natural world, in all its manifestations, is a gift from Mother Nature, God, the Universe, or perhaps the result of random chance. Nevertheless, to me, our task as intelligent beings is to figure out how our species can survive and thrive, while also preserving the wonders of nature (biodiversity) which we have been gifted. It would be easy to pave everything over and to measure the monetary value that would result. What is much harder to measure is the result of preserving biodiversity and natural areas. We know that nature provides "ecosystem services" and we know that compounds in plants, insects and other life forms give us useful products, and are a treasure trove of still-undiscovered uses. And we know that the animals and birds that share our planet are our fellow creatures, deserving to be here as much as we do! And yes - we eat them too! The service they provide to us: joy, inspiration, beauty in untold numbers of forms, intellectual enrichment, and equally important, their structures and functions are models for biomimicry.

We simply cannot let ecosystems be paved over because it will benefit short term interests. There is simply too much value in them -- even though that value is difficult to measure because it is so complex, and because as a society we don't have a long-established agreed up method of valuing it! In an anecdote I heard years ago, Someone takes a business man to see the Grand Canyon and he says "Very nice, but what can you do with it."

The profit motive is an extension of the survival instinct and is built into the human psyche. But citizens, agencies, organizations and governments exist to speak up for the common good - beyond the profit motive. However, I will close by saying that I firmly believe that in the end, preserving it will benefit humans individually & collectively and benefits our community in tangible and intangible ways. We are challenged every day to find better solutions to complex problems. Would most people know what was lost if this is paved over? No -- but those of us who do know are morally required to speak up on the basis of our own understanding and knowledge. The developers say that with their plan, the habitat that they will leave undeveloped will be better than it is now. They are wrong. They did not correctly and thoroughly survey the myriad life forms on this site, they did not accurately address the reality of controlled burns, and the proposed mitigation is inadequate and duplicitous. There are other reasons to deny the permit as well, enumerated on the Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition website. I respectfully submit that the permit to

develop Coral Reef Commons be denied.

Thank you for your time, and for the vital work you do every day as US Fish and Wildlife Service professionals.

Sincerely yours,
Arlene Ferris
South Miami, FL

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [Ashleigh Blackford](#)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: FW: Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan - Comments
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:49:48 AM
Attachments: [Coral Reef Commons HCP comments.doc](#)

-----Original Message-----

From: Jim Teas [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, May 20, 2017 6:33 PM
To: David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan - Comments

Please see attached Microsoft Word document with comments.

Thank you,

James Teas
[REDACTED]

Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan – Comments

- The pine rockland community is one of the most endangered habitats in North America (Williams, D.A., Y. Wang, M. Borchetta, and M.S. Gaines, *Genetic diversity and spatial structure of a keystone species in fragmented pine rockland habitat*, *Biological Conservation*, April 2007, at 256, 257).
- Less than 1.5% of pine rocklands in Florida (exclusive of Everglades National Park) remain (USCG).
- Coral Reef Commons will negatively impact pine rocklands by habitat fragmentation and destruction, which will result in decreased (island) biodiversity.
- An EIS should be prepared for this project due to its significant environmental impacts.
- Sea-level rise over the next 83 years will inundate parts of Everglades National Park, and may possibly further decrease pine rockland habitat in South Florida. Human populations threatened by sea level rise will move inland, further impacting pine rockland habitat.
- Migratory birds that visit Miami-Dade County will be negatively impacted by loss of forest habitat.
- Light pollution from a Walmart as well as 900 residential units, will negatively impact nocturnal species.
- Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly & Florida leafwing butterfly, both listed species under the ESA, depend on pine rocklands habitat for survival.
- Florida brickell bush & Carter's small-flowered flax, listed species under the ESA, have designated habitat with the project.
- Periodic controlled burning, required for the health of pine rocklands, will be all but impossible due to adjacent residential units. Mechanical/chemical removal of exotics is not a substitute for controlled burns.
- One of only two known populations of Miami Tiger Beetle, recently listed, exists within the Richmond Pine Rocklands tract. Similar habitat exists within the Coral Reef Commons project. Surveys of the Miami Tiger Beetle on the CRC property are inadequate (HCP p36) and may have been completed while these organisms were dormant and underground.
- Acoustic evidence for the Florida Bonneted Bat, a listed species under the ESA, has been found on the project site. Bonneted bat roost sites in Coral Gables and Homestead are threatened by inundation due to future sea level rise.
- The habitat functional assessment developed for this project are not based on peer reviewed literature based on the species present (which are neither panthers nor wood storks)
- The proposed off-site mitigation area is already protected and will not conserve additional habitat. Furthermore, the mitigation area is not owned by the applicant but by the University of Miami.
- The length of the proposed project, 30 years, is too long.
- The property in question, which has not been adequately maintained by the University of Miami under its tenure prior to the sale in 2014, could be restored. The first step would be a controlled burn of the pine rocklands present to remove exotic species and hardwoods. Pines will grow back in the rocklands given the

chance (pines are growing in old asphalt on parts of the Richmond Pine Rockland Tract tha were once paved over).

- In conclusion, if the applicant is allowed to take these species, and they become extinct as a result, what then is the purpose of NEPA?

Thank you,

James Teas

From: [Ashleigh Blackford](#)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: FW: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 8:32:53 AM

From: Jim McGrath [mailto:]
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2017 1:41 PM
To: david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Coral Reef Commons

I am asking the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 acres of intact or restorable pine rockland habitat for a shopping center and apartment complex. Though the plan also envisions setting aside about 100 acres for non-development (onsite and off) I believe that does not compensate for the irreplaceable habitat which will be lost in the process.

At the very least, I ask you to prepare the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan.

"Pine rockland is characterized by an open canopy of South Florida slashpine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*) with a patchy understory of tropical and temperate shrub and palms and a rich herbaceous layer of mostly perennial species including numerous species endemic to South Florida."

I believe that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's review (and acceptance or denial) of this plan constitutes "a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment."

This major project on one of the last sizable portions of pine rockland in our area fits all of those criteria. Any development which takes place should at the very least receive a full review under the required Environmental Impact Statement.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Ashleigh Blackford](#)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: FW: Coral reef commons HCP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:41:25 AM

From: Jhrma [mailto:██████████]
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:36 AM
To: Ashleigh.Blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Coral reef commons HCP

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provided sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat,
and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative)
are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and

maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and “take” the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of “success.”

7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant’s own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants “credit” for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

From: [Ashleigh Blackford](#)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: FW: EVCO Resolution Re Pine Rocklands and Coral Reef Commons
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 8:33:36 AM
Attachments: [Resolution Richmond Pine Rocklands. Finaldocx.pdf](#)

From: Jacki Lopez [mailto:jlopez@]
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2017 1:56 PM
To: 'Ashleigh Blackford'; 'Dell, David'
Subject: EVCO Resolution Re Pine Rocklands and Coral Reef Commons

Greetings,

The Everglades Coalition adopted the attached resolution last week regarding Richmond pine rocklands. In sum, it states that the Everglades Coalition:

“opposes the further destruction of the Richmond pine rocklands, including the approval of “Coral Reef Commons” which would result in the take of several federally listed species. Instead, we urge the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Miami-Dade County to work to preserve and restore the Richmond pine rocklands and not allow any further commercial development in this globally imperiled habitat so it may be enjoyed by future generations of Floridians and continue to serve as a home to the dozens of rare and endangered plants and animals found there.”

Please add this information to the administrative record for the Coral Reef Commons draft HCP/EA.

Thank you

Jaclyn Lopez |

[Redacted signature block]

[Redacted signature block]



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
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

A RESOLUTION OF THE EVERGLADES COALITION SUPPORTING THE PRESERVATION OF THE RICHMOND PINE ROCKLANDS

WHEREAS The Richmond pine rocklands are the largest globally imperiled tracts of pine rocklands outside of Everglades National Park and

WHEREAS Recent studies by the U.S. Geological Survey recently found only 1.5% of America's pine rocklands remain in south Florida and

WHEREAS Overdevelopment of south Florida and severe fragmentation of habitat have reduced imperiled pine rocklands throughout south Florida and

WHEREAS Pine rocklands are considered to be more biologically diverse than even our vanishing coral reefs and

WHEREAS The Richmond pine rocklands are home to dozens of rare and federally protected plants and animals including the eastern indigo snake, gopher tortoise, rim rock crowned snake, Audubon's crested caracara, Florida burrowing owl, little blue heron, southeastern American kestrel, tri-color heron, white crowned pigeon, wood stork, Florida bonneted bat, Bartram's scrub hairstreak butterfly, Cassius blue butterfly, Ceraunus blue butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Miami tiger beetle, Florida brickell bush, Deltoid spurge, Small's milkpea, Carter's small flowered flax, tiny polygala, bracted colicroot, Blodgett's wild mercury, little strongbark Bourrerria Cassinifolia, Florida pineland crabgrass, Everglades bully, one nerved enodia, wild-potato Morning glory, Rockland's morning glory, skyblue clustervine, pineland lantana, sand flax, wild sweet basil, Everglades poinsettia, Bahama wild coffee, Florida skullcap, pygmy spikemoss, wedglet fern, southern ladies tresses, least halberd fern, common white pine tillandsia, giant wildpine tillandsia, golden leather fern, Lamarck's trema, pineland golden trumpet, pink-pink orchid, locustberry byrosnima, Rocklands spurge, white sunbonnets, satin-leaf, silver palm, Christmas berry, Blodgett's swallowwart, Caribbean crabgrass, Miami cave crayfish, Atala hairstreak butterfly, great white heron, big brown bat, bald eagle and

WHEREAS Climate change is forecast to trigger sea-level rise in south Florida over the coming years and

WHEREAS Everglades National Park is expected to be adversely affected by rising sea water damaging its pine rockland habitat and destroying saltwater intolerant plants and animals and

Committed to full protection and restoration of America's Everglades

WHEREAS The Richmond pine rocklands are significantly higher in elevation than Everglades National Park pine rocklands and can serve as “Lifeboat Habitat” for rare and endangered plants and animals living in the vanishing pine rocklands of south Florida and

WHEREAS The Richmond pine rocklands are already severely fragmented and facing a proposed \$1 billion worth of commercial development and

WHEREAS Most of the Richmond pine rocklands are already designated critical habitat by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and

WHEREAS The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considering approving draft Habitat Conservation Plan for a mixed use development known as “Coral Reef Commons” in the Richmond pine rocklands and

WHEREAS The proposed “Coral Reef Commons “ development includes a 900-unit apartment complex, a big-box anchor store, additional smaller retail stores, and land set aside for the construction of a school and

WHEREAS Proper management of pine rocklands requires periodic burns and creates potential smoke and fire hazards potentially incompatible with shopping centers, residential developments and schools yet therefore:

BE IT RESOLVED That the Everglades Coalition opposes the further destruction of the Richmond pine rocklands, including the approval of “Coral Reef Commons” which would result in the take of several federally listed species. Instead, we urge the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Miami-Dade County to work to preserve and restore the Richmond pine rocklands and not allow any further commercial development in this globally imperiled habitat so it may be enjoyed by future generations of Floridians and continue to serve as a home to the dozens of rare and endangered plants and animals found there.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 19th day of May, 2017.

Sincerely,



Mark Perry
Co-Chair



Michael J. Baldwin
Co-Chair

Committed to full protection and restoration of America’s Everglades

From: [Ashleigh Blackford](#)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: FW: Helicopter Pilot request
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 9:06:52 AM

From: Mikolay3 [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:47 PM
To: Ashleigh.Blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Helicopter Pilot request

Ms. Ashleigh Blackford,

As a DOI/USFS carded helicopter pilot working in South Florida, I beg you to preserve the Pine Rocklands at the Commons project.

I've spent 10 years flying in hostile/combat environments with the US Army as a UH-60 helicopter pilot. I have come to appreciate the natural forested areas of our Nation after seeing the destruction and pollution around the world, directly correlated to unstable regions. South Florida is on what I call "life support" with the current state of developed areas versus what is left of the historic tract of Dade County Pine Rockland. There is no "recharge" areas left outside of Everglades National Park in urban Miami-Dade county.

I beg you with all my heart, NOT to allow development in the Richmond Pine tract.

Sincerely,

Mikolay Plater-Zyberk

Ps- cute Jet Ranger you have there. :)

From: [Ashleigh Blackford](#)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: FW: Public Comments Submission on Coral Reef Commons Draft HCP and ITP
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 8:31:34 AM
Attachments: [CRCCommentsToUSFWS.docx](#)

From: Paula Johnson [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2017 12:17 PM
To: Dell, David; Ashleigh Blackford
Cc: Paula Johnson
Subject: Public Comments Submission on Coral Reef Commons Draft HCP and ITP

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit public comments on the proposed Habitat Conservation Plan and Incidental Take Permit application for the project designated Coral Reef Commons.

The following submission is from Paula Johnson, resident of Miami-Dade County for over 50 years:

“Pine rocklands are a unique plant community that grow on exposed limestone outcropping, existing only in southern Miami-Dade County, a few islands in the Florida Keys and the West Indies. This habitat once covered the majority of the Miami Rock Ridge and extended south to Everglades National Park. They typically contain over 225 native plant species of which more than 20% are found nowhere else in the world. Pine rocklands are so rare they are considered to be a globally imperiled habitat.” (Excerpted from [Pine Rockland Plant Guide: A Field Guide to the Plants of South Florida’s Pine Rockland Community](#), by Dr. Daniel F. Austin, second edition-2015)

The highest and best use of, and the best hope for preserving, the Richmond Pine Rockland is to prevent any and all development and restore/preserve, in perpetuity, this rare remnant of south Florida’s once beautiful natural environment.

The Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan is seriously problematic in multiple ways and raises many concerns and questions about the developer’s proposed plan for preservation and mitigation:

1. The HCP includes heavy use of chemical treatments, over a period of years, to rid the preserved areas of invasive plants, particularly Burma Reed. The chemical treatments, \$440,052 over 5 years, account for 39% of the On-Site conservation Program Initial Work Cost Estimates. What will be the impact on the ecosystem, all species, not just protected species, from the heavy use of chemicals? What about chemical drift and leaching into the aquifer?;
2. The plan calls for prohibiting public utilization of on-site preserves – how will this be monitored/enforced? How will other prohibited activities such as dumping, littering, unauthorized clearing, hunting, trapping or harassing wildlife, unauthorized

harvesting of plants, smoking, and feeding of wildlife be monitored and enforced, particularly after the developer has completed the project? Compliance with deed restrictions and posted signs cannot be ensured when thousands of people are living, working and shopping in close proximity to the preserved areas;

3. The monumental task of ensuring that the developer does everything proposed in the HCP to preserve and protect will fall to whom, the county? Will the county's monitoring costs be covered by the developer, or will taxpayers foot the bill?;

4. Once the area slated for development is razed and paved over, those acres of pine rockland are lost forever. What is the tipping point for endangered species in the Richmond tract and what would be the impact of those 88 lost acres on the ability of species to continue to exist and thrive?;

5. The Best Management Practices for On-site Conservation Areas Land Management Activities uses words such as "to the extent practicable" and "when feasible." Such hedging does not inspire confidence in the developer's commitment to proper management of the preserved areas;

6. The developer and UM are requesting a 30-year Incidental Take Permit! Clearly, this is just the first phase of development and further destruction of the Richmond tract is on the drawing board. Approval of this ITP will also open the door to and embolden Miami-Dade County to proceed with its plans for a water park and entertainment park which will further degrade and destroy our precious pine rockland;

7. The noise, air and ground pollution, and traffic that will result from construction and the existence of the shopping and residential areas will unquestionably have a negative impact on the species in the preserved areas. Light pollution will negatively affect the bonneted bat and other populations of birds and insects sensitive to light. Migrating birds will lose habitat and be thrown off their migratory routes by the development, potentially leading to declines in other endangered migratory species;

8. The 3.88 acres of mitigation "stepping stones" that will be artificially created, primarily with pineland croton, are woefully inadequate and do not realistically reproduce what will be lost from razing the original environment. A viable pine rockland will take years to be re-established, if it even can be reproduced, and the loss of plant and animal species may never recover. Destroying 73% (137.90) of the total area (188.86), breaking up the tract and attempting to artificially create a favorable habitat for endangered species is experimental at best and a reckless and wanton destruction of a critically imperiled habitat;

9. The University of Miami's role in the HCP and ITP is a cynical attempt to justify its irresponsible behavior in this proposed development. As a poor steward of the pine rockland, the administration has joined with the developer in a plan to destroy the pine rockland using the specious justification of preserving/mitigating;

10. We need to preserve the remaining natural areas in south Florida. We are experiencing frequent and increasingly severe droughts (11 drought years out of the past 17). According to the South Florida Tree Canopy Coalition, "Miami-Dade

averages 12%, with some local cities showing tree canopy densities of as little as 2%. The national average for tree canopy densities in metropolitan areas across the United States is 33.4%.” Native habitats serve to preserve biodiversity, replenish our underground aquifer, act as a carbon sink and cool the earth;

11. The developer’s highly questionable Habitat Functional Assessment is an algorithm that was bastardized from a scientific methodology used to evaluate whether restoration goals were being reached in certain pine rockland preserves, not to determine whether pine rocklands were worthy of being preserved;

12. The prescribed burns for the preserved areas will be difficult, if not impossible, and likely encounter considerable opposition from apartment residents and management. The negative health consequences that may ensue (aggravation of respiratory conditions) have the potential to leave the developer, Walmart and other responsible parties open to lawsuits and additional legal costs in defending against legal actions.

“Human beings are not exempt from the iron law of species interdependency. We were not inserted as ready-made invasives into an Edenic world. Nor were we intended by providence to rule that world. The biosphere does not belong to us, we belong to it. The organisms that surround us in such beautiful profusion are the product of 3.8 billion years of evolution by natural selection. We are one of its present-day products...Our physiology and our minds are adapted for life in the biosphere, which we have only begun to understand. We are now able to protect the rest of life, but instead we remain recklessly prone to destroy and replace a large part of it...The surviving wildlands of the world are not art museums. They are not gardens to be arranged and tended for our delectation. They are not recreation centers or reservoirs of natural resources or sanatoriums or undeveloped sites of business opportunities –of any kind. The wildlands and the bulk of Earth’s biodiversity protected within them are another world from the one humanity is throwing together pell-mell. What do we receive from them? The stabilization of the global environment they provide and their very existence are gifts to us. We are their stewards, not their owner.”

excerpted from article by Edward O. Wilson, biologist, researcher, author and Harvard professor; “Fifty-Fifty: A biologist’s manifesto for preserving life on Earth, published in Sierra magazine, January/February 2017, pages 32-33)

Sincerely,
Paula Johnson

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4. Once the area slated for development is razed and paved over, those acres of pine rockland are lost forever. What is the tipping point for endangered species in the Richmond tract and what would be the impact of those 88 lost acres on the ability of species to continue to exist and thrive?;
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organisms that surround us in such beautiful profusion are the product of 3.8 billion years of evolution by natural selection. We are one of its present-day products...Our physiology and our minds are adapted for life in the biosphere, which we have only begun to understand. We are now able to protect the rest of life, but instead we remain recklessly prone to destroy and replace a large part of it...The surviving wildlands of the world are not art museums. They are not gardens to be arranged and tended for our delectation. They are not recreation centers or reservoirs of natural resources or sanatoriums or undeveloped sites of business opportunities –of any kind. The wildlands and the bulk of Earth's biodiversity protected within them are another world from the one humanity is throwing together pell-mell. What do we receive from them? The stabilization of the global environment they provide and their very existence are gifts to us. We are their stewards, not their owner."

excerpted from article by Edward O. Wilson, biologist, researcher, author and Harvard professor; "Fifty-Fifty: A biologist's manifesto for preserving life on Earth, published in Sierra magazine, January/February 2017, pages 32-33)

From: [Ashleigh Blackford](#)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: FW: Request for Local Public Hearing on FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:42:36 AM

From: Dan Keys [mailto:██████████]
Sent: Saturday, May 20, 2017 9:04 AM
To: David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Request for Local Public Hearing on FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223

May 19, 2017

David Dell

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Atlanta Regional Office,

1875 Century Blvd.

Atlanta, GA 30345

David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford

South Florida Ecological Services

1339 20th Street

Vero Beach, FL 32960

Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

Re: Request for Local Public Hearing on FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223, Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Incidental Take Permit Application and Environmental Assessment for Commercial Mixed-Use Development; Miami-Dade County, FL and 90 Day Public Comment Request.

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford,

As a concerned Florida Resident I respectfully request a public hearing on the above-referenced proposed incidental take permit and environmental assessment on the commercial mixed-use development locally known as Coral Reef Commons.

We request that this public hearing take place during the comment period and in a location and timeframe that ensures members of the public will be able to meaningfully participate.

As you are aware, native habitats in Florida are rapidly disappearing.

Perennially rare communities, such as the pine rocklands that would be impacted by Coral Reef Commons, are among the native habitats in Florida that have been drastically reduced in area.

Pine rockland is a globally endangered plant community with more than 98 percent decline in its pre-settlement area due to significant ecological degradation, conversion to other land uses, and outright destruction.

This important community provides vital habitat for many endangered species, including those at issue in this permit application.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) review of the Coral Reef Commons application requires compliance with the Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and Administrative Procedure Act.

The Service's Habitat Conservation Planning and Incidental Take Permit Processing Handbook (2016) (hereinafter, Handbook), a policy document intended to inform how the Service processes Endangered Species Act Section 10 incidental take permits, describes public hearings as: [a] common method for soliciting stakeholder input on agency actions. Hearings provide all or selected participants an opportunity to present their opinions on an issue, usually in a formal manner in an allotted amount of time The information is recorded and becomes part of the public record. Laws and agency regulations often mandate public hearings.

Likewise, the Handbook describes public meetings as:

[f]orums in which our staff can present information to interested stakeholders.

Many public meetings . . . are designed to encourage discussion and feedback. Public meetings can be very effective and useful for conveying information, educating the interested public, and identifying interested parties.

This guidance echoes the requirements of NEPA, which at every turn emphasize the importance of public participation.

The Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA state that "[a]ccurate scientific analysis, expert agency comments, and public scrutiny are essential to implementing NEPA." 40 C.F.R. § 1500.1.

Indeed, CEQ regulations require that the Service hold a public hearing or meeting "whenever appropriate," taking into account factors such as "substantial environmental controversy concerning the proposed action or substantial interest in holding the hearing." 40 C.F.R. § 1506.6(c)(1).

I have a long standing interest in the protection of Pine Rocklands and their endangered and threatened species.

I have also have carefully followed years of additional requests for more Pine Rockland Protection.

For example, in 2014, the Center for Biological Diversity, South Florida Wildlands Association, Tropical Audubon Society, Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association and Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition petitioned the Service to list the Miami tiger beetle, one of the species impacted by the incidental take permit, as endangered.

Additionally, as the result of a settlement agreement reached between the Center for Biological Diversity and the Service in 2011, the Service listed the Florida bonneted bat as endangered in 2013 ; listed as endangered and designated critical habitat for the Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly and Florida leafwing butterfly in 2014 ; and listed as endangered and designated critical habitat for the Carter's small-flowered flax and Florida brickell-bush in 2015. All are species that would be negatively impact by Coral Reef Commons.

I understand there have been more than 14,000 letters to the developer of Coral Reef Commons asking it to protect listed species and not move forward with the project.

Many concerned residents appear to oppose the project and would benefit from the opportunity to attend a public hearing on the application.

It is evident that a substantial environmental controversy concerning the proposed action and a substantial interest in holding the hearing exist.

We hope you will grant the public the opportunity to more fully discuss the impacts of Coral Reef Commons on federal and state endangered and threatened species through a public hearing. I look forward to your reply.

In addition, I'd also like to request the Public Comment Period be extended to 90 days to allow the Public to carefully examine the proposed Coral Reef Commons HCP in light of the more than 3 years the applicants have had to develop it jointly with the FWS

Sincerely,
Daniel Keys

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Ashleigh Blackford](#)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: FW: Request for Local Public Hearing
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:47:39 AM
Attachments: [image.png](#)

From: Jim Keys [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Friday, May 19, 2017 10:48 AM
To: Ashleigh.Blackford@fws.gov; David_dell@fws.gov
Subject: Request for Local Public Hearing

May 19, 2017

David Dell

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Atlanta Regional Office,

1875 Century Blvd.

Atlanta, GA 30345

David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford

South Florida Ecological Services

1339 20th Street

Vero Beach, FL 32960

Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

Re: Request for Local Public Hearing on FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223, Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Incidental Take Permit Application and Environmental Assessment for Commercial Mixed-Use Development; Miami-Dade County, FL and 90 Day Public Comment Request.

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford,

As a concerned Florida Resident I respectfully request a public hearing on the above-referenced proposed incidental take permit and environmental assessment on the commercial mixed-use development locally known as Coral Reef Commons.

We request that this public hearing take place during the comment period and in a location and timeframe that ensures members of the public will be able to meaningfully participate.

As you are aware, native habitats in Florida are rapidly disappearing.

Perennially rare communities, such as the pine rocklands that would be impacted by Coral Reef Commons, are among the native habitats in Florida that have been drastically reduced in area.

Pine rockland is a globally endangered plant community with more than 98 percent decline in its pre-settlement area due to significant ecological degradation, conversion to other land uses, and outright destruction.

This important community provides vital habitat for many endangered species, including those at issue in this permit application.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) review of the Coral Reef Commons application requires compliance with the Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and Administrative Procedure Act.

The Service's Habitat Conservation Planning and Incidental Take Permit Processing Handbook (2016) (hereinafter, Handbook), a policy document intended to inform how the Service processes Endangered Species Act Section 10 incidental take permits, describes public hearings as: [a] common method for soliciting stakeholder input on agency actions. Hearings provide all or selected participants an opportunity to present their opinions on an issue, usually in a formal manner in an allotted amount of time The information is recorded and becomes part of the public record. Laws and agency regulations often mandate public hearings.

Likewise, the Handbook describes public meetings as:

[f]orums in which our staff can present information to interested stakeholders.

Many public meetings . . . are designed to encourage discussion and feedback. Public meetings can be very effective and useful for conveying information, educating the interested public, and identifying interested parties.

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We hope you will grant the public the opportunity to more fully discuss the impacts of Coral Reef Commons on federal and state endangered and threatened species through a public hearing. I look forward to your reply.

In addition, I'd also like to request the Public Comment Period be extended to 90 days to allow the Public to carefully examine the proposed Coral Reef Commons HCP in light of the more than 3 years the applicants have had to develop it jointly with the FWS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James D. Keys".

James D. Keys

1875

1876

1877

From: [Ashleigh Blackford](#)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: FW: VOTE NO for Walmart and apartment construction on Coral Reef
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 8:58:31 AM

From: nellie brothers [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2017 5:34 PM
To: Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov
Subject: VOTE NO for Walmart and apartment construction on Coral Reef

Please do not allow the preserved land and endangered animals to be destroyed. We count on your stopping this project immediately, see my points below:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provided sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative) are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."
7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

Thank you,
Sincerely,
Nellie M. Brothers

From: [Ashleigh Blackford](mailto:Ashleigh.Blackford@fws.gov)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: FW: comments submitted on coral reef commens EA and HCP
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 8:16:38 AM
Attachments: [Comments on Coral Reef Commons EA and HCP.pdf](#)

From: Laura Reynolds [mailto:[lreynolds@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:lreynolds@[REDACTED])]
Sent: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 12:20 AM
To: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; david_dell@fws.gov; dennismoss@miamidade.gov
Cc: Jenny Staletovich; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Erin Clancy; Zac cosner
Subject: comments submitted on coral reef commens EA and HCP

please see attached letter with our detailed comments:

However, the bottom line in our assesment is that the entore EA and its claim that there is no finding of significant impact rests on a flawed model and the premise that allowing 50% of the cirritical habitat to be destoryed will somehow be sustainable. With that math we find a recipe and a precedent for extinction for the globally emberilled pinerocklands and the species that live there.

Regards,

Laura Reynolds

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [.org](#)





May 22nd, 2017

RE: Coral Reef Commons comment letter regarding the EA & HCP

David Dell

david_dell@fws.gov

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 30345
Ashleigh Blackford

ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov

South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach FL 32960

Ashleigh Blackford & David Dell of the US Fish and Wildlife Service:

The pine rocklands of South Florida are an immensely bio-diverse and critically endangered habitat which once stretched across 185,000 of the Miami Atlantic Coastal Ridge. This fire-dependent ecosystem is the most bio-diverse in the state of Florida, and hosts a variety of rare endemic species. It has been identified as globally imperiled and this parcel specifically has been identified as critical habitat for endangered species.

Over the course of the 20th century, the effects of development, deforestation, fragmentation, and fire suppression have reduced the extent of this ecosystem to a paltry 1.5% of its original range or less. As such, many of the endemic species which once called this ecosystem home have been designated as threatened, endangered, or critically endangered, and the habitat itself is considered to be critically endangered. Of the 1.5% of pine rockland habitats which remains intact, a significant proportion occur in small “postage-stamp” communities. Few pine rockland habitats in Miami Dade County exceed 40 hectares, and as such can only support species requiring a minimum range. Presence of larger contiguous forest tracts (above 80 ha) is imperative for the survival of several pine rockland species with large minimum ranges such as the Florida Bonneted bat. Habitat fragmentation has hit these species the hardest, pushing many to the brink of extinction.

It is important to note that the preserved pine rockland habitats of Everglades National Park differ greatly from those of the Miami Rock Ridge in terms of geology, hydrology, and



endemic species content from those of Miami-Dade County. The pine rocklands of Miami-Dade county boast a significantly greater native species richness (182 taxa/.16 ha in Miami-Dade vs 128 taxa/ .1 ha in ENP). Efforts to relocate highly endangered species such as the Miami Tiger Beetle to the more low-lying pine rocklands of Long Pine Key have met with failure as a result of the ecological distinctions between these subsets of pine rockland habitat. Furthermore, the elevation difference which distinguishes the pine rocklands of the Miami Rock Ridge from the more low lying pine rocklands found in Everglades National Park gives these parcels on the ridge a greater chance at long-term health and survival in the face of sea level rise, making these parcels an effective lifeboat habitat for many species which might otherwise face extinction. We mention these facts in order to stress the supreme importance of preserving the last remaining parcels of pine rockland on the Miami Rock Ridge outside of Everglades National Park.

The area known as the Richmond Pine Rocklands on the upper Atlantic Coastal Ridge is the largest contiguous tract of pine rockland habitat outside of Everglades National Park.

The Pine rockland parcel in question contains many highly endangered endemic flora and fauna including the Miami Tiger Beetle, the Florida Leaf-wing Butterfly, the Bertram's Hairstreak butterfly, and several others. It is possible that many more highly endangered or threatened species may be present on the property, but this has yet to be determined due to the absence of virtually any comprehensive surveys of the property. Various individuals who spend significant time in this area have mentioned sightings of species such as the bonneted bat and the rim-rock crown snake, but this remains unconfirmed. The Richmond Pine Rocklands have also been designated as "critical habitat" for the Florida brickell-bush and Carter's small-flowered flax amongst other endangered floral species.

In the wake of hurricane Andrew, the United States Federal Government granted the University of Miami ownership of a large swath of the Richmond Pine Rocklands with a 30 year stipulation that the land be used for educational purposes. During this period the university used the site for animal testing purposes, and generally neglected the environmental needs of the habitat. In 2014 (virtually immediately after the expiration of its mandate to utilize the property educational purposes), the University sold 88 acres of this pine habitat to Ram Realty for the price of \$22 million.

Ram Realty now plans to construct 900 apartments, a Wal-Mart retail center, several other retail establishments, and potentially a school upon the property. This constitutes the first large scale development on a globally imperiled pine rockland habitat since Miami-Dade



County launched its land buying program to preserve this crucial habitat in 1990. In pursuit of this development, Ram has submitted a Habitat Conservation Plan meant to assure the Fish and Wildlife Service that they are doing everything within their power to “avoid, minimize and mitigate the potential impacts of the take”.

After careful review of the Environmental Assessment and Habitat Conservation Plan for the proposed development, we found the document to be wholly insufficient in its efforts to limit undue damage to the highly sensitive pine rockland ecosystem and the many endangered endemic species which inhabit the parcel in question. In fact if this model were to be used that in effect allows for 50% of the critical habitat to be destroyed it is a recipe for pine rockland’s and the species it calls home to become extinct. This sets a dangerous precedent for critical habitat designation across the united states.

The precise nature of our concerns with the plan as it currently stands are outlined below:

1. Ram’s Environmental Assessment lacks crucial data, remains incomplete and is insufficient overall for the scope of this project:

Simply put, the Environmental Assessment for this plan is grossly insufficient and should be replaced with a full Environmental Impact Statement. First and foremost, one must consider that the almost complete absence of comprehensive and open surveying of the property. This makes this assessment virtually meaningless, and will not aid in proof that take is accidental. Without solid information on the true composition of species which occupy this site, it is literally impossible to determine what impacts the proposed project may have. Thus, there is no scientific evidence or conclusions that the TAKE is accidental in nature. In fact, without an a more extensive survey and full EIS this cannot be determined. This necessary step must be complete a full Environmental Impact Statement to be able to accurately quantify take as incidental and to determine if there is significant harm.

Furthermore, the Environmental Assessment is clearly incomplete and bears no mention of potential impacts on species from deforestation and development, nor does it contain a summary, nor an analysis of the ways in which the soil and other abiotic portions of the ecological community may be affected. Without these features the EA can hardly claim to answer any of the most pressing questions regarding whether their



take of species is accidental or incidental to the project. This question is absolutely vital to the matter at hand and must be addressed before any progress is made.

Finally, it is our belief that an Environmental Assessment alone is insufficient for this project. As stated previously, this project constitutes the first large scale development on highly endangered and ecologically sensitive pine rockland habitat since the beginning of Miami Dade County's conservation efforts in the 1990's. The project includes measures to clear-cut and develop over approximately half of the parcel in question, as well as bring upwards of 2,000 humans into the area. There is no realistic scenario in which this development does not negatively impact the species which occupy this area. As such, an Environmental Assessment is insufficient and a full Environmental Impact Statement must be provided.

2. Ram relies on fundamentally flawed and misleading use of "Habitat Value Units" and "Habitat Value Assessment"

The claims made in regard to "habitat value" and the potential increase in "habitat value units" supposedly wrought by the project is incredibly dangerous precedent to set and is a recipe for extinction of critical habitat such as this one. The section in question amounts to little more than Ram realty attempting to misuse a classification/quantification system specifically designed for the management of existing pine rocklands and were never in any way designed to factor in the costs of habitat destruction or development. The authors of the system themselves have objected to its use in this manner. This section constitutes little more than the Ram attempting to write itself a blank check for habitat destruction and development. Ultimately, should the claims in this document be accepted, and the EA and development plans approved, an incredibly dangerous precedent will be set that will allow for the wholesale destruction and development of vast portions of the last remaining parcels of pine rockland forest on this Earth. All the developer need do is argue that the scraps of habitat left destroyed will be "better managed", and by that argument make the obscene claim that the pine rockland community is in fact better served by its own eradication. The last remaining pine rocklands of south Florida and the litany of highly endangered species which occupy them are not wanting for "better" vague, subjective, and single species specific management, they are wanting for the maintenance of the bare minimum of available range which is required for any hope of long term survival.



3. FWS and RAM provides insufficient assurance that the necessary fire regime will be carried out:

South Florida pine rocklands are highly dependent upon regular fire regimes in order to remain healthy. Any alternatives to burning such as mechanical or chemical control of invasive species and brush are insufficient and incapable of producing long-term restoration. The necessity of relatively frequent burning is both attested in the HCP itself and borne out by research, which shows that when not paired with burning, mechanical and chemical controls may elicit soil disturbances, weedy species increases, and rapid hardwood re-sprouting¹. Thus, it is clear that in order to truly achieve any measure of success an appropriate fire regime must be not only be established, but also strictly adhered to.

While the Habitat Conservation Plan does outline a proposed fire regime, the claim that they will truly be able to carry out these burns is highly suspect. The ability to conduct controlled burns is heavily constrained by the needs and sensitivities of the local population.

The smoke produced by controlled burns impairs lung functions and can cause numerous health impacts to the surrounding population². This risk is exacerbated in children, the elderly, and those with respiratory conditions. Considering the massive scope and residential capacity of the proposed development (not to mention the possible development of a public school upon the property as well) it seems virtually inevitable that many of these sensitive individuals will be present on the property.

Under the best management practices outlined in the Miami Dade County Natural Areas Management Plan, new projects should always “account for fire management needs of pine rockland sites”³. This development clearly fails that criterion by placing such a high density of settlement and use directly adjacent to the pine rockland habitat. Should this project reach fruition, upwards of 2,000 permanent residents may occupy the site, as well as many shoppers and potentially a large number of children (should the plans to build the school go through). With this high density of individuals on the property, it is inevitable that many may be particularly sensitive to the

¹Menges, Gordon, ‘SHOULD MECHANICAL TREATMENTS AND HERBICIDES BE USED AS FIRE SURROGATES TOMANAGE FLORIDA’S UPLANDS? A REVIEW’, Archbold Biological Station, [REDACTED] (2)The Nature Conservancy, Department of Biology, [REDACTED]. Florida Scientist, Volume 73.

² Slaughter, et al. Association Between Lung Function and Exposure to Smoke Among Firefighters at Prescribed Burns. Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene. August 17, 2010.

³ <http://www.miamidade.gov/environment/library/reports/natural-areas-mgmt-plan.pdf>



health impacts of burning, invariably compromising any attempts to adhere to a necessary and appropriate fire regime. In fact, the best available research shows that development near potential burn sites constitutes the greatest constraint on prescribed burning, and that in those landscapes which contain a mixture of protected, residential, and commodity producing lands, fire use is particularly constrained because of the “wildland-urban interface”⁴.

When one combines the inherent difficulties of carrying out a consistent controlled burn regime in a heavily settled area with the fact that the plan bears no actual repercussions for failure to adhere to said regime (a matter which will be addressed later in this document) the claims begin to look quite dubious. Before this plan can proceed, more certain measures must be implemented to ensure that Ram will be impelled to and capable of operating an appropriate controlled burn regime.

4. The plan provides insufficient management of the ecologically deleterious impacts of large scale commercial/residential development adjacent to an environmentally sensitive pine rockland ecosystem

The proposed development would construct 900 single-unit apartments, a Wal-Mart retail center alongside several other commercial establishments, and leave the potential for a school to be built on the property as well. In total, over 2000 individuals may be living and operating in this area on a daily basis should the plan go through. Large scale commercial and residential development of this type inherently inflicts a colossal disturbing force on native ecosystems to which they are adjacent. This goes double for ecosystems as fragile and rare as the South Florida pine rocklands.

As it stands, Ram Realty’s HCP does not sufficiently take into account the impacts of dense human settlement directly adjacent to the sensitive pine rockland ecosystem. The effects of large-scale human settlement which the plan fails to properly address include but are not limited to:

A. The introduction of invasive ornamental plants and the potential establishment of a perpetual source of invasive species seeds/spores.

⁴ Costanza, J. K., and A. Moody. 2011. Deciding where to burn: stakeholder priorities for prescribed burning of a fire-dependent ecosystem. *Ecology and Society* 16(1): 14. [online] URL: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol16/iss1/art14/>



Across various regions in the US and abroad, incidence of residential housing is positively associated with invasive exotic plant species richness^{5,6}. This is due to the tendency of residential developments to disturb land cover, introduce nonnative landscaping plants, and facilitate dispersal of propagules along roads. Many ornamental plants used in Florida are of an invasive exotic nature, and so it may be presumed that the risk would be especially great in regards to this development. Without some sort of measure to mandate use of native landscaping alongside other measures to reduce the incursion of nonnative species from both the proposed Wal-mart and the residential units, this HCP should not be considered fully complete. This requirement is fully in line with the Miami Dade County best practices for development adjacent to pine rockland sites⁷.

B. The introduction of invasive predators (felines specifically) which may significantly impact the populations of both migratory birds and endangered endemic fauna.

With the introduction of human residents into the midst of the sensitive environment which is the Richmond Pine Rocklands, so too will come other species. These include the aforementioned invasive exotic plant species, as well as another type of ecologically dangerous exotic species: the house cat. On average, house cats can depredate upwards of 0.7-1.6 birds per week, and play a major role in human induced decline in bird populations⁸. The influx of housecats into the area will significant damage to the populations of native and migratory birds, and measures must be taken to limit their population within the area.

C. Noise and light pollution.

Both noise and light pollution associated with commercial/residential development may elicit significant deleterious effects on native and migratory species. It is common practice for Wal-marts to flood their parking lots with bright LED light

⁵ Gavier-Pizarro, et al. Housing is positively associated with invasive exotic plant species richness in New England, USA. 1 October 2010. DOI: 10.1890/09-2168.1

⁶Hansen, et al.. EFFECTS OF EXURBAN DEVELOPMENT ON BIODIVERSITY: PATTERNS, MECHANISMS, AND RESEARCH NEEDS. 1 December 2005. DOI: 10.1890/05-5221

⁷ <http://www.miamidade.gov/environment/library/reports/natural-areas-mgmt-plan.pdf>

⁸ Lepczyk, Mertig, Liu. Landowners and cat predation across rural-to-urban landscapes. Biological Conservation Volume 115, Issue 2, February 2004, Pages 191–201. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0006-3207\(03\)00107-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0006-3207(03)00107-1)



throughout the night. Furthermore, residential units often leave on lights throughout the night as well. This can create a great and unpredictable disturbing influence on the native ecosystem which can be quite difficult to predict.

The noise of trucks, cars, operation of machinery, and other practices that are to be expected should this development commence should also prove quite stressful to native species. As it stands, the HCP contains no plans or strategies to address either of these ecologically damaging influences of the proposed development.

D. Introduction of fertilizers and pesticides

The all but guaranteed use of pesticides which would take place throughout large swaths of the project area poses a particular threat to one of the pine rockland ecosystem's most endangered native species, the Miami Tiger Beetle. As an insect which feeds primarily on other insects, the Miami Tiger Beetle is at particular risk from the impacts of pesticide application. Any HCP which does not take the necessary limitation and management of pesticides into account should be deemed insufficient. The continued existence of this species, which exists only in the pine rocklands of the upper Atlantic Coastal Ridge (of which this is the largest remaining parcel) is too vulnerable to proceed without due caution and consideration.

As it stands, the only means by which this HCP attempts to limit the potential damage done by residents and other individuals during daily activities is via "Promote public education and awareness of pine rockland habitat and Goal 4: associated species" and through the use of vague and undefined "Best Management Practices for commercial and residential development" which go unspecified and have not assurance of truly being implemented. While education is an important and valuable tool, on its own it is fully insufficient as a means of avoiding the potential negative effects of human habitation. Further considerations must be taken into consideration that might better manage and mitigate the risks of noise, light, and exotic species introduction as well as encourage or mandate use of native species in landscaping throughout the area. Furthermore,

5. The project provides insufficient mitigation and misleading claims regarding off-site mitigation

The HCP in question makes several questionable claims related to its use of offsite Mitigation. The authors of the plan claim that "the Project will result in



prescribed burning on 50.96 acres of Off-site Mitigation Area”, amongst other claims of increased net habitat function as a result of offsite mitigation

However, the land which the HCP attempts to utilize for off-site mitigation is in fact already under a conservation easement. The management regime which the University is currently required to uphold includes the implementation of controlled burns on the property. Thus, many of the claims made in regard to the actual ecological improvement of this land should be considered fallacious.

Furthermore, even in the absence of these misleading claims regarding their off-site mitigation, the off-site mitigation regime outlined would still be insufficient. Off-site mitigation of this variety should bear a 5-1 ratio of lands developed over to lands protected. This project abjectly fails to meet this criterion and manages (even under their dubious claims) to protect 1.23 acres of land for every one developed over at best. The fact that this ecosystem is globally imperiled further pushes this ratio outside the reasonable range for off-site mitigation.

The simple fact of the matter is that there is not enough South Florida pine rockland habitat in existence for off-site mitigation to serve as a viable strategy. The ecosystem has been whittled down to its last 1.5% and simply cannot weather any more destruction.

6. Overall, there is insufficient surveying and scientific understanding of the requirements of endangered species affected by the plan

As the largest contiguous stretch of pine rockland Habitat remaining outside of Everglades National Park, the Richmond pine rocklands hosts a bevy of highly endangered endemic species. These include the Miami Tiger Beetle, the Florida Bonneted Bat, the Rim-Rock Crown Snake, the Bartram’s Hairstreak Butterfly, the Florida Leaf-wing Butterfly, and many others.

It is quite possible and in fact likely that many other highly endangered flora and fauna species inhabit this area. Multiple individuals have made claims of sighting endangered species in the area such as the Rim-rock crown snake and others. However, Ram has consistently barred researchers from surveying the property, and imposed restrictive non-disclosure agreements upon all those allowed in. This creates a blackout of knowledge that might prove deadly to those endangered species whose presence is being obscured. The project should not proceed until a far more thorough course of surveying is completed.

There is great reason to believe that the pine rockland habitat in question is far more healthy and contains a far greater variety of rare native species than Ram would



have us believe. One recent count conducted in
Furthermore, many of the species which inhabit this parcel are quite rare, and as such little information and research exists which might offer us a better understanding of the specific habitat needs which they require. As such, any project upon this parcel should proceed with an especially grand abundance of caution. As it stands, the Habitat Conservation Plan put forth by Ram fails to meet this criterion.

7. The plan relies on known bad-actors

During the University of Miami's stewardship of the property in question the university consistently failed to provide any necessary upkeep of the property, going so far as to deny the habitat of the controlled burns upon which it relies. The management strategy of the University of Miami (and Ram Realty for that matter) can be characterized as purposeful neglect and abuse, meant to degrade the habitat to the
Neither actor should be

8. No Penalty Exists for Failure

This Habitat Conservation plan is unreliable merely by virtue of the fact that there is no penalty outlined for failure to adhere to any of the measures for preservation laid out. This fact is particularly egregious when it comes to the burn regime, a burn regime which will become infeasible upon the projects development.

9. Faulty Alternative System

The alternatives to the plan listed in the HCP do not truly reflect the range of potential alternatives. No effort was taken to determine the impacts and effects of environmental restoration without adjacent development or of environmental restoration alongside a scaled-down version of the project.

In conclusion, the Model that the HCP relies upon is flawed. It was developed for the purpose of assessing management needs, not to evaluate habitat value. Under Federal Law one must determine if the take in this case is accidental and without a more extensive survey as required in a full EIS that would be impossible. There is no conclusion section in this report or science to support alternative 6 and the habitat valuation model relied upon does not use sound science. More proof is required to show there is no significant impact, this would not hold up in a challenge and it is up to the FWS to do its due diligence here to protect endangered species and the critical habitat that has been identified for that purpose.



Recommendations:

We at Conservation Concepts LLC recommend the following:

1. A full Environmental Impact Statement should be prepared for this project. The sensitivity and ecological significance of this habitat is simply too great for safety and precaution to be taken lightly.
2. The HCP as it currently stands is insufficient in its measures to protect the numerous endangered endemic species of the Richmond Pine Rocklands, and should be thrown out in favor of an improved version based on more extensive surveys.
3. The flawed model that is relied upon here should be thrown out and only allowed to be used for the originally intended purpose the authors intended. As stated earlier this model was developed for the sole purpose of assessing management needs, not evaluating habitat value.
4. A public hearing should be conducted where the public is allowed to participate with experts and have their questions answered directly.

Please contact us with any questions you may have regarding these comments,
lreynolds@

Laura Reynolds

Zac Cosner

From: [Ashleigh Blackford](#)
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: FW: [REDACTED] sent you files via WeTransfer
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 8:42:43 AM
Attachments: [REDACTED].png

From: WeTransfer [mailto:noreply@wetransfer.com]
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2017 3:17 PM
To: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: [REDACTED] sent you files via WeTransfer

img



[jlopez@\[REDACTED\]](#)
sent you some files

68 files, 327 MB in total · Will be deleted on 29 May, 2017

[Get your files](#)

Greetings,

I'm using this service to electronically transfer the works cited in our comment letter on the Coral Reef Commons draft HCP and EA. Please let me know if you'd like to receive them another way. I believe you have a week or so to download the documents once you receive this notice.

Thank you
Jaclyn Lopez



Download link

<https://wetransfer.com/downloads/af6cc40bcb46fbedb85172f674ffb50a20170522191247/f20a92b124aed0cf73759a8b5823047e20170522191247/10c44d>

68 files

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Wirth 2016b.pdf

Wirth 2016a.pdf

Wirth 2015.pdf

Wiens 2016_Climate-Related Local Extinctions Are Already Widespread.pdf

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From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Federal Kill Permits for the "Coral Reef Commons" Project
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 1:10:13 PM

I oppose the building of 900 apartments and a Walmart near Zoo Miami on what remains of an extremely endangered native habitat found only in South Dade County, the Pine Rocklands.

Louise Ross

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Federal kill permits
Date: Monday, May 15, 2017 6:57:29 PM

I really really beg you to think twice before allowing the bulldozing of the Richmond pine rock lands please it's very Important for the community that this place is preserved as it is please don't let this tragedy happen please.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: From a US Park Ranger: Coral Reef Commons HCP: Bad Deal for Species
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 2:17:40 PM

I agree with this letter below. As a Park Ranger with Everglades, I am lucky to work within pinestrands that will never be destroyed. I strongly believe these pines should also be preserved outside of the park within the neighborhoods. Please put a stop to this development and ensure these pinelands remain wild and protected.

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Jeff Gonzalez
[REDACTED]

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Attached is a comment letter on Rock Pinelands.
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:10:30 AM
Attachments: [2017May17_comment_ltr_on_Rock_Pinelands.pdf](#)

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Willis, Christine** <christine_willis@fws.gov>
Date: Wed, May 17, 2017 at 12:10 PM
Subject: Attached is a comment letter on Rock Pinelands.
To: David Dell <david_dell@fws.gov>, Robert Tawes <robert_tawes@fws.gov>, Roxanna Hinzman [REDACTED]

Folks,

The attached comment letter came in today on the Rock Pinelands. I believe it is regarding and HCP. I put it in David's in box.

Christine Willis
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Energy Coordinator, Division of Environmental Review
Ecological Services, Southeast Regional Office
1875 Century Blvd. Ste. 200
Atlanta GA 30345
phone: (404) 679-7310
fax: (404) 679-7081

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From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Comments: Coral Reef Commons HCP /EA
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:58:30 AM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Gary Milano** [REDACTED] >
Date: Sun, May 21, 2017 at 7:56 PM
Subject: Comments: Coral Reef Commons HCP /EA
To: David_dell@fws.gov

RE: Comments: Coral Reef Commons HCP /EA

To Whom it may concern,

The developer EA conclusion that there will be no significant impact to the listed species and their habitat is not supported by the information presented in the HCP and EA.

The habitat model in the HCP is bogus (not supported by science).

I strongly recommend that that your Agency reject the self-serving model that was created by the developer, and recommend that a new model be developed by objective unbiased experts with input from local regulatory specialists and local knowledgeable scientists. If impacts are realized with the new model then an EIS should be conducted.

In addition, if the proposed school is built in the NW section of the site,

maintenance burning of the Pine Rockland will not be allowed. There are other schools very close to the referenced site, therefore, the school does not have to be built.

The proposed mitigation for the proposed impacts is not adequate.

Please do the right thing and reject the biased Coral Reef Commons HCP /EA submitted by the developer.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Gary Milano

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 8:37:05 AM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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From: **Beverley Obryan** [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 11:35 PM
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
To: david_dell@fws.gov

The Pine Rocklands are among the most endangered habitats on earth because 98% has been destroyed ! Please dont allow the last remnant in Miami be taken from us ! Please !

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fwS.gov
Subject: Fwd: Coral Reef Commons HCP
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 5:04:38 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: donnakalil <donnakalil@aol.com>
To: [crc_hcp <crc_hcp@fwc.gov>](mailto:crc_hcp@fwc.gov); [crc_hcp <crc_hcp@fws.gov>](mailto:crc_hcp@fws.gov)
Sent: Fri, May 19, 2017 4:48 pm
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP

First let me say that I am very angry and disturbed that the process of eliminating such an endangered area has gotten this far.

It is important for you to know that I have restored pine rocklands in the past without burning, although I know that prescribed burning is the best way to manage pine rocklands. I know first hand that it is not absolutely necessary. I also know that a degraded and disturbed pine rock land can be returned to a thriving environment with hands on care.

I do know what "Take" means, it means kill and I can not understand how any endangered or threatened species is allowed to be killed off in order to progress with development of such endanger lands.

Years ago, I was in charge of a project to restore a few small parcels of pineland at Leewood Elementary school at 10343 SW 124 st Miami. It is in the middle of a residential area that prior to development was a pine rockland. To make a long story short, a band of parents, teachers, students and boy scouts cleared out the invasive species and planted several pine trees and other native plants indigenous to pine rocklands in the area. Within weeks of completing our task, Atala butterflies began to arrive and make the pineland their homes. The Atala has been found to be pretty resilient but other animals like the hairstreak or plants like the deltoid sperge are not. They need pine rocklands to live in and can only live in pine rocklands. Nowhere else!

There is less than 2% of pine rocklands left. EVERY piece of land that has pineland plants and animals on it must be saved. It is the only home they have.

We people can move anywhere and shop anywhere. We do not have to do it on their land!

I will not shop on that land and will boycott all companies associated with this project and I will not vote for any politician who votes in favor of this project.

I believe that you will find many more people that feel the way I do about this project that in my opinion should not have gotten this far and should be stopped right now!

Sincerely,

Donna Kalil

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Coral Reef Commons HCP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 12:37:18 PM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Arlene Ferris** [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 12:32 PM
Subject: Coral Reef Commons HCP
To: Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov, David_Dell@fws.gov, verobeach@fws.gov

Dear Ms. Blackford and Mr. Dell,

I am writing to request the denial of the permit to develop the Coral Reef Commons property in Miami. Our comments are due tonite by midnight, and I want to be sure I reach you. This morning I sent you both an email using the link on the Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition website (which also went to crc_hcp@fws.gov). But for various reasons I wasn't sure that went through to you. I hope so, but if not, I am going to try to restate my impassioned plea.

I have lived in Miami for 40+ years, availing myself of all the natural wonders South Florida possesses. I was employed as volunteer director in a botanical garden (Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden) for 31 years, recently retired, and I currently volunteer in the Everglades teaching school groups about sawgrass and periphyton, and also, with a STEM program growing native Florida orchids. I am an ardent conservationist, but I know there are many competing interests at work here and everywhere.

We know that South Florida has a extraordinarily unique and fragile web of life. For 25 years at Fairchild we taught our volunteers "Natural History of South Florida" and it is now drilled into me just how unique our habitat is. Yet the development pressures are massive. It is my long-held belief that the natural world, in all its manifestations, is a gift from Mother Nature, God, the Universe, or perhaps the result of random chance. Nevertheless, to me, our task as intelligent beings is to figure out how our species can survive and thrive, while also preserving the wonders of nature (biodiversity) which we have been gifted. It would be easy to pave everything over and to measure the monetary value that would result. What is much harder to measure is the result of preserving biodiversity and natural areas. We know that nature provides "ecosystem services" and we know that compounds in plants, insects and other life forms give us useful products, and are a treasure trove of still-undiscovered uses. And we know that the animals and birds that share our planet are our fellow creatures, deserving to be here as much as we do! And yes - we eat them too! The service they provide to us: joy, inspiration, beauty in untold numbers of forms, intellectual enrichment, and equally important, their structures and functions are models for biomimicry.

We simply cannot let ecosystems be paved over because it will benefit short term interests. There is

simply too much value in them -- even though that value is difficult to measure because it is so complex, and because as a society we don't have a long-established agreed up method of valuing it! In an anecdote I heard years ago, Someone takes a business man to see the Grand Canyon and he says "Very nice, but what can you do with it."

The profit motive is an extension of the survival instinct and is built into the human psyche. But citizens, agencies, organizations and governments exist to speak up for the common good - beyond the profit motive. However, I will close by saying that I firmly believe that in the end, preserving it will benefit humans individually & collectively and benefits our community in tangible and intangible ways. We are challenged every day to find better solutions to complex problems. Would most people know what was lost if this is paved over? No -- but those of us who do know are morally required to speak up on the basis of our own understanding and knowledge. The developers say that with their plan, the habitat that they will leave undeveloped will be better than it is now. They are wrong. They did not correctly and thoroughly survey the myriad life forms on this site, they did not accurately address the reality of controlled burns, and the proposed mitigation is inadequate and duplicitous. There are other reasons to deny the permit as well, enumerated on the Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition website. I respectfully submit that the permit to develop Coral Reef Commons be denied.

Thank you for your time, and for the vital work you do every day as US Fish and Wildlife Service professionals.

Sincerely yours,
Arlene Ferris
South Miami, FL



From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan - Comments
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:17:36 AM
Attachments: [Coral Reef Commons HCP comments.doc](#)

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: Jim Teas <[REDACTED]>
Date: Sat, May 20, 2017 at 6:33 PM
Subject: Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan - Comments
To: David_dell@fws.gov, Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Valerie Robbin [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], Jim Teas [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] >, Kathy Teas <[REDACTED]>, Elizabeth Bonnell [REDACTED]

Please see attached Microsoft Word document with comments.

Thank you,

James Teas
[REDACTED]

Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan – Comments

- The pine rockland community is one of the most endangered habitats in North America (Williams, D.A., Y. Wang, M. Borchetta, and M.S. Gaines, *Genetic diversity and spatial structure of a keystone species in fragmented pine rockland habitat*, *Biological Conservation*, April 2007, at 256, 257).
- Less than 1.5% of pine rocklands in Florida (exclusive of Everglades National Park) remain (USCG).
- Coral Reef Commons will negatively impact pine rocklands by habitat fragmentation and destruction, which will result in decreased (island) biodiversity.
- An EIS should be prepared for this project due to its significant environmental impacts.
- Sea-level rise over the next 83 years will inundate parts of Everglades National Park, and may possibly further decrease pine rockland habitat in South Florida. Human populations threatened by sea level rise will move inland, further impacting pine rockland habitat.
- Migratory birds that visit Miami-Dade County will be negatively impacted by loss of forest habitat.
- Light pollution from a Walmart as well as 900 residential units, will negatively impact nocturnal species.
- Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly & Florida leafwing butterfly, both listed species under the ESA, depend on pine rocklands habitat for survival.
- Florida brickell bush & Carter's small-flowered flax, listed species under the ESA, have designated habitat with the project.
- Periodic controlled burning, required for the health of pine rocklands, will be all but impossible due to adjacent residential units. Mechanical/chemical removal of exotics is not a substitute for controlled burns.
- One of only two known populations of Miami Tiger Beetle, recently listed, exists within the Richmond Pine Rocklands tract. Similar habitat exists within the Coral Reef Commons project. Surveys of the Miami Tiger Beetle on the CRC property are inadequate (HCP p36) and may have been completed while these organisms were dormant and underground.
- Acoustic evidence for the Florida Bonneted Bat, a listed species under the ESA, has been found on the project site. Bonneted bat roost sites in Coral Gables and Homestead are threatened by inundation due to future sea level rise.
- The habitat functional assessment developed for this project are not based on peer reviewed literature based on the species present (which are neither panthers nor wood storks)
- The proposed off-site mitigation area is already protected and will not conserve additional habitat. Furthermore, the mitigation area is not owned by the applicant but by the University of Miami.
- The length of the proposed project, 30 years, is too long.
- The property in question, which has not been adequately maintained by the University of Miami under its tenure prior to the sale in 2014, could be restored. The first step would be a controlled burn of the pine rocklands present to remove exotic species and hardwoods. Pines will grow back in the rocklands given the

chance (pines are growing in old asphalt on parts of the Richmond Pine Rockland Tract tha were once paved over).

- In conclusion, if the applicant is allowed to take these species, and they become extinct as a result, what then is the purpose of NEPA?

Thank you,

James Teas

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Fwd: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 11:22:05 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Shaina Montalvo
Hammocks, Fl

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 1:45:57 PM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
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david_dell@fws.gov

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jim McGrath** [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 1:41 PM
Subject: Coral Reef Commons
To: david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov

I am asking the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 acres of intact or restorable pine rockland habitat for a shopping center and apartment complex. Though the plan also envisions setting aside about 100 acres for non-development (onsite and off) I believe that does not compensate for the irreplaceable habitat which will be lost in the process. At the very least, I ask you to prepare the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan.

"Pine rockland is characterized by an open canopy of South Florida slashpine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*) with a patchy understory of tropical and temperate shrub and palms and a rich herbaceous layer of mostly perennial species including numerous species endemic to South Florida."

I believe that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's review (and acceptance or denial) of this plan constitutes "a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment."

This major project on one of the last sizable portions of pine rockland in our area fits all of those criteria. Any development which takes place should at the very least receive a full review under the required Environmental Impact Statement.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Coral reef commons HCP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:59:13 AM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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From: **Jhrma** [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 11:34 AM
Subject: Coral reef commons HCP
To: David_dell@fws.gov

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provided sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done

to this globally-imperiled habitat,

and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative)

are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").

5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."

6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."

7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: EVCO Resolution Re Pine Rocklands and Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 2:00:48 PM
Attachments: [Resolution Richmond Pine Rocklands. Finaldocx.pdf](#)

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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From: Jacki Lopez <[REDACTED]>
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 1:56 PM
Subject: EVCO Resolution Re Pine Rocklands and Coral Reef Commons
To: Ashleigh Blackford <ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov>, "Dell, David" <david_dell@fws.gov>

Greetings,

The Everglades Coalition adopted the attached resolution last week regarding Richmond pine rocklands. In sum, it states that the Everglades Coalition:

“opposes the further destruction of the Richmond pine rocklands, including the approval of “Coral Reef Commons” which would result in the take of several federally listed species. Instead, we urge the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Miami-Dade County to work to preserve and restore the Richmond pine rocklands and not allow any further commercial development in this globally imperiled habitat so it may be enjoyed by future generations of Floridians and continue to serve as a home to the dozens of rare and endangered plants and animals found there.”

Please add this information to the administrative record for the Coral Reef Commons draft HCP/EA.

Thank you

Jaclyn Lopez | Florida Director, Senior Attorney

Center for Biological Diversity | www.biologicaldiversity.org

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



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
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

A RESOLUTION OF THE EVERGLADES COALITION SUPPORTING THE PRESERVATION OF THE RICHMOND PINE ROCKLANDS

WHEREAS The Richmond pine rocklands are the largest globally imperiled tracts of pine rocklands outside of Everglades National Park and

WHEREAS Recent studies by the U.S. Geological Survey recently found only 1.5% of America's pine rocklands remain in south Florida and

WHEREAS Overdevelopment of south Florida and severe fragmentation of habitat have reduced imperiled pine rocklands throughout south Florida and

WHEREAS Pine rocklands are considered to be more biologically diverse than even our vanishing coral reefs and

WHEREAS The Richmond pine rocklands are home to dozens of rare and federally protected plants and animals including the eastern indigo snake, gopher tortoise, rim rock crowned snake, Audubon's crested caracara, Florida burrowing owl, little blue heron, southeastern American kestrel, tri-color heron, white crowned pigeon, wood stork, Florida bonneted bat, Bartram's scrub hairstreak butterfly, Cassius blue butterfly, Ceraunus blue butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Miami tiger beetle, Florida brickell bush, Deltoid spurge, Small's milkpea, Carter's small flowered flax, tiny polygala, bracted colicroot, Blodgett's wild mercury, little strongbark Bourrerria Cassinifolia, Florida pineland crabgrass, Everglades bully, one nerved enodia, wild-potato Morning glory, Rockland's morning glory, skyblue clustervine, pineland lantana, sand flax, wild sweet basil, Everglades poinsettia, Bahama wild coffee, Florida skullcap, pygmy spikemoss, wedglet fern, southern ladies tresses, least halberd fern, common white pine tillandsia, giant wildpine tillandsia, golden leather fern, Lamarck's trema, pineland golden trumpet, pink-pink orchid, locustberry byrosnima, Rocklands spurge, white sunbonnets, satin-leaf, silver palm, Christmas berry, Blodgett's swallowwart, Caribbean crabgrass, Miami cave crayfish, Atala hairstreak butterfly, great white heron, big brown bat, bald eagle and

WHEREAS Climate change is forecast to trigger sea-level rise in south Florida over the coming years and

WHEREAS Everglades National Park is expected to be adversely affected by rising sea water damaging its pine rockland habitat and destroying saltwater intolerant plants and animals and

Committed to full protection and restoration of America's Everglades

WHEREAS The Richmond pine rocklands are significantly higher in elevation than Everglades National Park pine rocklands and can serve as “Lifeboat Habitat” for rare and endangered plants and animals living in the vanishing pine rocklands of south Florida and

WHEREAS The Richmond pine rocklands are already severely fragmented and facing a proposed \$1 billion worth of commercial development and

WHEREAS Most of the Richmond pine rocklands are already designated critical habitat by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and

WHEREAS The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is considering approving draft Habitat Conservation Plan for a mixed use development known as “Coral Reef Commons” in the Richmond pine rocklands and

WHEREAS The proposed “Coral Reef Commons “ development includes a 900-unit apartment complex, a big-box anchor store, additional smaller retail stores, and land set aside for the construction of a school and

WHEREAS Proper management of pine rocklands requires periodic burns and creates potential smoke and fire hazards potentially incompatible with shopping centers, residential developments and schools yet therefore:

BE IT RESOLVED That the Everglades Coalition opposes the further destruction of the Richmond pine rocklands, including the approval of “Coral Reef Commons” which would result in the take of several federally listed species. Instead, we urge the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Miami-Dade County to work to preserve and restore the Richmond pine rocklands and not allow any further commercial development in this globally imperiled habitat so it may be enjoyed by future generations of Floridians and continue to serve as a home to the dozens of rare and endangered plants and animals found there.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 19th day of May, 2017.

Sincerely,



Mark Perry
Co-Chair



Michael J. Baldwin
Co-Chair

Committed to full protection and restoration of America’s Everglades

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Incidental Take Permit Application and Environmental Assessment for Commercial Mixed- Use Development; Miami-Dade County, FL [TE15009C-0]
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 8:42:09 AM
Attachments: [CRC HCP-ITP-EA-Halupa comments.pdf](#)

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

NOTE: All email correspondence and attachments received from or sent to me are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be disclosed to third parties.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 11:14 PM
Subject: Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Incidental Take Permit Application and Environmental Assessment for Commercial Mixed- Use Development; Miami-Dade County, FL [TE15009C-0]
To: david_dell@fws.gov

Please see my comments relating to the HCP, EA, and ITP for the proposed development project [TE15009C-0] (attached).

My comments are in the attached pdf file.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input during this open comment period.

-Paula Halupa
[REDACTED]

RE: Comments – Coral Reef Commons HCP
TE15009C-0

May 22, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

Please find attached my comments regarding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) notice and request for public comments on Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Incidental Take Permit Application and Environmental Assessment for Commercial Mixed-Use Development; Miami-Dade County, FL (TE15009C-0).

I have a B.S. and M.S. in Biology and have worked as a biologist for more than 25 years. I have been employed by the Service for more than 20 years.

The comments enclosed here are being provided entirely on my own personal time and based upon the literature and information that is available in the public spectrum. The input provided here is my own and does not represent the views or position of the Service.

In the interest of full disclosure, I have previously participated in meetings with the Applicants and Service staff and managers and was asked to review and provide comments on an earlier version of the draft HCP and draft EA, in my capacity as a biologist for the Service. In that capacity, I provided verbal and written input relating to listed and imperiled species and their habitats and expressed various concerns with regard to the proposed project, its potential impacts, and information contained in the draft HCP, during its development and earlier in the development and review process.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide additional comments during this open public comment period.

Sincerely,

Paula J. Halupa

██████████
██████████
██████████

Comments on Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Incidental Take Permit Application and Environmental Assessment for Commercial Mixed-Use Development; Miami-Dade County, FL (TE15009C-0)

General Comments on the Environmental Assessment (EA) and Alternatives Examined

The proposed project (“Preferred Alternative”), if built out as proposed, comes with enormous consequences and losses to natural resources and humans. It would be the largest, most consequential development in the remaining pine rocklands of south Florida, and it would occur in habitat that is critically imperiled globally (FNAI 2017; http://fnai.org/PDF/Element_tracking_summary_current.pdf). The proposed project has significant consequences for numerous federally listed species, most notably the endangered Miami tiger beetle, Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak, and Florida leafwing, which are each dangerously close to extinction. The proposed project size and location are significant, as it is within the Richmond Pine Rocklands, the largest remaining tract of pine rocklands outside of Everglades National Park. The proposed project will result in the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of globally imperiled habitat both on the project site and within the surrounding lands.

It is not clear why the Service opted to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) rather than an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In addition to the effects to globally imperiled habitats and endangered species, there are significant effects of increasing human population density in a densely populated area, potential impacts of conducting or not conducting prescribed fire in an urban landscape, increased traffic and impacts from traffic, and increased demands on natural resources, as a result of the project. More and different alternatives should be fully explored, considered, and analyzed before any decisions are made.

I am hopeful that the significant questions and concerns expressed during the public comment period with regard to this proposed project will lead the Service to re-examine effects and work towards serious viable alternatives. There was no conclusion in the EA of either “finding of no significant impact” or decision to prepare an EIS. An EIS can be extremely helpful for this consequential project as it can: (1) help ensure a complete, unbiased, and robust evaluation of significant environmental impacts; and (2) inform decision-makers and the public of reasonable alternatives that would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the environment (<https://www.fws.gov/ecological-services/es-library/pdfs/NEPA.pdf>).

Given the anticipated effects of the “Preferred Alternative”, the flaws and questions in methodology and misrepresentation of information within the HCP, and the incomplete survey data and lack of survey information (discussed below), it is difficult to see how the Service could arrive at a “finding of no significant impact”, if a conclusion or decision is reached in the near future. Even the notice inviting public comments on the ITP and EA contains inaccuracies. For example, it states that “If issued, the permit would authorize take of three federally listed species, one Federal candidate, and two State-listed species, incidental to project development, occupation, and use.” In actuality, at a minimum, as it relates to federally listed species, four federally endangered animals and one federally threatened animal would be affected. Further, the notice states that “Construction of the project would impact 86.49 acres of pine rockland habitat and would take covered species that occupy the area.” See <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2017-03-23/pdf/2017-05767.pdf>. In actuality, the proposed project and its impacts and associated take would go well beyond that.

In the interest of finding solutions and restoring faith of the public, please consider a broader identification of alternatives, allow for public scoping, more fully analyze new and previously identified alternatives, and prepare a draft EIS, as allowed for through the NEPA process.

General Comments on the Incidental Take Permit Process / Issuance Criteria

Under section 10 of the ESA, permit issuance criteria must be met before the Service can issue a permit.

Based upon available scientific data and information and the questionable and incomplete information in the HCP and EA, it appears that at least three of the issuance criteria will not be met.

These include:

- the taking will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild;
- the applicant will, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize and mitigate the impacts of the taking; and,
- the applicant will ensure that adequate funding for the plan will be provided.

First, if the “Preferred Alternative” is selected, the project will likely appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of species in the wild. In this case, this includes at least three federally endangered species: Miami tiger beetle, Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak, and Florida leafwing.

For the Miami tiger beetle, the species occurs in the Richmond Pine Rocklands and at one other location. It is not known to occupy other locations and depends upon pine rockland habitat. Please see the final rule for the Miami tiger beetle <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-10-05/pdf/2016-23945.pdf> for a complete discussion of the species’ status and threats. There is no survival or recovery for this endangered species without critically imperiled pine rockland habitat. The proposed “Preferred Alternative” will result in the significant losses, fragmentation, and degradation of pine rocklands; consequently, the project will result in the taking of Miami tiger beetle. However, to date, there has been essentially no real effort to determine the numbers or extent of use at the proposed project or mitigation sites; there has been no complete analysis of suitable or potentially suitable habitat on the development site or mitigation site. Only extremely limited and inadequate surveys have been conducted. Consequently, based upon available information, and if no on-site surveys or habitat analyses are performed, it will not be possible for the Service to conclude that the taking will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of the species in the wild. Under section 10, the burden falls on the Service for ensuring this - that the taking will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of the species in the wild. Under section 7, the Service also needs to insure that the federal action (its potential issuance of a federal permit) will not jeopardize the continued existence of this species as a result of the project.

For Bartram’s hairstreak and the Florida leafwing, the species occur in the Richmond Pine Rocklands and at other locations. Please see the final rule for the Florida leafwing and Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak butterflies <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-08-12/pdf/2014-18614.pdf> for a complete discussion of the species’ status and threats. See also the critical habitat designation showing the importance of the Richmond Pine Rocklands at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-08-12/pdf/2014-18611.pdf>. The proposed “Preferred Alternative” will result in the significant losses, fragmentation, and degradation of pine rocklands, including the loss of critical habitat. Consequently, the project will result in the taking of endangered butterflies and potentially the adverse modification of their critical habitat. However, to date, there has been little effort to determine the numbers or extent of use at the proposed project or mitigation sites. It is difficult to imagine continued survival and recovery of these species with additional loss, degradation, and fragmentation of pine rocklands. As above, the Service will need to evaluate the proposed action under sections 10 and 7 of the ESA.

Second, if the “Preferred Alternative” is selected, the applicant will not have minimized and mitigated the impacts of the taking to the maximum extent practicable. A viable development project that would meet this issuance criterion could be designed in several ways. For example, a development could be built using a smaller development footprint – such that it falls entirely on previously developed areas (i.e., Redevelopment only), on seriously disturbed lands, or on a combination entirely composed of previously developed and seriously disturbed lands. Alternatively, a development could be built using a small footprint and larger and more meaningful off-site compensation could be secured. The off-site compensation currently offered as part of this project is already secured and partially managed. More meaningful compensation could include pine rocklands that are at-risk of development.

Third, it is not clear that the Applicant has provided for or secured adequate funding for management. It is not clear how prescribed fire will be used on the preserved areas, especially at the on-site preserves. Finally, development will be permanent, so management of preserves should be in place for perpetuity.

Specific Comments on the Service’s Environmental Assessment

2.0 Proposed Action (p. 3)

The Service states: “The proposed action being evaluated by this EA is the issuance of an ITP by the Service that would authorize take of the BSHB, indigo snake, leafwing, FBB, gopher tortoise, rim rock crowned snake, and white-crowned pigeon, incidental to development of CRC and implementation of the conservation plan in the associated HCP, in accordance with the statutory and regulatory requirements of the ESA.”

- Please explain why the take of the federally endangered Miami tiger beetle was not included as part of the Service’s description of the proposed action. The Miami tiger beetle occurs within the Richmond Pine Rocklands and suitable or potential habitat occurs on the proposed project site; this species will be impacted by the proposed development and management of the preserves.

2.1 Purpose and Need of the Proposed Action (pp. 3-4)

*The Service states: “On May 5, 2016, the Service received an application from the Applicants for ITP under the authority of section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA. If the application is approved and the Service issues a permit, the ITP would authorize the Applicants to take BSHB, indigo snake, leafwing, FBB, gopher tortoise, rim rock crowned snake, and white-crowned pigeon as a result of the development of CRC including construction, habitat restoration and land management activities, and permanent urban community development within the HCP Plan Area.. The ITP would also incorporate measures to mitigate (avoid, minimize, and compensate) for adverse effects to other Service-jurisdiction resources, including listed and proposed listed plants [Blodgett’s silver bush (*Argythamnia blodgettii*), Carter’s small-flowered flax (*Linum carteri* var. *carteri*), crenulate lead-plant (*Amorpha crenulata*), deltoid spurge (*Chamaesyce deltoidea* ssp. *deltoidea*), Everglades bully (*Sideroxylon reclinatum* ssp. *austrofloridense*), Florida brickell bush (*Brickelia mosieri*), Florida bristle fern (*Trichomanes punctatum* ssp. *floridanum*), Florida pineland crabgrass (*Digitaria pauciflora*), Florida prairie clover (*Dalea carthagenensis* var. *floridana*), Garber’s spurge (*Chamaesyce garberi*), sand flax (*Linum arenicola*), Small’s milkpea (*Galactia smallii*), tiny polygala (*Polygala smallii*)] and critical habitat for the BSHB, leafwing, Carter’s small-flowered flax, and Florida brickell bush. The Service has prepared this EA to inform the public of our proposed action and the effects of the proposed action and its alternatives, seek information from the public, and to use information collected and analyzed to make better informed decisions concerning this incidental take permit application.”*

- Based upon the above information, it does not appear that the federally endangered Miami tiger beetle is being fully considered. As stated in the final rule for the species, “One of the two known populations of the Miami tiger beetle occurs within the Richmond Pine Rocklands, on parcels of

publicly or privately owned lands that are partially developed, yet retain some undeveloped pine rockland habitat.” <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-10-05/pdf/2016-23945.pdf>

- Please explain why the Miami tiger beetle is not being included in the purpose and need section of the EA and why measures to mitigate for adverse effects to this species and its habitat are not being fully included in the alternatives and fully considered in the analyses. From this section of the EA, it appears that the Miami tiger beetle is not a covered species in the HCP. Is take of Miami tiger beetles not expected? If so, please explain this rationale.

3.0 The Affected Environment (pp. 5-7)

The Service states: “The Applicants’ proposed activity will result in the loss of pine rockland habitat within CRC.”

- The proposed project, if approved in its current design, will result in both the loss of pine rockland habitat on-site within CRC, and it will also result in the fragmentation and degradation of the habitat within the Richmond Pine Rocklands. Additional people, increased traffic, increased public use, etc. will result in more demands for resources, increased threats, more difficulty in implementing prescribed fires, and increased difficulty in management.

The Service states: While significant areas of pine rocklands are now protected within preserves such as ENP, Big Cypress National Preserve, and the National Key Deer Refuge, vulnerable fragments continue to be threatened on the Miami Rock Ridge and in the Florida Keys (Service 1999). This continuing habitat loss has resulted in pine rockland communities of South Florida becoming imperiled globally (Service 1999; FNAI 2015). The inevitable consequences of climate change throughout the 21st century will impact pine rocklands as sea level rise (SLR) and increased precipitation, storm intensity, and annual average temperatures proceed to transform the hydrology and subsequently, the vegetative communities in South Florida, the Florida Keys and Bahamas.

- A more complete description of the importance of pine rocklands and threats to the species and habitat can be found within more current literature and multiple sources.
- Pine rocklands remain critically imperiled globally (FNAI 2017). http://fnai.org/PDF/Element_tracking_summary_current.pdf
- The importance of pine rocklands and threats to habitat can be found within the final rule for the Miami tiger beetle. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-10-05/pdf/2016-23945.pdf>
- The importance of pine rocklands and threats to habitat can be found within the final rule for the Florida leafwing and Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak butterflies. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-08-12/pdf/2014-18614.pdf>
- A more complete description of the Richmond Pine Rocklands (historic and current) can be found within the comments and information provided by Christopher Wirth, submitted when the Miami tiger beetle was being proposed for federal listing. See <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=FWS-R4-ES-2015-0164-0060>

The Service states: “Factors of the human environment were identified including; the natural environment, built environment, human health, welfare, and safety; for which the effects of the proposed action should be assessed.”

- The natural environment – globally imperiled pine rocklands – should be more carefully considered and more fully assessed. This proposed project, within the Richmond Pine Rocklands, is a major development action, affecting the most significant block of remaining pine rocklands outside of Everglades National Park and impacting listed species and critical habitats.
- Effects to this globally imperiled natural resource and listed species as a result of the proposed project are significant and should necessitate the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. Please explain the Service’s decision to opt for an environmental assessment rather than prepare a full EIS.

3.2.2 Existing Land Uses (p. 18)

The Service states: “Current land use classification identifies approximately 33.3 ac as Developed Lands, the remaining areas are considered undeveloped. The proposed CRC property can be lumped into four categories: 1) developed lands (33.3 ac), 2) disturbed uplands (20.9 ac), 3) pine rocklands (80.0 ac), and 4) rockland hammock (3.2 ac).”

- Please describe the current land use classification system used, and what methods, if any, were used to verify its accuracy. Were these categories and acreages ground-truthed by the Service, NRCS, FNAI, or other natural resource agencies?
- Please give the original classification of the disturbed uplands. Are these areas disturbed pine rocklands? Disturbed pine rocklands can be restored (Possley 2015, Wirth 2015). Formerly scraped pine rockland area now provides suitable habitat for the Miami tiger beetle. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-10-05/pdf/2016-23945.pdf>

3.2.3 Surrounding Land Uses (pp. 18-19)

The Service mainly describes ownerships of surrounding lands.

- The EA or future EIS would benefit from a full and comprehensive discussion of the habitat types within the Surrounding Lands, specifically the importance of pine rocklands within the Richmond tract.

3.3.2 Vegetative Communities within CRC (pp. 20-21)

The Service states: “A description of vegetative communities within the proposed CRC can be found in Section 2.0 of the HCP. The vegetative communities generally fall into three (3) different categories, with each category further defined by subcategories.”

- Please describe the vegetative communities classification system used, and what methods, if any, were used to verify its accuracy. Were these categories and acreages ground-truthed by the Service, NRCS, FNAI, or other natural resource agencies?
- Please give the original vegetative classification of the disturbed uplands. Were these areas originally disturbed pine rocklands? Disturbed pine rocklands can be restored (Possley 2015, Wirth 2015). Formerly scraped pine rockland area now provides suitable habitat for the Miami tiger beetle <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-10-05/pdf/2016-23945.pdf>

- For historical perspective, please see Wirth's information submitted on the proposed rule for the Miami tiger beetle <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=FWS-R4-ES-2015-0164-0060>

3.3.3.1 Status of the species within the proposed CRC property (pp. 22-27)

Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly

The Service provides some limited information on surveys and states: "The property where CRC is proposed includes 90.2 ac of CH for the BSHB."

- Please describe the level of survey effort expended, indicated which areas were surveyed, and provide details over what time period surveys were conducted.
- Were any surveys conducted by FWS, FWC, FNAI, or other natural resource agencies or independent scientists? Did personnel accompany Applicants during the surveys?
- Were surveys conducted for the proposed development areas and the proposed mitigation areas? If not, how were the alternatives designed or evaluated?
- The proposed project will have major effects on this species and affect large acreages of CH. The Service will need to conduct a thorough analysis for possible jeopardy and adverse modification during the section 7 and 10 processes.

Florida leafwing

The Service states: "Leafwing butterflies have not been documented within the proposed CRC property, although suitable habitat is present. The property where CRC is proposed includes 90.2 ac of CH for the leafwing."

- Please provide the basis for the statement. Were any surveys conducted? What is this based upon?
- Were any surveys conducted by FWS, FWC, FNAI, or other natural resource agencies or independent scientists?
- Were surveys conducted for the proposed development areas and the proposed mitigation areas? If not, how were the alternatives designed or evaluated?
- The proposed project will have major consequences on survival and recovery potential. The Service will need to conduct a thorough analysis for possible jeopardy and adverse modification during the section 7 and 10 processes.

Miami tiger beetle

The Service states: "Surveys performed during 2014 within the proposed CRC property did not document any Miami tiger beetles (JEI 2017). Dr. Barry Knisley conducted surveys on a small portion of the property (approximately 1.7 hectare [ha] [4.3 ac]) on the eastern side of the proposed development area, and the Miami tiger beetle was not observed (Knisely 2013). Miami tiger beetles have been documented on properties located north, east, and south of the proposed CRC. The property proposed for the development of CRC includes suitable habitat for the species."

- Please describe the level of survey effort expended, indicated which areas were surveyed, and provide details over what time period surveys were conducted.

- Were any surveys conducted by FWS, FWC, FNAI, or other natural resource agencies or independent scientists? Did qualified personnel accompany Applicants during the surveys?
- Were surveys conducted for the proposed development areas and the proposed mitigation areas? If not, how were the alternatives designed or evaluated?
- New and complete surveys should be conducted by qualified personnel during the appropriate tiger beetle flight seasons. This information should be obtained and analyzed before any decisions are made.
- As stated in the final rule for the Miami tiger beetle, *“It is unknown if the Miami tiger beetle occurs on the proposed development site, as only one limited survey has been conducted on a small portion (approximately 1.7 ha (4.3 ac)) of the proposed development area and more surveys are needed. Based upon available information, it appears that the proposed developments will likely impact suitable or potentially suitable beetle habitat, because roughly 13 ha (33 ac) of the proposed development are planned for intact and degraded pine rocklands (Ram 2015, p. 91).*
- Please also see comments provided by Chris Wirth
<https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=FWS-R4-ES-2015-0164-0060>
- The proposed project will have major effects on the continued survival and recovery of this species. The Service will need to conduct a thorough analysis for possible jeopardy and adverse modification during the section 7 and 10 processes.

In general, the revised EA or future EIS would benefit from additional surveys or a clearer description of the amount of effort expended, where surveys were conducted, who performed the surveys, qualifications of the surveyors, what methodologies were used, and over what time period. This would help in the formation of viable alternatives and the analyses of these alternatives.

3.5 Socioeconomic Environment (pp. 29-30)

The Service uses data from the 2010 Census.

More recent data are available. The revised EA or future EIS would benefit from the incorporation and consideration of more recent data. For example, the population for Miami-Dade County as of July 1, 2016 is 2,712,945. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/POP815215/12086>

4.0 Alternatives and Environmental Consequences (pp. 40-116)

The Service provides some alternatives, but the evaluations of these alternatives are questionable.

- The evaluation of alternatives appears to be hampered by: (1) overreliance on information provided in the HCP (prepared by Applicants); (2) deficient or insufficient information (e.g., lack of survey data); and, (3) unclear methods for evaluation of alternatives. In addition, some statements are contrary to existing scientific literature and incompatible with statements in other previous Service documents.

- It is not clear why or how the alternatives were selected and why other more viable options were not fully explored. An EIS would help illuminate more viable project options that could meet issuance criteria (see above). Please explain why other alternatives with fewer impacts to listed species were not considered.
- It is not clear why a habitat functional assessment was used, how it was used, how the HVUs were derived, or why this approach was used instead of real data from surveys using approved methodologies. Please explain.
- Was the habitat functional assessment independently reviewed or examined by experts? Was it ground-truthed in the field by agency personnel or independent scientists? Please explain.
- It is not clear how the “Preferred Alternative” was selected or how the HVUs were calculated. The HVU approach is highly questionable. How does a permanent loss of pine rockland habitat under this alternative equate to a net benefit in the functional value of remaining habitat? Please explain.
- As above, how does a permanent loss of pine rockland habitat under this alternative result in an overall beneficial effect to covered species? Please explain.
- As above, how does a permanent loss of critical habitat under this alternative result in a net benefit of CH for all the species? Please explain. All of the species do not have critical habitat. All of the listed species do not have critical habitat. No new critical habitat is being created as a result of the project. In addition, the lack of management or changes in environmental conditions in the future should not be assumed.

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Helicopter Pilot request
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 8:45:36 AM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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----- Forwarded message -----
From: Mikolay3 [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 11:50 PM
Subject: Helicopter Pilot request
To: David_dell@fws.gov

Mr. David Dell,

As a DOI/USFS carded helicopter pilot working in South Florida, I beg you to preserve the Pine Rocklands at the Commons project.

I've spent 10 years flying in hostile/combat environments with the US Army as a UH-60 helicopter pilot. I have come to appreciate the natural forested areas of our Nation after seeing the destruction and pollution around the world, directly correlated to unstable regions. South Florida is on what I call "life support" with the current state of developed areas versus what is left of the historic tract of Dade County Pine Rockland. There is no "recharge" areas left outside of Everglades National Park in urban Miami-Dade county.

I beg you with all my heart, NOT to allow development in the Richmond Pine tract.

Sincerely,

Mikolay Plater-Zyberk

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Humble teacher
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:59:19 AM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Fred Truby** [REDACTED]
Date: Sun, May 21, 2017 at 9:41 PM
Subject: Humble teacher
To: David_dell@fws.gov
Cc: Philip Stoddard [REDACTED] >, "Stoddard, Philip K." <[REDACTED]>, Philip Stoddard <[REDACTED]>, Philip Stoddard <[REDACTED]>, "Welsh, Bob" <[REDACTED]>

Mr. Dell,

Please do everything you can to stop the unnecessary destruction of a unique and wonderful parcel of history. I grew up in South Miami and now I am a teacher at [REDACTED] in [REDACTED], not far from the "Zoo" site.

I trust you will make the right decision,

Sincerely,
Fred S. Truby

[REDACTED]

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Miami Pine Rocklands - Proposed Habitat Conservation Plan allowing Incidental "Take" of Endangered Species
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 8:22:27 AM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

NOTE: All email correspondence and attachments received from or sent to me are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be disclosed to third parties.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Leo Jacobs [REDACTED]
Date: Sun, May 21, 2017 at 10:52 PM
Subject: Miami Pine Rocklands - Proposed Habitat Conservation Plan allowing Incidental "Take" of Endangered Species
To: David_dell@fws.gov
Cc: District12@miamidade.gov, District7@miamidade.gov, District5@miamidade.gov, District3@miamidade.gov, District2@miamidade.gov, District1@miamidade.gov, district13@miamidade.gov, district11@miamidade.gov, district10@miamidade.gov, district9@miamidade.gov, District8@miamidade.gov, district6@miamidade.gov, district4@miamidade.gov

Dear Sir:

The "scientific study" of the endangered species known to occur on pine rocklands is skewed and incomplete. Working together, the University of Miami and Ram Development

limited the scope and sequence of the survey. They sampled sporadically over a partial year. A thorough biological survey of multiple endangered species requires systematic sampling

for at least one year. The animals behavior and numbers vary over the four seasons. The true picture of their numbers and relationships cannot otherwise be known. Good science

requires proper data collection. There was plenty of time to complete such a study.

There are also questions about the legality of the zoning changes U.M. made. The U.M. leased the property for free for 30 years, and the lease had an educational use only clause. The zoning change came shortly before the lease ended. It went from agricultural to office/residential. The public was never properly informed about the zoning changes being proposed, and the matter never came before the county commission. The secrecy involved

allowed the university to sell a portion of their rezoned property for \$22 million after the educational clause had expired.

I urge you to reject this take permit for Ram Development and the University of Miami at this time. It is deeply flawed and detrimental to the future of this community.

Diane Jacobs



From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Pine Rocklands
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 8:09:45 AM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

NOTE: All email correspondence and attachments received from or sent to me are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be disclosed to third parties.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Dan Liftman** [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 10:26 PM
Subject: Pine Rocklands
To: david_dell@fws.gov, ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov

Please save this precious, irreplaceable biome. Do not develop the land!

Dan Liftman
West Palm Beach

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Please DONT allow Pineland destruction
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 8:38:02 AM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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----- Forwarded message -----
From: Mikolay3 [REDACTED] >
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 11:39 PM
Subject: Please DONT allow Pineland destruction
To: David_dell@fws.gov

Mr. David Dell,

As a DOI/USFS carded helicopter pilot working in South Florida, I beg you to preserve the Rock Pinelands at the Commons project.

I've spent 10 years flying in hostile/combat environments with the US Army as a UH-60 helicopter pilot. I have come to appreciate the natural forested areas of our Nation after seeing the destruction and pollution around the world, directly correlated to unstable regions. South Florida is on what I call "life support" with the current state of developed areas versus what is left of the historic tract of Dade County Pine Rockland. There is no "recharge" areas left outside of Everglades National Park in urban Miami Dade county.

I beg you with all my heart, NOT to allow development in the Richmond Pine tract.

Sincerely,

Mikolay Plater-Zyberk

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Please stop development in Coral Reef and save the protected area!
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 7:19:54 AM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

NOTE: All email correspondence and attachments received from or sent to me are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be disclosed to third parties.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: nellie brothers <[REDACTED]>
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 5:41 PM
Subject: Please stop development in Coral Reef and save the protected area!
To: "David_dell@fws.gov" <David_dell@fws.gov>

I vote NO TO WALMART AND APARTMENTS PROPOSED IN CORAL REEF for the following reasons:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provided sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat,
and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative)
are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled

resource (their words) and “take” the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of “success.”

7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant’s own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants “credit” for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Nellie Brothers

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Fwd: Preserve Rare Pine Rockland Forest In Southern Miami-Dade
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 2:31:10 AM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Cassandra Robertson <[REDACTED]>
Date: May 22, 2017 at 11:29:16 PM PDT
To: Cassandra Robertson [REDACTED]
Subject: **Preserve Rare Pine Rockland Forest In Southern Miami-Dade**

Please intervene to
Preserve Rare Pine Rockland Forest In Southern Miami-Dade!

Less than 2 percent of Miami-Dade County's original pine rockland remains outside of Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve.

Once this land is developed, that's it! There is so little natural land left in this country, for your children and theirs, please,

Preserve Rare Pine Rockland Forest In Southern Miami-Dade!

Cassandra Robertson

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Proposed Miami Wilds/walmart development
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 8:59:42 PM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

NOTE: All email correspondence and attachments received from or sent to me are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be disclosed to third parties.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Joseph Piccini** [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, May 15, 2017 at 3:26 PM
Subject: Proposed Miami Wilds/walmart development
To: David_dell@fws.gov

Please take note of my opposition to future issuance of federal kill permits regarding the Miami Richmond pine rocklands.
These lands are the last habitat for many endangered plants and animals as you know.
Proposed mitigation property is not enough.
Pine rockland must burn in order to sustain natural balance.
Allowing 900 apartments proposed so close to this habitat, creates a conflict of people and environment where none existed before.
DO NO HARM.
The Richmond pine rockland must remain intact.
Destroying acres of oxygen producing, air filtering, carbon absorbing habitat and replacing it with non pervious asphalt/concrete, is "counter sustainable".
The Miami Richmond pine rockland is an Endangered American Forest and should be protected as such.
Apartments and Walmarts can be developed on plenty of different parcels currently available.
There is only one Richmond pine rockland, and it cannot be replaced. It is the last one.
I urge your office to deny federal kill permits and future commercial development of the Richmond pine rockland.
Furthermore, please consider federal govt purchase of this land for addition to Everglades National park or as Richmond Pine Rocklands National Wildlife Refuge.

Sincerely,
Joseph Piccini
[REDACTED]

piccini.joseph@gmail.com

JP

From: [REDACTED]
To: David_dell@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov; [Ashleigh Blackford](mailto:Ashleigh.Blackford@fws.gov)
Subject: Fwd: Public Comment on CRC HCP
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 4:53:57 PM
Attachments: [Rockland Resolutions.zip](#)
[Untitled attachment_00028.htm](#)

Begin forwarded message:

From: Al Sunshine Gmail [REDACTED] >
Subject: Public Comment on CRC HCP
Date: May 20, 2017 at 4:29:29 PM EDT
To: "David_dell@fws.gov" <David_dell@fws.gov>, [Ashleigh Blackford](mailto:Ashleigh.Blackford@fws.gov) <ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov>, crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [SunshineNews](mailto:sunshinenews@comcast.net) <sunshinenews@comcast.net>

Re: Public Comment about Proposed Coral Reef Commons HCP

As a long time resident of Miami Dade County who's raised my family here for some 4 decades, I have become increasingly concerned about continued development in the Globally Imperiled Richmond Pine Rocklands.

Recently I have seen more traffic and more development in the Richmond Pine Rocklands and a resulting loss of Habitat and observable Wildlife there.

Traffic is clogging and chocking the area and the Richmond Pine Rocklands' fragile Habitats have been terribly mis-managed despite numerous conservation plans that have generally ignored and mismanaged.

Some areas remain overgrown with invasive weeds overgrowing the habitat which is at risk of becoming inappropriate home for many Federally Listed Endangered plants and animals.

I fear the so-called CRC HVP" will be yet another misguided effort to balance development and preservation at the expense of the Protected Plants and Animals fighting for their survival there every day.

1. **The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete.** Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed over a longp-enough period to truly track their life cycles and habitat use. Were there any Independent Bat Soundings to see how the protected Florida Bonneted Bat feeds and lives in the CRC Property? Why have other independent surveys found Florida Bonneted Bat soundings throughout the Richmond Tract, but NOT in the CRC site? Why have Miami Tiger Beetle sightings also been documented throughout the Richmond Pine Rocklands, but NOT in the CRC Site? Was the applicant' survey, conducted by a private engineering consultant, done when the Miami Tiger Beetle was underground in its' pupal stage and almost impossible to easily detect? Why is

there no research into the horribly disruptive effect on wildlife of all the traffic going in and out of the proposed CRC site, as well as the effect of all the artificial lighting from 900 apartment units, a Walmart Super store and nearby strip mall requiring extensive nighttime illumination? What will the lighting impact be on listed/endangered species found there including the Florida Bonneted Bat, Miami Tiger Beetle, Rim Rock Crowned Snake, Gopher Tortoise and Bartram's Hairstreak Butterfly?

2. **Their proposed mitigation is inadequate.** Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.

3. **Burning is crucial but impossible.** The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.

4. **"No Good Alternatives."** All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provided sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative) are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").

5. **"Success" is illusory.** The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."

A local biologist recently advised me:

The HCP proffers a quantitative "habitat functional assessment" for the CRC property (pages 82-90)...implying that the metrics developed are appropriate for ranking some CRC parcels as more worthy of development than others; This is not the case.

The habitat assessment is most heavily weighted toward each parcel's cover of canopy, non-native plants, and "pine rockland herbs" (20% for each factor, or 60% of total score). By using these particular metrics to evaluate parcels, the assessment uses to its advantage the property's history of fire-suppression and lack of exotic vegetation management. If, for example, the habitat assessment instead gave more weight to the presence of federally listed species, the presence of designated critical habitat, presence of butterfly nectar sources, and connectivity, then the scores would be much different, and would likely show that all unpaved areas within the CRC property are highly valuable. A complete habitat functional assessment of the CRC property should be executed which considers all ecological factors—not just ones that support the development goals. I also object to the characterization of "net conservation gain" that includes the

addition of 50.96-acres of off-site mitigation. This off-site property is already under a conservation agreement through deed restriction and including it in the HFA does not change anything, as far as I can discern. To put it more simply, conserving something that is already conserved should not count.

6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."

7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource. Years ago, Miami Dade County offered to buy and preserve the South Campus Property (CRC Development Site) under it's Environmentally Endangered Lands Program. Not only did U of Miami refuse to consider the sale to preveve the land, but I have firsthand accounts how Miami Dade Employees were threatened with personal lawsuit if they pursued the proposal.

In addition, a current member of the Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition was told by a University of Miami Vice President years ago to "Fence off some areas (of its' South Campus in the Richmond Pine Rocklands) and put goats in before the biologists find out what's there".

Additionally, Federal Court Records going back to 2006 show the University of Miami paid the U-S Department of Justice almost \$400,000 to settle an investigation into contaminating the soil and water of the Richmond Pine Rocklands for some 20 years by Illegally dumping the radioactive remains of dead lab monkeys there. Yet those facts were reportedly not disclosed during the recent local zoning hearings which rezoned the land for commercial development.

There remains a growing Groundswell of Public Support to preserve and restore the globally imperiled Richmond Pine Rocklands and specifically the proposed CRC Site.

Here's one recent example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDKliYvog4o>

While several local Municipalities have recently passed formal resolutions supporting preserving the Richmond Pine Rocklands, NONE have enacted any formal actions supporting the destruction of the South Campus/CRC site for any commercial development there.

I have attached several Municipal Resolutions supporting Preservation of the Pine Rocklands as well as some local elementary school students' recent post cards urging preservation of the Pine Rocklands for its endangered inhabitants.

RESOLUTION 14-60

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF CUTLER BAY, FLORIDA, OPPOSING THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF APPROXIMATELY 88 ACRES OF PINE ROCKLAND GENERALLY LOCATED ALONG S.W. 152 STREET AND S.W. 127TH AVENUE WITHIN UNINCORPORATED MIAMI-DADE COUNTY; PROVIDING FOR TRANSMITTAL; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, it has been recently reported that approximately 88 acres of forest land generally located along S.W. 152 Street and S.W. 127 Avenue in unincorporated Miami-Dade County is to be developed as a mixed use development (the "Property"); and

WHEREAS, the Property consists of one of the last intact tracts of endangered pine rockland ("Rockland") within Miami-Dade County; and

WHEREAS, Rockland is a globally imperiled habitat containing an array of rare plants, animals, and insects which are rare and exclusive to that habitat; and

WHEREAS, some of the endangered species for which Rockland provides a habitat include the bald eagle, indigo snake, the Florida bonneted bat, and two rare butterflies; and

WHEREAS, preservation of the native Rockland, and the species for which it provides a home, is of great importance for the protection of our native forest's unique and endangered environment; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Cutler Bay (the "Town") is concerned about the loss of this valuable Rockland and desires to express its opposition to the development of the Property; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council finds that this Resolution is in the best interest and welfare of the residents of the Town.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF CUTLER BAY, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Recitals. The above recitals are true and correct and are incorporated herein by this reference.

Section 2. Opposition. The Town Council hereby opposes the proposed development of the Property.

Section 3. Transmittal. The Town Council hereby authorizes the Town Clerk to transmit this Resolution to the Board of the Miami-Dade County Commissioners and Craig W. Aubrey, South Florida field supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Section 4. Effective Date. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 20th day of August, 2014.

EDWARD P. MACDOUGALL
Mayor

Attest:

DEBRA E. EASTMAN, MMC
Town Clerk



APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
LEGAL SUFFICIENCY FOR THE SOLE
USE OF THE TOWN OF CUTLER BAY:

WEISS, SEROTA, HELFMAN, PASTORIZA,
COLE & BONISKE, P.L.
Town Attorney

Moved By: Council Member Bell
Seconded By: Council Member Mixon

FINAL VOTE AT ADOPTION:

Mayor Edward P. MacDougall	yes
Vice Mayor Ernest N. Sochin	yes
Council Member Peggy R. Bell	yes
Council Member Sue Ellen Loyzelle	yes
Council Member Mary Ann Mixon	yes



CARLOS A. GIMENEZ
MAYOR
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

March 6, 2015

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

Re: Year one Amendment 1 allocation for the acquisition of globally-imperiled pine rocklands habitat in Miami-Dade County

Dear Governor Scott:

I am writing this letter to request that the State of Florida allocate funds pursuant to the Florida Water and Land Conservation Initiative, Florida Constitutional Amendment 1 to acquire certain environmentally sensitive pine rocklands located in Miami-Dade County.

As you know, 75.64 percent of Florida voters overwhelmingly approved Florida Constitutional Amendment 1 on November 4, 2014, which authorizes no less than 33 percent of net revenues collected from the existing excise tax on real estate documents to be used to acquire, restore, and improve land and water areas throughout Florida. The revenues collected pursuant to this amendment may be used to finance the acquisition and improvement of conservation land and outdoor recreation areas.

Miami-Dade County contains the majority of what is left of the Florida Natural Areas Inventory designated Globally-Imperiled Habitat, the pine rocklands. Originally 185,000 acres of pine rocklands forest existed throughout the County, but now only 3,700 acres remain outside of Everglades National Park. The largest pine rocklands outside the National Park is a tract within and adjacent to Zoo Miami in an area commonly referred to as the Richmond Pinelands, located in southern Miami-Dade County. While portions of these critically-endangered pinelands have been acquired and are protected by Miami-Dade County, other portions remain in private ownership, or are owned by non-county agencies and institutions. The Richmond Pinelands are known to contain state and federally listed endangered species.

Honorable Governor Rick Scott

Page 2

In August 2014, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service also designated portions of these lands as critical habitat for two federally listed endangered butterfly species. Acquisition of these lands provides the best opportunity for preservation of this unique and critically important habitat in this area.

Please accept this letter as my request for your consideration in allocating some portion of year one Amendment 1 proceeds to the acquisition of these critically important pine rocklands within the Richmond Pinelands.

Thank you for your attention and consideration. Please contact me to discuss this further at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Honorable Carlos A. Gimenez, Mayor
Miami-Dade County



Honorable Dennis C. Moss
Miami-Dade County
County Commissioner – District 9

c: Jack Osterholt, Deputy Mayor/Director
Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources

Michael Spring, Senior Advisor/Director
Cultural Affairs

Jack Kardys, Director
Parks Recreation and Open Spaces



City of Miami

Legislation

Resolution

City Hall
3500 Pan American
Drive
Miami, FL 33133
www.miamigov.com

File Number: 16-00509

Final Action Date:

A RESOLUTION OF THE MIAMI CITY COMMISSION SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF THE MIAMI TIGER BEETLE AS A THREATENED SPECIES AND URGING THE FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION AND THE UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TO DESIGNATE THE SAME; SUPPORTING THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE RICHMOND PINE ROCKLANDS; DIRECTING THE CITY CLERK TO TRANSMIT A COPY OF THIS RESOLUTION TO THE OFFICIALS STATED HEREIN.

WHEREAS, before a plant or animal species can receive the protection provided by the Endangered Species Act ("ESA"), it must first be added to the federal lists of endangered and threatened wildlife and plants, a process referred to as "listing"; and

WHEREAS, a species is added to the list when it is determined to be endangered or threatened because of any of the following factors: the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range; overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes; disease or predation; the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; and/or other natural or manmade factors affecting its survival; and

WHEREAS, the area bounded to the south by Southwest 152nd Street, to the north by Southwest 184th Street, to the east by Southwest 117th Avenue, and to the west by Southwest 137th Avenue, Miami, Florida, located adjacent to Zoo Miami, is one of Miami-Dade County's last remaining tracts of pine rockland, and is known as the Richmond Tract ("Richmond Tract"); and

WHEREAS, pine rockland habitats have diminished greatly in Miami-Dade County due to development; and

WHEREAS, pine rockland habitats support various rare plants, animals, and insects that are exclusive to said areas; and

WHEREAS, one of the rare insects of pine rockland habitats is the Miami Tiger Beetle ("Tiger Beetle"); and

WHEREAS, the Tiger Beetle was believed to be extinct until a survey detected the species at the Richmond Tract in 2007; and

WHEREAS, on June 29, 2015, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission received a request from, inter alia, the Center for Biological Diversity to evaluate the Tiger Beetle's status for listing as a state-designated threatened species; and

WHEREAS, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service is undergoing a similar process that includes public comment; and

WHEREAS, the City of Miami ("City") is concerned that the rare Tiger Beetle could become extinct

if preventative measures are not taken to conserve the same;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI, FLORIDA:

Section 1. The recitals and findings contained in the Preamble to this Resolution are adopted by reference and incorporated as if fully set forth in this Section.

Section 2. The Mayor and City Commission hereby express their support for the listing of the Tiger Beetle and the protection of the Richmond Tract under the Endangered Species Act by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

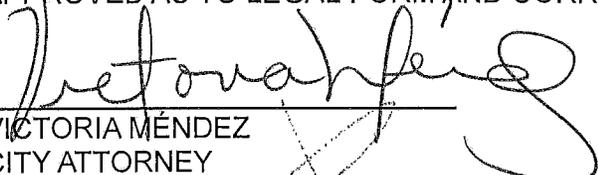
Section 3. The Mayor and City Commission hereby express their support for the listing of the Tiger Beetle as a state-designated threatened species by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Section 4. The Mayor and City Commission hereby express their support to preserve the Richmond Tract and all other pine rocklands in Miami-Dade County, including designating the Richmond Tract as a "Critically Endangered Habitat" under the ESA.

Section 5. The City Clerk is directed to transmit a copy of this Resolution to the Members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives that represent Miami-Dade County, Florida; the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; Members of the Miami-Dade County Legislative Delegation; the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission; and all elected municipal and county officials in Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Section 6. This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption and signature of the Mayor.{2}

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL FORM AND CORRECTNESS:



VICTORIA MÉNDEZ
CITY ATTORNEY

Footnotes:

{1} The herein authorization is further subject to compliance with all requirements that may be imposed by the City Attorney, including but not limited to those prescribed by applicable City Charter and Code provisions.

RESOLUTION 2015-5

A RESOLUTION OF THE VILLAGE OF PINECREST, FLORIDA, OPPOSING THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF PINE ROCKLAND ACREAGE NEAR ZOO MIAMI IN UNINCORPORATED MIAMI-DADE COUNTY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, forest land generally located at Southwest 152 Street and Southwest 127 Avenue, near Zoo Miami, in unincorporated Miami-Dade County, is being considered for development as a mixed use project; and

WHEREAS, the property consists of one of the last intact tracts of endangered pine rockland within Miami-Dade County; and

WHEREAS, pine rockland is a globally imperiled habitat containing an array of rare plants, animals, and insects which are rare and exclusive to that habitat; and

WHEREAS, some of the endangered species for which the property provides a habitat include the bald eagle, indigo snake, the Florida bonneted bat, and two rare butterflies; and

WHEREAS, as part of the development process, the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners will consider declaring the area blighted; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Pinecrest is concerned about the loss of this valuable natural area and desires to express its opposition to the development of the property;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE VILLAGE COUNCIL OF PINECREST, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

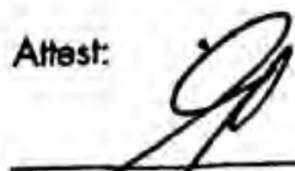
Section 1. That the Village Council hereby opposes the designation of the pine rockland property near Zoo Miami as blighted and further opposes the development of this natural area - one of the last intact tracts of endangered pine rockland within Miami-Dade County.

Section 2. This resolution shall be effective immediately upon adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 13th day of January, 2015.


Cindy Lerner, Mayor

Attest:


Guido H. Inguanzo, Jr., CMC
Village Clerk

1 RESOLUTION NO: 2016-03

2 A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND THE VILLAGE COUNCIL OF
3 THE VILLAGE OF PALMETTO BAY, FLORIDA, IN SUPPORT OF THE
4 MIAMI TIGER BEETLE AND ENCOURAGING BOTH THE FLORIDA
5 FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION AS WELL AS
6 THE US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TO DESIGNATE THE MIAMI
7 TIGER BEETLE AS A THREATENED SPECIES; PROVIDING FOR
8 TRANSMITTAL; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

9
10 WHEREAS, the Village Council of the Village of Palmetto Bay (the "Village") recognize that
11 one of the last tracts of endangered pine rockland ("Rockland") within Miami-Dade County is located
12 along S.W. 152 Street and S.W. 127 Avenue in unincorporated Miami-Dade County; and
13

14 WHEREAS, Rockland is a globally imperiled habitat containing an array of rare plants,
15 animals, and insects which are rare and exclusive to that habitat; and
16

17 WHEREAS, preservation of the native Rockland, and the species for which it provides a
18 home, is of great importance for the protection of our native forest's unique and endangered
19 environment; and
20

21 WHEREAS, one of the rare inhabitants of the Rockland is the Miami Tiger Beetle; and
22

23 WHEREAS, the Miami Tiger Beetle was presumed extinct until a recent survey detected the
24 species in the Rockland; and
25

26 WHEREAS, on June 29, 2015, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
27 received a request to evaluate the status of the Miami Tiger Beetle for listing as a state-designated
28 threatened species from the Center of Biological Diversity and individuals; and
29

30 WHEREAS, the US Fish and Wildlife Service is undergoing a similar process, and has
31 scheduled a January 13th Public Hearing at Miami Dade College Kendall Campus as part of its' rule
32 making process for its' proposal to list the Miami Tiger Beetle under the US Endangered Species Act;
33 and
34

35 WHEREAS, the Village is concerned that the rare Miami Tiger Beetle will become extinct
36 within Miami-Dade County and/or world-wide; and
37

38 WHEREAS, the Village Council finds that this Resolution is in the best interest and welfare
39 of the residents of the Village.
40

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND VILLAGE
COUNCIL OF THE VILLAGE OF PALMETTO BAY, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

41 Section 1. That each of the above stated recitals is hereby adopted and confirmed.

42
43 Section 2. The Village Council hereby expresses its support for the Florida Fish and

1 Wildlife Conservation Commission to include the Miami Tiger Beetle in its state-designated
2 Threatened species list.

3
4 **Section 3.** The Village Council hereby expresses its support for the U-S Fish and
5 Wildlife Service to list the Miami Tiger Beetle under the U-S Endangered Species Act.

6
7 **Section 4.** The Village Clerk is hereby directed to transmit this resolution to Florida Fish
8 and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners, Florida State Legislators representing the Village, and all elected
9 municipal officials in Miami-Dade County.

10
11 **Section 5.** The Village Clerk is hereby directed to transmit this resolution to members of the
12 U-S Fish and Wildlife Service, our south Dade members of the US Congress and US Senate.

13
14 **Section 6.** This resolution shall become effective immediately.
15

16 PASSED and ADOPTED this 4th day of January, 2016.

17
18
19 Attest: 
20 Meighan Alexander
21 Village Clerk


Eugene Flinn
Mayor

22
23
24 APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY FOR THE
25 USE AND RELIANCE OF THE VILLAGE OF PALMETTO BAY ONLY:

26
27
28 
29 Dexter W. Lehtinen
30 Dexter W. Lehtinen
31 Village Attorney

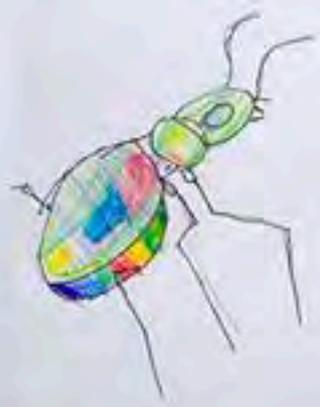
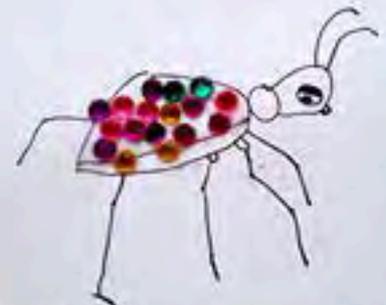
32
33
34 FINAL VOTE AT ADOPTION:

- 35 Council Member Karyn Cunningham YES
- 36 Council Member Tim Schaffer YES
- 37 Council Member Larissa Siegel Lara YES
- 38 Vice-Mayor John DuBois YES
- 39 Mayor Eugene Flinn YES

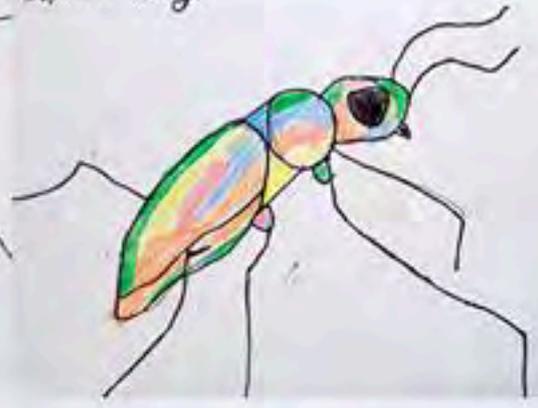
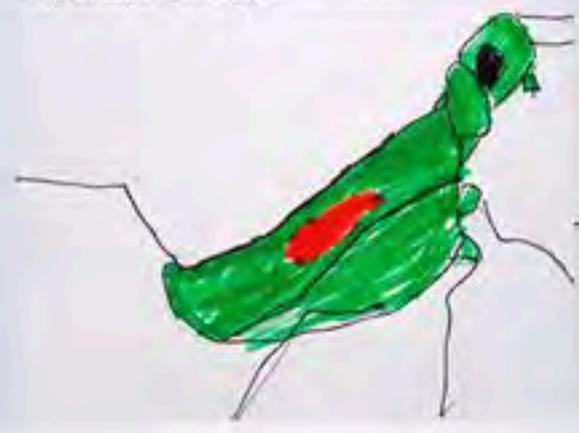
ADRIAN



Amarissa Edwards



Caitlin Wong



Please protect the Miami Tiger Beetle ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

Cynthia Dahner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region
1875 Century Blvd, Suite 400
Atlanta, GA 30345

Please Protect the Miami Tiger Beetles ♡

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Please protect the miami tiger Beetle

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Adrian

Please Protect the Miami Tiger Beetle ♡

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Please Protect the Miami tiger beetle.
AARON

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Please Protect the Miami Tiger beetle

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Finally, I'd like to quote the FWS Mission (<https://www.fws.gov/info/pocketguide/fundamentals.html>) statement itself in urging the CRC HCP be rejected:

FWS Fundamentals

The Mission

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The Vision

We will continue to be a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service.

The Priorities

National Wildlife Refuge System: Conserving Our Lands and Resources

Landscape Conservation: Working With Others

Migratory Birds: Conservation and Management

Threatened and Endangered Species: Achieving Recovery and Preventing Extinction

Aquatic Species: National Fish Habitat Action Plan and Trust Species

Connecting People With Nature: Ensuring the Future of Conservation

The Conservation Principles

Stewardship: Our ethic is to conserve natural resources for future generations.

People: Our employees are our most valued asset.

Science: Our work is grounded in thorough, objective science.

Partnerships: We emphasize creative, innovative partnerships.

Professionalism: We hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards, strive for excellence and respect others.

Legacy: We ensure the future of natural resource conservation by connecting people with nature.

Service: It is our privilege to serve the American people.

I believe approving Incidental Take Permits under the CRC Proposed HCP would be contrary to the Mission of the FWS, and would jeopardize the future survival of dozens of rare and endangered plants and animals found in this “Globally Imperiled Habitat.

Al Sunshine
President
Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition, Inc.
12841 SW 149 St
Miami, Fla. 33186

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Public Comments Submission on Coral Reef Commons Draft HCP and ITP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 12:36:34 PM
Attachments: [CRCCommentsToUSFWS.docx](#)

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

NOTE: All email correspondence and attachments received from or sent to me are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be disclosed to third parties.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Paula Johnson [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 12:16 PM
Subject: Public Comments Submission on Coral Reef Commons Draft HCP and ITP
To: "Dell, David" <David_dell@fws.gov>, Ashleigh Blackford <ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov>
Cc: Paula Johnson <pmanjoh@gmail.com>

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford,
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3. The monumental task of ensuring that the developer does everything proposed in the HCP to preserve and protect will fall to whom, the county? Will the county's monitoring costs be covered by the developer, or will taxpayers foot the bill?;
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affect the bonneted bat and other populations of birds and insects sensitive to light. Migrating birds will lose habitat and be thrown off their migratory routes by the development, potentially leading to declines in other endangered migratory species;

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10. We need to preserve the remaining natural areas in south Florida. We are experiencing frequent and increasingly severe droughts (11 drought years out of the past 17). According to the South Florida Tree Canopy Coalition, “Miami-Dade averages 12%, with some local cities showing tree canopy densities of as little as 2%. The national average for tree canopy densities in metropolitan areas across the United States is 33.4%.” Native habitats serve to preserve biodiversity, replenish our underground aquifer, act as a carbon sink and cool the earth;

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“Human beings are not exempt from the iron law of species interdependency. We were not inserted as ready-made invasives into an Edenic world. Nor were we intended by providence to rule that world. The biosphere does not belong to us, we belong to it. The organisms that surround us in such beautiful profusion are the product of 3.8 billion years of evolution by natural selection. We are one of its present-day products...Our physiology and our minds are adapted for life in the biosphere, which we have only begun to understand. We are now able to protect the rest of life, but instead we remain recklessly prone to destroy and replace a large part of it...The surviving wildlands of the world are not art museums. They

are not gardens to be arranged and tended for our delectation. They are not recreation centers or reservoirs of natural resources or sanatoriums or undeveloped sites of business opportunities –of any kind. The wildlands and the bulk of Earth’s biodiversity protected within them are another world from the one humanity is throwing together pell-mell. What do we receive from them? The stabilization of the global environment they provide and their very existence are gifts to us. We are their stewards, not their owner.”

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From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Fwd: Public Comments Submission on Coral Reef Commons Draft HCP and ITP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 1:54:10 PM
Attachments: [CRCCommentsToUSFWS.docx](#)
[Untitled attachment_00199.htm](#)

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Paula Johnson [REDACTED]
Date: May 22, 2017 at 12:16:48 PM EDT
To: "Dell, David" <David_dell@fws.gov>, Ashleigh Blackford <ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov>
Cc: Paula Johnson [REDACTED]
Subject: **Public Comments Submission on Coral Reef Commons Draft HCP and ITP**

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10. We need to preserve the remaining natural areas in south Florida. We are experiencing frequent and increasingly severe droughts (11 drought years out of the past 17). According to the South Florida Tree Canopy Coalition, "Miami-Dade averages 12%, with some local cities showing tree canopy densities of as little as 2%. The national average for tree canopy densities in metropolitan areas across the United States is 33.4%." Native habitats serve to preserve biodiversity, replenish our underground aquifer, act as a carbon sink and cool the earth;
11. The developer's highly questionable Habitat Functional Assessment is an algorithm that was bastardized from a scientific methodology used to evaluate whether restoration goals were being reached in certain pine rockland preserves, not to determine whether pine rocklands were worthy of being preserved;
12. The prescribed burns for the preserved areas will be difficult, if not impossible, and likely encounter considerable opposition from apartment residents and management. The negative health consequences that may ensue (aggravation of respiratory conditions) have the potential to leave the developer, Walmart and other responsible parties open to lawsuits and additional legal costs in defending against legal actions.

"Human beings are not exempt from the iron law of species interdependency. We were not inserted as ready-made invasives into an Edenic world. Nor were we intended by providence to rule that world. The biosphere does not belong to us, we belong to it. The

organisms that surround us in such beautiful profusion are the product of 3.8 billion years of evolution by natural selection. We are one of its present-day products...Our physiology and our minds are adapted for life in the biosphere, which we have only begun to understand. We are now able to protect the rest of life, but instead we remain recklessly prone to destroy and replace a large part of it...The surviving wildlands of the world are not art museums. They are not gardens to be arranged and tended for our delectation. They are not recreation centers or reservoirs of natural resources or sanatoriums or undeveloped sites of business opportunities –of any kind. The wildlands and the bulk of Earth’s biodiversity protected within them are another world from the one humanity is throwing together pell-mell. What do we receive from them? The stabilization of the global environment they provide and their very existence are gifts to us. We are their stewards, not their owner.”

excerpted from article by Edward O. Wilson, biologist, researcher, author and Harvard professor; “Fifty-Fifty: A biologist’s manifesto for preserving life on Earth, published in Sierra magazine, January/February 2017, pages 32-33)

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Request for Local Public Hearing on FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:09:33 AM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: Dan Keys <[REDACTED]>
Date: Sat, May 20, 2017 at 9:04 AM
Subject: Request for Local Public Hearing on FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
To: David_dell@fws.gov, Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

May 19, 2017

David Dell

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Atlanta Regional Office,

1875 Century Blvd.

Atlanta, GA 30345

David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford

South Florida Ecological Services

1339 20th Street

Vero Beach, FL 32960

Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

Re: Request for Local Public Hearing on FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223, Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Incidental Take Permit Application and Environmental Assessment for Commercial Mixed-Use Development; Miami-Dade County, FL and 90 Day Public Comment Request.

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford,

As a concerned Florida Resident I respectfully request a public hearing on the above-referenced proposed incidental take permit and environmental assessment on the commercial mixed-use development locally known as Coral Reef Commons.

We request that this public hearing take place during the comment period and in a location and timeframe that ensures members of the public will be able to meaningfully participate.

As you are aware, native habitats in Florida are rapidly disappearing.

Perennially rare communities, such as the pine rocklands that would be impacted by Coral Reef Commons, are among the native habitats in Florida that have been drastically reduced in area.

Pine rockland is a globally endangered plant community with more than 98 percent decline in its pre-settlement area due to significant ecological degradation, conversion to other land uses, and outright destruction.

This important community provides vital habitat for many endangered species, including those at issue in this permit application.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) review of the Coral Reef Commons application requires compliance with the Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and Administrative Procedure Act.

The Service's Habitat Conservation Planning and Incidental Take Permit Processing Handbook (2016) (hereinafter, Handbook), a policy document intended to inform how the Service processes Endangered Species Act Section 10 incidental take permits, describes public hearings as: [a] common method for soliciting stakeholder input on agency actions. Hearings provide all or selected participants an opportunity to present their opinions on an issue, usually in a formal manner in an allotted amount of time The information is recorded and becomes part of the public record. Laws and agency regulations often mandate public hearings.

Likewise, the Handbook describes public meetings as:

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Many public meetings . . . are designed to encourage discussion and feedback. Public meetings can be very effective and useful for conveying information, educating the interested public, and identifying interested parties.

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I have a long standing interest in the protection of Pine Rocklands and their endangered and threatened species.

I have also have carefully followed years of additional requests for more Pine Rockland Protection.

For example, in 2014, the Center for Biological Diversity, South Florida Wildlands Association, Tropical Audubon Society, Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association and Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition petitioned the Service to list the Miami tiger beetle, one of the species impacted by the incidental take permit, as endangered.

Additionally, as the result of a settlement agreement reached between the Center for Biological Diversity and the Service in 2011, the Service listed the Florida bonneted bat as endangered in 2013 ; listed as endangered and designated critical habitat for the Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly and Florida leafwing butterfly in 2014 ; and listed as endangered and designated critical habitat for the Carter's small-flowered flax and Florida brickell-bush in 2015. All are species that would be negatively impact by Coral Reef Commons.

I understand there have been more than 14,000 letters to the developer of Coral Reef Commons asking it to protect listed species and not move forward with the project.

Many concerned residents appear to oppose the project and would benefit from the opportunity to attend a public hearing on the application.

It is evident that a substantial environmental controversy concerning the proposed action and a substantial interest in holding the hearing exist.

We hope you will grant the public the opportunity to more fully discuss the impacts of Coral Reef Commons on federal and state endangered and threatened species through a public hearing. I look forward to your reply.

In addition, I'd also like to request the Public Comment Period be extended to 90 days to

allow the Public to carefully examine the proposed Coral Reef Commons HCP in light of the more than 3 years the applicants have had to develop it jointly with the FWS

Sincerely,
Daniel Keys

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Request for Local Public Hearing
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:40:05 AM
Attachments: [image.png](#)

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jim Keys** [REDACTED]
Date: Fri, May 19, 2017 at 10:47 AM
Subject: Request for Local Public Hearing
To: Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov, David_dell@fws.gov

May 19, 2017

David Dell

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Atlanta Regional Office,

1875 Century Blvd.

Atlanta, GA 30345

David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford

South Florida Ecological Services

1339 20th Street

Vero Beach, FL 32960

Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

Re: Request for Local Public Hearing on FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223, Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Incidental Take Permit Application and Environmental Assessment for Commercial Mixed-Use Development; Miami-Dade County, FL and 90 Day Public Comment Request.

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In addition, I'd also like to request the Public Comment Period be extended to 90 days to allow the Public to carefully examine the proposed Coral Reef Commons HCP in light of the more than 3 years the applicants have had to develop it jointly with the FWS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James D. Keys".

James D. Keys

1875

1876

1877

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Fwd: Richmond Pine Rocklands
Date: Monday, May 15, 2017 9:16:49 PM

Please...do the right thing.

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "Show me the money." The developer has no material, legally-enforceable obligation(s) (and no funds on deposit or bond) to restore and maintain the natural areas, as outlined in the HCP. There are only promises, no financially-backed guaranties.
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."

WE trust you with the future of Florida.

Ray Henderson
[REDACTED]

PS Our Ahole commissioner has his own agenda so we know why he's pushing this.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Fwd: Richmond Pine Rocklands
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 8:28:25 PM

Please...do the right thing.

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
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WE trust you with the future of Florida.

Ray Henderson
[REDACTED]

PS Our Ahole commissioner has his own agenda so we know why he's pushing this.

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: Rick lands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:03:03 AM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: m selen [REDACTED] >
Date: Fri, May 19, 2017 at 3:33 PM
Subject: Rick lands
To: david_dell@fws.gov

Hello David,

Please consider the following:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provided sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative) are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined

and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are “funny money.”

6. No penalty for failure. The developer's “success criteria” for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and “take” the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of “success.”

7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant’s own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants “credit” for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

Thanks

Murray Selen



From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: TE15009C-0 Public Comment
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 12:00:55 PM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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From: **Michael McCoy** [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, May 22, 2017 at 11:39 AM
Subject: TE15009C-0 Public Comment
To: "david_dell@fws.gov" <david_dell@fws.gov>

As a concerned citizen and environmental professional, I would like to make sure that the full suite of alternatives are considered in this alternative, including the “do nothing” alternative. I have experienced several projects that were halted in the name of conservation, but the alternative left the area worse off than it would have been with the development, and wildlife habitat suffered as a result of an ideological decision. While I share a concern for developing diminishing wildlife habitat, I understand that this project is proposing to develop 86.49 acres, and place under conservation easement a total of 102.45 acres of onsite and offsite habitat. I was surprised to read that, as I have rarely seen developments that place more acres into conservation than they build upon. I am also aware that the University of Miami and the County have exactly 0 acres in a conservation easement without this development, and based on my previous experience walking the site, their previous land management strategy for the site was to do nothing and allow the site to become overrun with invasive species and degrade much of the habitat to an unusable state.

To that end, I would like the USFWS to consider what is the best **LIKELY** scenario for this property and act accordingly. If the US FWS has solid information that if this property is not developed then it will become a park or conservation area, then that would be best for the wildlife. However, if the US FWS is only considering the current proposed development or nothing, I think that the habitat will once again deteriorate, and that future development will continue to happen piece-meal and provide less overall conservation area. Please also review the current proposed alternatives in light of your experience with other similar properties – if you believe that in other similar situations you typically obtain larger concessions and greater

% conservation areas, or if you typically obtain less conservation areas.

I request that the US FWS be pragmatic in their decision and do what is best for the management and conservation of the species, whatever that decision.

Thank you.

Michael McCoy

Vice President/Sr. Environmental Scientist

NEW LEAF ENVIRONMENTAL, LLC

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [Blackford, Ashleigh](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: coral reef commons
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 6:23:50 PM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Alberto Diaz-Vallejo** [REDACTED]
Date: Tue, May 16, 2017 at 6:04 PM
Subject: coral reef commons
To: Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

Hi my names Albert Diaz I live in [REDACTED] I was raised as a child on 152 ave right next to the coral reef commons and I am complete and entirely opposed to any construction in that area, we need to protect our rocklands, we need more prescribed burns, we need public outreach to save the future of the USA not more walmarts and corporate ass kissing government agencies. I wil question the integrity of FWC and work to dismantle it the rest of my life if you allow for a globally imperiled US treasure like the rocklands to turn into a walmart.. so I suggest you do the right thing, which is your job.

--

Ashleigh Blackford
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Supervisory Wildlife Biologist
Planning & Resource Conservation - East
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street - Vero Beach, FL 32960
phone: 772-469-4246
ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov

NOTE: This email correspondence and any attachments to and from this sender is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be disclosed to third parties.

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd: coral reef commons
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 9:02:06 PM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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From: **Alberto Diaz-Vallejo** [REDACTED]
Date: Tue, May 16, 2017 at 6:03 PM
Subject: coral reef commons
To: David_dell@fws.gov

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From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Fwd:
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:43:50 AM

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Thomas Keys** <[REDACTED]>
Date: Fri, May 19, 2017 at 11:31 AM
Subject:
To: "Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov" <Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov>, "David_dell@fws.gov" <David_dell@fws.gov>

May 19, 2017

David Dell

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Atlanta Regional Office,

1875 Century Blvd.

Atlanta, GA 30345

David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford

South Florida Ecological Services

1339 20th Street

Vero Beach, FL 32960

Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

Re: Request for Local Public Hearing on FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223, Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Incidental Take Permit Application and Environmental Assessment for Commercial Mixed-Use Development; Miami-Dade County, FL and 90 Day Public Comment Request.

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Sincerely,

Thomas J. Keys

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: HCP FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:35:36 PM

This letter is in regard to Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I write this as a resident of Miami for 43 years, and as the leader in the world of conservation minded non-profit organizations in Miami-Dade.

Pine rockland habitat once dominated Miami's Coastal Ridge. As virtually the only high ground - above the fresh wetlands of sawgrass and cypress and the salt wetlands of Mangroves, and above hurricane storm-surge, it was the only land available to early pioneers and later waves of settlers.

Over the next 100 years, land booms came and went. Population pressure grew. Heavy equipment became increasingly powerful. Tract housing development dominated, leading to complete removal of all plants and trees.

As a result, around 186,000 acres were wiped off the map, and with them went virtually every plant, tree, mammal, bat, bird, reptile, insect, tiger beetle, etc. Only 2% remains of the lands outside of Everglades National Park, so every remaining acre is valuable.

When the University of Miami (UM) was given the Richmond Pine Rocklands, it was with the proviso that they would provide stewardship to the tract, protecting its priceless value. They broke that commitment year after year and decade after decade. UM excluded their own faculty from assessing the biodiversity of the Pine Rocklands because the faculty would have held their University accountable in the Faculty Senate. Instead, they hired outside consultants who could be muzzled with non-disclosure agreements

Fire is essential to the health of Pine Rocklands. Any HCP that could curtail or limit the use of controlled burns is an unconscionable extension of "demolition by neglect". If retail and residential development is embedded in this habitat, controlled burns will become impossible. That is unacceptable.

Based on my experiences with the removal of invasive exotic plants and trees, an aggressive campaign to control and remove the invasives would be completely successful. In fact, our organization has discovered that following fire, Burma reed becomes extremely easy to remove manually. I would be happy to share this knowledge and our methods with a responsible agency doing stewardship in the Pine Rocklands.

The numerous endangered species known to exist there are already sufficiently documented to stop the destruction of this habitat. It appears to be the only remaining refuge of the Miami Tiger Beetle.

The HCP fails to adequately protect this priceless tract. These are some of the reasons*:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected:developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is 1.23:1 at most. This is not within the "range of reason", especially for a project that amounts to the taking of a major remnant portion of

a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.

3. Burning is essential to this habitat, but it is not feasible with the planned 900 apartments, a Walmart, mall, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.

4. "No Good Alternatives." No proposed alternatives provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative). Off-site mitigation is not acceptable, since no habitat restoration can fully replace such priceless natural resources.

Large tracts of Pine Rocklands - with their greater capacity for biodiversity - are priceless. This is the last and largest tract outside the boundaries of Everglades National Park. Please take all necessary steps to stop this development from moving forward. It must be preserved for future generations.

Sincerely,

Amy Leonard

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: HCP for Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 12:54:05 PM

Please prepare the full EIS required by NEPA for a major federal action before taking action on this plan. This is an irreplaceable ecosystem, and Florida has SO MANY shipping centers. We should require greater density and re-use of existing vacant commercial property before developing virgin habitat.

Thank you

Sincerely,
Seana Parker-Dalton

[REDACTED]

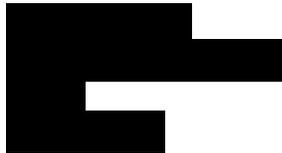
From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: HCP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 1:06:44 PM

In relation to the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) prepared for the Coral Reef Commons in the pine rocklands of South Miami-Dade.

Im asking the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 acres of intact or restorable pine rockland habitat for a shopping center and apartment complex. Though the plan also envisions setting aside about 100 acres for non-development (onsite and off) we believe that does not compensate for the irreplaceable habitat which will be lost in the process. Please prepare the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan.

This major project on one of the last sizable portions of pine rockland in our area fits all of those criteria. Any development which takes place should at the very least have a full review.

Ann Alessi



Sent via the Samsung Galaxy Note® 4, an AT&T 4G LTE smartphone

From: [REDACTED]
To: ["crc_hcp@fws.gov"](mailto:crc_hcp@fws.gov)
Subject: HCP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:50:22 AM
Importance: High

Deny the current proposal to develop the following:

Please do not destroy any more land. Specifically the 86 Acres or more of intact or restorable Pine Rockland Habitat. We do not need another shopping center or Apartment complex. What we need is to preserve our land!!

Thank you,

Claudia P. Lanigan
Associate Broker
Broker: Ian Fike

All Risks Limited

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

WWW.ALLRISKS.COM

This email is intended for the addressee shown. It contains information that is confidential and protected from disclosure. Any dissemination or use of this transmission or its contents by unintended persons is strictly prohibited. If this email relates to placement of coverage, please note that no coverage will be bound and no changes will be made without a written "Confirmation of Insurance", Binder, Endorsement or Reinstatement from our office. Coverage cannot be assumed if you do not receive one of the aforementioned notices.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: HCP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 5:48:59 PM

I am adding my voice to deny the proposal for development. It's time our local government listen to it's constituents instead of a few big businesses. Our land and wildlife is what brings many people to our state and if we keep developing we will lose tourism dollars as well as year round residents. We need to protect undeveloped land not exploit it. Please deny the proposal. Thank you. Karin Leonard

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; [REDACTED]
Subject: Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 3:29:59 PM

To: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. I am a Miami-Dade County resident and very interested in the managed growth and sustainability of our community. The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jennie Lopez

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 12:49:34 PM

David

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. As a business professional, I am interested in the growth and sustainability of our community. The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and into the future. I hope you will approve the plan.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Geritano, PMP*ITIL*CSSGB*BSITM*MMISc

[REDACTED]

[Linked In](#)

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) prepared for the Coral Reef Commons in the pine rocklands of South Miami-Dade
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 12:47:50 PM

To whom it concerns:

I would like to ask the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 acres of intact or restorable pine rockland habitat for a shopping center and apartment complex. The +/- 100 acres for non-development (onsite and off) does not compensate for the irreplaceable habitat which will be lost in the process.

At the very least, please prepare the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan.

This major project on one of the last sizable portions of pine rockland in our area fits all of those criteria. Any development which takes place should at the very least receive a full review under the required Environmental Impact Statement.

Sincerely,

David J. Webb
Environmental scientist
South Florida resident

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) prepared for the Coral Reef Commons in the pine rocklands of South Miami-Dade
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 3:25:28 PM

Dear U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,

I am requesting that you deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 acres of intact or restorable pine rockland habitat for a shopping center and apartment complex. Though the plan also envisions setting aside about 100 acres for non-development (onsite and off) I believe that does not compensate for the irreplaceable habitat which will be lost in the process.

Please prepare the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 5:41:56 PM

This letter is in regard to Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I write this as a resident of Miami for 48 years.

The history of Miami's Pine Rocklands can be described as death by a billion cuts. This unique habitat once dominated Miami's Coastal Ridge. As virtually the only high ground - above the fresh wetlands of sawgrass and cypress and the salt wetlands of Mangroves, and above hurricane storm-surge, it was the only land available to early pioneers and later waves of settlers.

First there were homesteads and farms. Agriculture for export began to expand. Beginning around 1850 with the establishment of Lemon City, a settlement began to grow. Settlements along the Miami River, in Coconut Grove and Cutler provided ports. There were thousands of acres of land... especially Pineland... so why worry?

Then Flagler's railroad arrived, and Miami became a resort destination. Within a few years, a land-boom exploded. The Pines were harvested mercilessly as a building material, and acre after acre were taken for homes, streets, stores, industry, tourism and agriculture.

Over the next 100 years, land booms came and went. Population pressure grew. Heavy equipment became increasingly powerful. Tract housing development dominated, leading to complete removal of all plants and trees.

As a result, around 186,000 acres were wiped off the map, and with them went virtually every plant, tree, mammal, bat, bird, reptile, insect, tiger beetle, etc. Only 2% remains, so every remaining acre is extraordinarily valuable.

When the University of Miami (UM) was given the Richmond Pine Rocklands, it was with the proviso that they would provide stewardship to the track, protecting its priceless value. They broke that commitment year after year and decade after decade.

UM excluded their own faculty from assessing the biodiversity of the Pine Rocklands because the faculty would have held their University accountable in the Faculty Senate. Instead, they hired outside consultants who could be muzzled with non-disclosure agreements

When a fire broke out there, the outside consultants identified a prime opportunity to remove invasive exotic species such as Burma reed and Brazilian pepper. Not only did UM fail to take appropriate and responsible action, they suppressed the publication of these reports to shirk their responsibility for this blatant neglect.

The public has a right to know about UM's destructive policies, breaking covenants, and allowing these public resources to become damaged. Consultant records should be subpoenaed, and made public record. Legal protection and financial incentives should be provided to

whistle-blowers. We-the-People have a right to know.

This systematic policy of "demolition by neglect" is now being used to justify the complete demolition of many acres under this HCP. While it is true that this site is deeply infested by invasive exotics, it is by no means lost.

Fire is essential to the health of Pine Rocklands. Any HCP that could curtail or limit the use of controlled burns is an unconscionable extension of "demolition by neglect". If retail and residential development is embedded in this habitat, controlled burns will become impossible.

The numerous endangered species known to exist there are already sufficiently documented to stop the destruction of this habitat. It appears to be the only remaining refuge of the Miami Tiger Beetle.

The HCP fails to adequately protect this priceless tract. These are some of the reasons*:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected:developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is 1.23:1 at most. This is not within the "range of reason", especially for a project that amounts to the taking of a major remnant portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is essential to this habitat, but it is not feasible with the planned 900 apartments, a Walmart, mall, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." No proposed alternatives provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative). Off-site mitigation is not acceptable, since no habitat restoration can fully replace such priceless natural resources.

Large tracts of Pine Rocklands - with their greater capacity for biodiversity - are priceless. This is the last and largest tract outside the boundaries of Everglades National Park. Please take all necessary steps to stop this development from moving forward. It must be preserved for future generations.

Sincerely,

Dawn Maraldi

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 12:11:34 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)

Dear Mr. Dell,

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. As a business professional, I am interested in the growth and sustainability of our community. The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and into the future. I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you.

Best Regards, Atentamente, Sinceramente Seu



EFRAIN SORA
PRESIDENT & CEO

E: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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OFRECIENDO SOLUCIONES, OTORGANDO TRANQUILIDAD.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Habitat Conservation Plan/Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 10:39:33 AM

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. As a lifelong resident of Miami-Dade County and business professional, I am deeply invested in the growth and sustainability of our community. I hope that future generations of residents have many experiences with nature. The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and into the future. I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,

Obdulio Piedra

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Helicopter Pilot request
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:51:44 PM

Dear Sirs,

As a DOI/USFS carded helicopter pilot working in South Florida, I beg you to preserve the Pine Rocklands at the Commons project.

I've spent 10 years flying in hostile/combat environments with the US Army as a UH-60 helicopter pilot. I have come to appreciate the natural forested areas of our Nation after seeing the destruction and pollution around the world, directly correlated to unstable regions. South Florida is on what I call "life support" with the current state of developed areas versus what is left of the historic tract of Dade County Pine Rockland. There is no "recharge" areas left outside of Everglades National Park in urban Miami-Dade county.

I beg you with all my heart, NOT to allow development in the Richmond Pine tract.

Sincerely,

Mikolay Plater-Zyberk
Miami, FLA.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: How will you feel when..
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 3:56:04 PM

To whom it concerns,

How will you feel when the critically endangered Pine Rockland gets paved over with the develop that continues to fragmented this endangered habitat? Pine Rocklands are IN DANGER, and you are in a position to stop it. We only have so little left of it. The fact that the developers of the 138 acres of Coral Reef Commons think they are doing the community justice by having a mere 50 acres of conservation land inside plus 51 acres outside is laughable.

To further fragment this precious habitat is a crime. We are getting to a point where these species are NOT being protected - is this legal? It's defiantly not moral. Please do not issue the permits that will not protect the federally endangered species that are losing their home. Please do not further fragment an eco system that makes south Florida so incredibly special - something that commonplace development does not.

Sincerely,
Sanna O'Sullivan
Miami Dade resident

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: I VOTE NO for Walmart and 900 apartments on Coral Reef
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 5:32:47 PM

Please Do not allow destruction of protected areas:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provided sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative) are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."
7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

Thank you very much,

Sincerely,

Nellie Brothers

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Just Say "No"
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:05:00 AM

Who benefits? Greed?
No! No! No! Think longterm implications.
Water just one issue.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Keep the Pine Rockland
Date: Monday, May 15, 2017 9:10:53 AM

To whom it may concern,

I am from Miami Dade County, this issue is close to me. Pine rockland was once one of the dominant habitats in South Florida. It is home to the highest native plant biodiversity of any Florida ecosystem and is one of the rarest types of forest in the entire world. Nevertheless, today less than 2 percent of pine rockland habitat remains in Miami-Dade County. In addition to threatening one of the few remnants of a globally imperiled habitat, the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan imperils numerous at-risk species, including Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Florida bonneted bat, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, Miami tiger beetle, white-crowned pigeon, Florida Brickell bush, and Carter's small flowered flax.

Every vanishing patch of pine rockland, and each species that it supports, warrant protection. They are a rare and a unique part of the country's natural history, and should be protected in perpetuity. Strip malls are an ephemeral and ubiquitous feature of the American landscape which deserve none of the same considerations.

Please do not approve any habitat conservation plan that threatens to replace a single square-yard of precious pine rockland habitat.

Sincerely,

Brenda Warger

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Leave the Pine Rocklands alone!
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 1:26:15 PM

To Whom it may concern:

Please do not allow any development(s) to occur in the Pine Rocklands close to Zoo Miami.

This wonderful Pine Rocklands is one of very few that still exist. We have development of retail stores and other commercial interests all over Miami. Yet, we have so few Pine Rocklands still available to the residents of Miami Dade County outside of the Everglades.

I'm writing you this email to ask that you do not allow any development(s) to occur in this Pine Rocklands close to the Zoo Miami.

Please listen to us interested and informed residents of Miami Dade County!

Thank you very much for your time and consideration on this issue,

Gisela Gomar

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh Blackford FWS; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Light and Noise Pollution - Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 5:19:17 PM

To: Mr. David Dell, Regional HCP Coordinator, Atlanta

david_dell@fws.gov.

CC: Ashleigh Blackford, Supervisory Wildlife Biologist, South Florida Ecological Services

ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov

crc_hcp@fws.gov

From: Cully Waggoner, Vice President of the Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition

Re: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan

Agency/Docket Number: FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223

Document Number: 2017-05767

Dear FWS

Today is the last day for Public Comments and something I had not thought about came to my attention. Light and Noise Pollution and how it would affect the Richmond Pine Rocklands and all the endangered species living there.

A Walmart Super Center with a retail / restaurant strip mall along the main road will not only create a significant and detrimental amount of light and noise pollution not only for the animals, but for the neighbors too. All this houses and townhomes right across the street, all backed right up to Coral Reef Drive.

I can tell you from firsthand experience being on the Richmond Pine Rocklands at night is dark and tranquil. Only the Prison has any significant light, as all the other places have very

little lights on. You can actually see the Stars at night and all you can hear is the nightlife in the Pine Rocklands. I've seen bats fly at night over the site.

I live less than half a mile away from the Coral Reef Commons site and I can't see most of the stars in the sky from my backyard. The only night life I'll be able to hear is 30k more cars per day on Coral Reef Drive, more gridlock, more horns of angry drivers and more noise from the stores and 900 apartments.

The sheer amount of light and noise will have a devastating effect on life in the Pine Rockland, just one more reason in the many reasons for FWS to deny the Take Permits and deny Coral Reef Commons from being built.

We've heard rumors that this Public Comment period was just a formality, that FWS has already decided the fate of the Richmond Pine Rocklands. That a former FWS official worked with Ram Development to develop this HPC for FWS in favor of the Developer. Rumor or not, I sincerely hope that the hundreds of comments FWS has already received will be enough to defeat any funny business that may or may not have gone on behind the scenes at FWS.

I look forward to FWS doing what they are supposed to do and protect our endangered species and deny this ITP and HPC so that Miamians and everybody else can continue to enjoy the unique beauty and all the species that live there.

Save It Don't Pave It

Cully Waggoner

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

--

Cully Waggoner

Vice President, Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition

Personal:

Cell: [REDACTED]
Home: [REDACTED]

E-Mail: [REDACTED];

MSN IM: [REDACTED];

Facebook: [REDACTED]

Twitter: [REDACTED]

LinkedIn: [REDACTED]

Instagram: [REDACTED]

Skype: cully.waggoner

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: MIAMI PINE ROCKLANDS
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 2:19:54 PM

I do not support development of this pineland. We have plenty of Walmarts and shopping centers. Once this is gone, it's gone. Please follow your conscious and science, and preserve our natural resources. Do not allow this to happen. Let's save it for ourselves, our children, wildlife and future generations.

Thank you,
Kim Kuether
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 9:15:18 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Rashelly Bueno
Miami, FL
Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Date: Wednesday, May 17, 2017 6:57:46 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,

Maurice R. Hernandez

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: crc_hcp@fws.gov; Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 4:23:54 PM

I am writing to you today in reference to the endangered pine rockland, Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.

My name is Brian Behr
I have lived in Miami-Dade county for 39 years.

I believe that Ram Realty's plan is fundamentally flawed.

I believe surveys of plants animals and insects in the area have been inadequate. No large scale surveys over a long period of time have been done. As this land is habitat for critically endangered species, including at least one previously thought to be extinct, this is unacceptable and irresponsible.

Burning is the only way to renew pine rocklands. I know of no reputable scientist who would say otherwise. No matter what the developer says, this will be impossible in practice. Their development will include 900 apartment units (at least 2500 residents), multiple retail locations and a school. Since there is no penalty for failure, there is no reason to believe that the remaining patches of rockland will be burned on a regular basis. The design of the project, which does not even keep the remaining wilderness contiguous, makes this even more unrealistic.

The amount of mitigation is wholly insufficient. Instead of a 5:1 ratio (protected areas : developed areas), the developer is proposing a ratio of 1.23 acres for every acre of development. If only it were only that poor a ratio. Removing the off-site mitigation property, which is already protected by deed restriction - and therefore immaterial to the HCP. Without the off-site property, the ratio drops to an appalling 0.66:1 (protected areas : developed areas). On top of this the on-site parcels are spread out, with the largest piece being only 23.92 acres. The end result is simply unacceptable if the goal is to protect the critically endangered habitat and the species within it.

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative) are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition

of “success.”

7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant’s own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants “credit” for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

Comments should be sent to:

The public is invited to submit comments on the draft Coral Reef Commons HCP and EA 60 days after publication in the Federal Register. Written comments can be submitted by one of the following methods:

Electronically to:

crc_hcp@fws.gov

By hard copy or Email to:

David Dell

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Atlanta Regional Office, Ecological Services

1875 Century Blvd.

Atlanta, GA 30345

David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

South Florida Ecological Services

1339 20th St.

Vero Beach, FL 32960

Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

The draft HCP and EA can be viewed on web at

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Metro Zoo Pine Forest
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 1:35:32 AM

Save the _Pine Forest near Metro Zoo from development and what could be the worst traffic snarl in Dade County--SW 152 Street The remaining pine forest has much native plants to survive the onslaught

Sidney Robinson Redland

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Metrozoo development
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 1:49:03 PM

The proposed development near Metrozoo that will bulldoze 88 acres of pine rockland habitat is a truly awful idea. Society has an ethical responsibility to conserve unique natural resources for future generations. Dade county's subtropical environment coupled with the harsh growing conditions of the almost soilless limestone ridge have resulted in this unique ecosystem found only in Dade county, the lower keys and parts of the Big Cypress preserve. Pine rocklands used to cover approximately 11% of the county. Most of Dade county's pine rocklands outside of Everglades national park have been bulldozed and lost forever. The pine rocklands have an incredibly rich biodiversity that rivals the rain forests. The strength of this biodiversity is in the hundreds of species of wildflowers, shrubs and ground covers many of which are found nowhere else on the planet. To stroll through a meadow of white topped sedge and pineland croton is to enter an enchanted fairy land of delicate beauty.

Destruction of a significant chunk of the remaining pine rocklands is a reckless sin of greed and disregard for our natural inheritance. Population growth continues and there will be more shopping centers but they should not be in one of the last remaining pine rocklands. This project should be moved to already bulldozed or drained marl prairie lands that have far less ecological value. Much of South Florida's tropical paradise has been ruined forever. Is it too much to ask to save a small part of unique South Florida habitat for our grandchildren?

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Miami Pine Rockland Habitat
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 11:48:17 AM

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

I am writing to voice my opposition to the proposed development of Coral Reef Commons in the Miami Pine Rockland habitat. I ask you to please REJECT the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan for the following reasons:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is markedly inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas: developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is, at best, 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" especially when compared to other HCPs, and especially for a project that contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally imperiled ecosystem that is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial, but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pineland and depends entirely on a robust and periodic burn regimen, which would not be feasible, especially with approx. 2,000 people (900 apts), a Walmart and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas that must undergo burns. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pineland is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally imperiled habitat, and, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative), are either "straw men," or, in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative), seek to get mitigation credit for property that is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."
7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the University of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the Federal government (read: U.S. Taxpayers!) for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the rare resource.

I ask you to please help us protect this natural habitat that is unique to our area. We do not need another Walmart. We need to preserve our earth and these unique habitats for future citizens of Miami.

Respectfully,

Leah Shadle
Miami, FL
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Miami Pine Rocklands near Zoo
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 4:38:14 PM

Please don't tear down this very valuable forest. I've lived in Miami-Dade my entire life, almost 72 years, and I've witnessed so many pine rocklands go down because of construction. This is all we have left and it is extremely important. We need more houses and more shopping like another hole in the head. I know this not a very eloquent letter but there is a lot of love in it for the land. The University of Miami could donate the land to the state and get a huge writeoff for that. It's not too late to change path on this. Please.

Sincerely,

Joy Reid
Miami Native

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Miami Pine Rocklands
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 4:07:39 PM

Hello,

I hope you recognize the critical importance of this fragile parcel of land. Please do what is right; local business interests can find an alternative location, perhaps razing something in an already developed area in the county. Also, know that whatever support is needed, don't hesitate to call me or of course anyone from the Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition. My personal cell number is [REDACTED].

Public officials are the only voice of conscience as defenders of these plant and animal species, so we hope you can do what is right.

Sincerely,

Tiina Lombard

Associate Professor, Senior
MDC English Department, North Campus

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Care for our Planet Earth and it will take care of you.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Miami's Pine Rockland - request to deny a federal permit
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:39:16 PM

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing because of a great concern over the future of the pine rocklands in Miami, Florida. This small piece is an island sanctuary amidst suburban sprawl. It is an irreplaceable natural habitat like no where else on Earth and a home to multiple threatened and endangered fauna and flora. Some of these insects, butterflies, and bats are well known to biologists and researchers but others are only now being understood, as they have only recently been discovered. To sacrifice their future for housing and corporate retail is unconscionable. The lack of respect for the last speck of pine rockland outside of Everglades National Park robs future generation's of this legacy. It is judgement day for this small piece of the puzzle that forms the larger web of life. There really will be no turning back, no reversal of the damage to land that just now recovers from our past abuses. The continued chipping away at such habitats means that the only nature left for future generations will be on a video screen. As we mourn the species past generations abused into extinction, remember we are complicit when repeating the same mistakes.

Sincerely,

Daniel R. Berger D.O.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Miami-Dade County Rockland Remnant
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 11:48:58 AM

To whom all it concerns,

Please consider the proposed project for the subject site to be incompatible with the State and Federally-Listed Species that are extant on the site.

To permit such an extensive project within this site would be detrimental to the rare elements found within this property.

It would be unwise to create a rift between the non-profit organizations (that represent millions of concerned American Citizens) and the US Fish & Wildlife Service, as the environmentally-conscious public is fully-aware of the precedent that would be set by the proposed project going forward.

If a form of mitigation could be identified that actually furthered the conservation of the listed species on this property, the public would be interested to hear about it.

Thank you.

--

Scott A. Davis

[REDACTED]



"If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it." -- Peter Singer

"The difference between a good and a bad economist is that the bad economist only considers the immediate, visible effects, whereas the good economist is also aware of the secondary effects." -- Frederic Bastiat

"My faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try to make a difference." -- Jimmy Carter

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." -- Martin Luther King, Jr

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Miami-Dade Pine Rockland
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 1:56:42 PM

RE: Coral Reef Commons HCP and EA

To whom it may concern:

This will be a short and to the point e-mail. The Miami-Dade Pine Rocklands are a special place on planet earth. They represent what remains of the diverse ecology that was once South Florida. These lands belong to the people of Florida and should remain wild and free. To bulldoze under this fragile and rare ecosystem for a Walmart and LA Fitness is the height of stupidity and greed. Leave these lands wild, turn them over to the state, and free them from the tyranny of greed and abhorrent materialism.

Please find it in your hearts to do what is right and preserve these lands for all Floridians to explore and enjoy. Once they are gone, they are gone forever.

Sincerely, Leslie Siegel

--

Leslie Siegel

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Miami-Dade Pine Rocklands HCP
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 2:57:53 PM

Hello,

Having grown up in Miami I know how much it's been paved over and its habitat plowed under in the name of progress and profits. The draft HCP for this property is wholly inadequate and other than Alternative #1, the "No Action Alternative", is designed to give the developer what he wants at the expense of the public's rights and those of the endangered species that depend on that rare habitat.

While the current administration seeks destruction of the Endangered Species Act, it's still the law of the land. Those animals and plants granted endangered status deserve protection. No matter how small or insignificant they may seem to those with a vested interest in their destruction. Please, reject this damaging and ill conceived plan so that this tiny remaining speck of endangered habitat can be protected. Thank you.

David Hartgrove
Vice President & Conservation Chair
Halifax River Audubon
Daytona Beach, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: My support
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 11:04:21 PM

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. As a teacher I want my students to have many experiences with nature. The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future. I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you

Josh Troyer

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: No Construction!
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:59:59 AM

Leave this sensitive and now rare wildlife area alone! Instead of just giving up because of invasive plants, why not do our best to clean it up? Better yet, charge UM with the clean up task since it's their property and their responsibility to maintain. We don't need more shopping or apartment buildings. We need to conserve wildlife and do our best to protect its habitat!

Sincerely,
Joyce Lara

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: Ashleigh.Blackford@fws.gov; David.dell@fws.gov; crc.hcp@fws.gov
Subject: OPPOSING Kill Permits for the UM/Ram Coral Reef Commons Project
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 1:32:12 PM

OPPOSING Kill Permits for the UM/Ram Coral Reef Commons Project

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.

2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.

3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.

4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provided sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat,

and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative)

are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").

5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of

"success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."

6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."

7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

Respectfully,

r

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Oppose "take" HCP permit for Coral Reef Commons
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 11:14:28 PM

Dear USFWS:

There is only 2% left globally of pine rockland habitat, which supports endangered species. We should be protecting what is left, not developing it.

Please note the following specific concerns:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
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- Elsa Alvear



From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Opposition to Coral Reef Commons Project
Date: Wednesday, May 17, 2017 12:34:17 PM

US Fish and Wildlife Service,

I am writing today to voice my OPPOSITION for the Coral Reef Commons Project. There is so little Pine Rocklands that remain in Miami-Dade outside of Everglades National Park. This is a critical time for natural forests, we need to protect and preserve them rather than build a Walmart.

When I visit some of the great natural places in the United States, I always take a moment to think about the people who had the foresight to protect natural areas. Once it is gone it is gone, there is no going back.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Denice Frieden
[REDACTED]

--

Denice Frieden
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Lands
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 7:11:52 PM

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to implore you to review the decision to allow development on these endangered pine lands. The environmental destruction of a unique habitat where critically endangered plants and animals such as the Florida bonneted bat & Miami tiger beetle inhabit. For a theme park and Walmart?

Please oppose this development, the environmental impact is not worthy of allowing yet another Walmart and even more housing in this overpopulated area. This will add even more gridlock. It will not enrich our community but will enrich a few that don't even live here.

Thank you,

Vivian Oliva
Miami, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rockland Development Proposal (Please Deny)
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:15:47 AM

Dear US Fish and Wildlife Department,

I am writing to urge you to please deny the proposal to develop the pine rocklands in South Miami.

It is profoundly disturbing that this piece of land, so important to the ecosystem of South Florida, which was entrusted for that reason to the University of Miami for safekeeping and stewardship, might be destroyed when the intention was that it was to be saved.

I would further encourage you to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement as required by the National Environmental Policy Act to assess the risks that this development represents.

Thank you,
Korina Cornish

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rockland Forest Preservation
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 9:35:00 PM

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Sandra Hendricks
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rockland Habitat
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:22:22 AM

To Whom it May Concern,

I'd like to add my voice to the concerned who have already asked the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 acres of intact or restorable pine rockland habitat for a shopping center and apartment complex. Though the plan also envisions setting aside about 100 acres for non-development, I believe that does not compensate for the irreplaceable habitat which will be lost in the process.

Please prepare the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan.

A coalition of environmental organizations are preparing a complete review of the submitted Habitat Conservation Plan or HCP. It will be submitted today. One of the key points is that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's review (and acceptance or denial) of this plan constitutes "a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment." This is the language of the National Environmental Policy Act. The term "significantly" is further clarified by the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (see <https://goo.gl/zEW4W5>) and includes projects which occur in ecologically critical areas, where the effects are likely to be controversial or unknown, and which may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species.

Any development which takes place should receive a full review under the required Environmental Impact Statement.

I would greatly appreciate updates on this endeavor. Below is my contact information.

Thank you.

Aly Schwarzer

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rockland Remnants
Date: Wednesday, May 17, 2017 11:17:19 AM

To whom it may concern:

We are losing our last intact remnants of many ecosystems on a global scale. This means that we lose their unique ecosystems services and NATURAL CAPITAL.

Thee places are the last genetic banks of species that offer us help and hope for the future---our future food, fiber, forage, fuel and pharmaceuticals. These places are priceless.

Pine rockland was once one of the dominant habitats in South Florida. It is home to the highest native plant biodiversity of any Florida ecosystem and is one of the rarest types of forest in the entire world. Nevertheless, today less than 2 percent of pine rockland habitat remains in Miami-Dade County. Of the dwindling remnants of pine rockland in South Florida, the largest habitat patch outside a National Park is the South Dade Richmond Pine Complex, which is scheduled to be bulldozed, or at the least, further fragmented to construct yet another residential and commercial complex.

In addition to threatening one of the few remnants of a globally imperiled habitat, the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan imperils numerous at-risk species, including Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Florida bonneted bat, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, Miami tiger beetle, white-crowned pigeon, Florida Brickell bush, and Carter's small flowered flax.

Every vanishing patch of pine rockland, and each species that it supports, warrant protection. They are a rare and a unique part of the country's natural history, and should be protected in perpetuity. Strip malls are an ephemeral and ubiquitous feature of the American landscape which deserve none of the same considerations.

Please do not approve any habitat conservation plan that threatens to replace a single square-yard of precious pine rockland habitat.

Sincerely,

Wendy Poag

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rockland in Miami-Dade County
Date: Monday, May 15, 2017 7:56:41 PM

To the US Fish & Wildlife Service,

I am writing to ask you NOT to allow development in the Coral Reef Commons project. We have so few Pine Rocklands left - and there are so many Walmart Shopping Centers. You are in charge of safeguarding our resources - please do not summarily exchange property and allow the destruction of our few, critical, remaining wild spots.

Thank you,

--

Philis Edelman

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: Crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rockland
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 2:09:47 AM

Let our government know that the right thing to do is to not destroy our natural lands.

For apartments and Walmart, to potentially put into extinction species of life.

We can never get back our Pine Rocklands.

Make the right choice for the EARTH.

Please voice our comment MAY 22.

Please let them know there are people who care about the environment and are not willing to let it go.

Thank you

ELIZABETH

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rockland
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 1:37:55 PM

Please reject the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan!

PLEASE SAVE OUR PRECIOUS PNIE ROCKLAND HABITAT!

Jean Field
Coral Gables

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rockland
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 8:32:41 AM

Pine rockland was once one of the dominant habitats in South Florida. It is home to the highest native plant biodiversity of any Florida ecosystem and is one of the rarest types of forest in the entire world. Nevertheless, today less than 2 percent of pine rockland habitat remains in Miami-Dade County. Of the dwindling remnants of pine rockland in South Florida, the largest habitat patch outside a National Park is the South Dade Richmond Pine Complex, which is scheduled to be bulldozed, or at the least, further fragmented to construct yet another residential and commercial complex.

In addition to threatening one of the few remnants of a globally imperiled habitat, the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan imperils numerous at-risk species, including Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Florida bonneted bat, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, Miami tiger beetle, white-crowned pigeon, Florida Brickell bush, and Carter's small flowered flax.

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Please do not approve any habitat conservation plan that threatens to replace a single square-yard of precious pine rockland habitat.

Sincerely,

--

Whitney Mickelsen

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rockland
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:43:58 AM

Please do not allow development on one of the last vestiges of wilderness in Miami-Dade.

Thank you,
Erik Dietl-Friedli
Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rocklands - Miami-Dade County FL
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 12:11:57 AM

Dear US Fish and Wildlife,

I'm writing to let you know of my extremely strong objection to the development of the Pine Rockland area that the University of Miami wants to sell to developers. There are many endangered animals and plants that live in that Pine Rockland area and this should not be developed (and for a Walmart?!)

Thanks for your consideration.

Susan L Green, PhD
Miami-Dade resident
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rocklands Development Miami-Dade County
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 11:46:31 PM

Dear Representatives of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,

I am a resident of the South Dade community impacted by the proposed development of 900 apartments and a Walmart Shopping Center.

As a person who battles rush hour traffic on SW 152 Avenue which borders the proposed development, there is no way that this road which is choked up with 60,000 cars a day, can handle a projected additional 30,000 cars traveling to and from the apartments and the Walmart shopping center.

I also would like to say that the destruction of the Pine Rockland habitat by the developer is not mitigated by what the developer is doing in regards to "stepping stone" , small islands of vegetation sprinkled through the parking lots. To think the endangered insects and animals are going to move in an unnatural migration via these "stepping stones" strains all credulity.

Please reconsider the issuance
of kill permits. Once the Pine Rockland habitat is gone, it is gone forever.

Thanks for considering my points.

Sharon Van Smith
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rocklands Endangered Habitats
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:42:37 PM

This letter is in regard to Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.

Dear U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Decision Makers,

I am a retired faculty member from the University of Miami who lives in Coral Gables. I am also a member of the Connect to Protect Network Miami (located at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden), which is dedicated to protect the few remaining isolated fragments of pine rockland, a globally critically imperiled plant community.

I am appalled that the University sold the Richmond Pine Rocklands site they received gratis from the US Government in the 1990s to a Palm Beach developer several years ago. When the University of Miami was given the Richmond Pine Rocklands tract, it was with the proviso that they would provide stewardship to the tract. Over the course of several decades the University repeatedly broke that commitment.

Now this developer plans to build a Walmart, shopping center, and apartment complex on this tract, to be called the "Coral Reef Commons". The amount set aside for habitat conservation in their draft Habitat Conservation Plan is insufficient to preserve endangered species like the Bartram's hairstreak and Florida leaf wing butterflies, the Miami Tiger Beetle, and endangered or threatened wildflowers and other pine rockland plants.

The Pine Rocklands are among the most endangered habitats on earth because 98% has been destroyed. With less than 2% of Pine Rockland habitat remaining in Miami Dade County, we should be preserving, not destroying, what little is left of it. Please don't let the last major remnant in Miami be taken from us.

Please reject the proposed draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.

Sincerely,

Sharyn J. Ladner, Ph.D.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rocklands Miami-Dade
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 5:01:51 PM

Dear Representatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,

I am a native Miamian, who has experienced all the changes Miami has evolved through over the years. I can remember as a child taking for granted the big expanses of slash pines and the scrubby underbush that used to flourish in what was then called Dade County.

As the decades rolled by and development pushed further south in Dade County and west toward Krome Avenue the landscape changed dramatically.

At first, this looked like progress, and as a young woman and mother, I appreciated much of what development offered. A bigger inventory of housing for our expanding baby boom population and many, many more restaurants, malls and attractions to visit with the kids. I was very happy to have a world class zoo open a short distance from my suburban home.

But life, I have learned over the last 69 years, is all about balance. Balance between opportunities to develop and grow and a need to preserve what is irreplaceable. Miami-Dade County has many areas of non-endangered lands for building housing and big box stores. If you drive around Miami-Dade, you will see many strip malls with empty retail spaces as online shopping puts more and more brick and mortar stores out of business. It is truly ironic that we would kill off many endangered plants, birds, and butterflies, and other creatures to build a big box store that is economically doomed to extinction by the Internet.

The last remnants of Pine Rockland is all we have left, down from an estimated 186,000 acres outside Everglades National Park to the final 1.5 percent we have today. This is a unique habitat found only here and in some locations in the Caribbean.

I could appeal to you on many grounds such as: over-crowded roads, the over-abundance of strip malls in our area, and proliferation of big-box stores such as the Walmart Store that are proposed in this location off SW 152nd Street, but I am not going to use that as my appeal.

Instead, I am appealing to the sense of balance that we all seek in our life. I know the developers say they are balancing the economics of building apartments and a large retail site with the native habitat. They say they are sitting aside a certain amount of the site for non-development. The endangered flora and fauna will not be able to navigate the "stepping stones" laid out in the plans. They are islands in asphalt and concrete that will not allow for the continuation of the endangered species.

I am asking for a bigger viewpoint. Look at the entire ecosystem of the county and see that this slice of Pine Rockland is unique and the needs of developers to make a profit can be found elsewhere.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,

Sharon Van Smith
[REDACTED]

Miami, Fl. 33186

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rocklands Miami-Dade
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:57:15 PM

Dear U.S.Fish & Wildlife Service,

Please take the time for a more thorough scientific survey of the endangered Rock Pinelands. Also, a public hearing is really called for.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sharon Van Smith

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rocklands of Miami-Dade
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:27:19 AM

Please deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 acres of intact or restorable pine rockland habitat for a shopping center and apartment complex. Though the plan also envisions setting aside about 100 acres for non-development, I believe that does not compensate for the irreplaceable habitat which will be lost in the process.

Please prepare the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan.

Melanie Bond

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rocklands on SW 152 Street and near Zoo Miami
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 4:12:21 PM

To whom this concerns,

It is incomprehensible and infuriating that the people who have been involved in this project, those who are not and will never be affected by their self-serving decisions, did not have the decency, respect and obvious foresight to include the public in the decision-making process that only affects the people who live in this area, beside the endangered land, species of plants, animals and insects.

This project should never have been considered. The builder, Ram, and Miami commissioner, and U of M, all were very secretive from the beginning. At conception, letters were sent to the surrounding areas' residents. However, the focus area was merely within a ½ mile radius from the location of the planned development. There are very few, if any, residents located within that radius, therefore there was no public notice sent to those who would be sorely affected by this awful mistake. I believe this was done on purpose. The public was only informed of this travesty by reading the newspapers – and by then it was apparently too late.

Besides the obvious reasons for the insane and very poorly thought-out plan to develop this vital ecological area, there are other very important considerations that I feel have not been highlighted at all. It is dangerous to our lives and livelihood. Most of the people who live west of this area whose jobs, lives and quality of life depend upon keeping this area as it is at present. They, we, are the ones who are being affected greatly by this grossly unpopular and extremely bad judgement of use of this endangered piece of property!

There is a 2 mile distance that should not take more than 6 minutes to reach the TP, but it takes many mornings during rush hour over an hour or more, and during other times of the day, 20 to 25 minutes on most days. This area I am referring to is along SW 152 Street (Coral Reef Drive) from SW 137 Avenue and SW 117 Avenue – the corner where the TP is located. We have lived at the area West of SW 152 Street and SW 137 Ave since 1980. Too much development has occurred in the area since 1980, making the commute to the Turnpike impossible – With an additional 900 apartments built at that vital artery, it would be utter chaos.

I have not heard any new evacuation plans in the event of a hurricane or worse, to accommodate the large population for now and future. At this time, there are few arteries in which to evacuate. With the additional traffic caused by many more residents, I fear the area has the potential of creating much loss of life in the event of a catastrophe.

Linda Wanshel

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rocklands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:11:47 PM

Re: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Agency/Docket Number: FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
Document Number: 2017-05767

Ram Realty wishes to develop a portion of pine rocklands. Their plan is unacceptable. The land in question is a critical habitat for several endangered species. Pine rocklands have more biological diversity than a coral reef.

The developer's definition of success for the property is self-defined and not based on independent science. They even admit their development will fragment the on-site mitigation property (what little there is) and could negatively affect species. They also discuss how they will mitigate the damage from pesticides, herbicides, lighting, and many other things. Reducing the damage still means damage is being done.

I urge FWS to choose Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative).

Calvin Kleinman
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rocklands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 12:49:52 PM

To Whom It May Concern:

Good day.

I'm contacting you to deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 acres of intact or restorable pine rockland habitat, for a shopping center and apartment complex.

Setting aside about 100 acres for non-development is not sufficient to compensate for the irreplaceable habitat which will be lost in the process.

Please, if you feel it's needed, prepare the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan.

Please don't allow this special, limited, endangered habitat to go to the same ole, same ole development.

We have to think of the future and the future cannot live on concrete and asphalt alone. We need nature.

Thank you,

Edie Driest

North Port, FL

Former native Miami resident

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rocklands
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 9:02:24 AM

I am writing to beg you to stop the development of the Pine Rocklands near ZooMiami. Our city is not in need of yet another shopping mall! In fact, as more retail moves online, this development is destined to become yet another deserted behemoth in just a few years. In the meantime, our glorious natural Rocklands will have been destroyed forever. Today, official government signs are posted on the site declaring the area ecologically sensitive and threatened. How then can our same government allow this travesty to occur? Please save the pine Rocklands for future generations to enjoy! Thank you.

Hillary Hoffman
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rocklands
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 2:09:47 AM

To Whom it may Concern:

I would like to urge preserving the Pine Rocklands tract that is being considered for development in South Dade adjacent to Metro Zoo.

Seriously, what is the county thinking?

Is our very soul for sale?

Please do everything in your power to preserve this precious piece of authentic Florida habitat for posterity! There are plenty of other locations for yet another Walmart!

Heaven spare us from blind commercialism and creeping concrete jungles!

Please have the wisdom and the courage to stop this travesty!

Sincerely,
Kathleen Doyle

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine Rocklands: A Unique Resource that must be saved (Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223)
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 2:54:49 PM

This letter is in regard to Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I write this as a resident of Miami for 47 years, and as the leader of a non-profit with 9 years directly relevant experience in habitat stewardship and conservation. Our projects include the creation of Pine Rocklands, which are now used as proof of concept in the masterplanning of habitat at Vizcaya Museum & Gardens in Miami.

The history of Miami's Pine Rocklands can be described as death by a billion cuts. This unique habitat once dominated Miami's Coastal Ridge. As virtually the only high ground - above the fresh wetlands of sawgrass and cypress and the salt wetlands of Mangroves, and above hurricane storm-surge, it was the only land available to early pioneers and later waves of settlers.

First there were homesteads and farms. Agriculture for export began to expand. Beginning around 1850 with the establishment of Lemon City, a settlement began to grow. Settlements along the Miami River, in Coconut Grove and Cutler provided ports.

There were thousands of acres of land... especially Pineland... so why worry?

Then Flagler's railroad arrived, and Miami became a resort destination. Within a few years, a land-boom exploded. The Pines were harvested mercilessly as a building material, and acre after acre were taken for homes, streets, stores, industry, tourism and agriculture.

Over the next 100 years, land booms came and went. Population pressure grew. Heavy equipment became increasingly powerful. Tract housing development dominated, leading to complete removal of all plants and trees.

As a result, around 186,000 acres were wiped off the map, and with them went virtually every plant, tree, mammal, bat, bird, reptile, insect, tiger beetle, etc. Only 2% remains, so every remaining acre is extraordinarily valuable.

When the University of Miami (UM) was given the Richmond Pine Rocklands, it was with the proviso that they would provide stewardship to the tract, protecting its priceless value. They broke that commitment year after year and decade after decade.

UM excluded their own faculty from assessing the biodiversity of the Pine Rocklands because the faculty would have held their University accountable in the Faculty Senate. Instead, they hired outside consultants who could be muzzled with non-disclosure agreements

When a fire broke out there, the outside consultants identified a prime opportunity to remove invasive exotic species such as Burma reed and Brazilian pepper. Not only did UM fail to take appropriate and responsible action, they suppressed the publication of these reports to shirk their responsibility for this blatant neglect.

The public has a right to know about UM's destructive policies, breaking covenants, and allowing these public resources to become damaged. Consultant records should be subpoenaed, and made public record. Legal protection and financial incentives should be provided to whistle-blowers. We-the-People have a right to know.

This systematic policy of "demolition by neglect" is now being used to justify the complete demolition of many acres under this HCP. While it is true that this site is deeply infested by invasive exotics, it is by no means lost.

Fire is essential to the health of Pine Rocklands. Any HCP that could curtail or limit the use of controlled burns is an unconscionable extension of "demolition by neglect". If retail and residential

development is embedded in this habitat, controlled burns will become impossible. That is unacceptable.

Based on my professional experiences with the removal of invasive exotic plants and trees, an aggressive campaign to control and remove the invasives would be completely successful. In fact, our organization has discovered that following fire, Burma reed becomes extremely easy to remove manually. I would be happy to share this knowledge and our methods with a responsible agency doing stewardship in the Pine Rocklands.

The numerous endangered species known to exist there are already sufficiently documented to stop the destruction of this habitat. It appears to be the only remaining refuge of the Miami Tiger Beetle.

The HCP fails to adequately protect this priceless tract. These are some of the reasons*:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected:developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is 1.23:1 at most. This is not within the "range of reason", especially for a project that amounts to the taking of a major remnant portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is essential to this habitat, but it is not feasible with the planned 900 apartments, a Walmart, mall, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." No proposed alternatives provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative). Off-site mitigation is not acceptable, since no habitat restoration can fully replace such priceless natural resources.

Large tracts of Pine Rocklands - with their greater capacity for biodiversity - are priceless. This is the last and largest tract outside the boundaries of Everglades National Park. Please take all necessary steps to stop this development from moving forward. It must be preserved for future generations.

Sincerely,

Sam Van Leer

President & Founder
Urban Paradise Guild



"Creating Sustainable Paradise, One Habitat at a Time."

<http://urbanparadiseguild.org/>

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[Calendar: Volunteer Opportunities 6X per Week!](#)

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine racklands conservation
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 9:37:27 AM

I am writing to express my adamant objection to development in the fragile pine dockland area south of SW 152nd Street in Miami-Dade. As a lifelong resident of Miami-Dade I have seen enormous growth diminish our natural environment. We must draw the line to save the last remaining plant and animal species remaining in our community for our children and grandchildren. Such species as the Bertram's Hairstreak butterflies, the RimRock Crowned snakes and the Eumops floridans bats are at immediate risk. We must have preserved areas for all our residents.

The outdated environmental survey commissioned by the Ram developers is a sham. We do not need a Walmart, shopping center, or theme park in this area. What we do need is a peaceful quiet area devoid of artificial lighting that preserves a natural environment.

Respectfully,

Deborah Lehman
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine rock land south fade
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 6:08:28 PM

The time has come for people to start to take responsibility for the health of our earth. This choice is so obvious. Walmart vs destruction of nearly extinct natural habitat. Money speaks but when do we start to see that as our earth's resources disappear money will no longer matter. Loving kindness works magic with humans. We need to start giving back a little loving kindness to our earth. Our lives and the lives of our children and grandchildren depend on it. It needs to start in this closed minded place where we live, where concrete rules and we use pesticides to keep our grass green while we kill off natural resources we depend in for our very life!! Come on Dade County- lets go down in history as the place where we finally opened our eyes and hearts and did the right thing!!

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine rock land
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 2:19:34 PM

Please reject the Commons Development plan! The last thing we need is another development with more carbon belching cars & gassy people, fighting each other for parking places on acres of asphalt!
Take a walk in the woods & see if that isn't so much more peaceful, worthwhile & needed!

Pam Garrison

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine rock lands
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 12:36:39 PM

Do not allow bulldoze/development of Miami Pine RockLands! Leave it alone!
Rita Cassady
Fort Lauderdale

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
To: David_dell@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine rockland forest
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 8:30:06 PM

Dear Sir

It is extremely upsetting to hear that a pine rockland forest near Metro Zoo that supports many endangered plants and animals is to be destroyed to build Walmart and apartments. I think we have many other vacant land where these could be built. Please do not destroy the habitat for these endangered species. If you drive by Metro Zoo during peak hours you will see that traffic is a nightmare. Last thing we need is to build another shopping mall and add more traffic. Please consider scrapping this plan

Thank you

Elizabeth Chakko

From: [REDACTED]
To: Crc_hcp@fws.gov; David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Pine rockland
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 3:44:15 PM

Good afternoon,

I am a concerned citizen of Miami , I just wanted to share my opinion . I do not think that we should destroy the pine rockland area of the coral reef commons to have a walmart or any other stores or more housing. The area is already congested not to mention it will affect the animals that live in that area .

Thank you so much for your time,

Tegan Morales

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pine rocklands
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 11:00:17 AM

I am opposed to the proposals that would develop parts of the Pine Rocklands near the zoo. Miami's natural areas are disappearing. Any mitigation plans are insufficient. There were ironclad "mitigation" for preserving the bay when it was dredged and it turned out they were insufficient. We need to place a priority on preservation of unique areas in Miami rather than on expanding commercial areas which are leading our county to look like anywhere USA.

Naomi Papirno
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pinelands Public Hearing
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:54:44 AM
Attachments: [May 22Pinelandsletter.docx](#)

Please see attached letter.

Thank you

May 22, 2017

David Dell
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345

Dear Mr. Dell,

I am writing you to request a Public Hearing on the Coral Reef Commons HCR and EA. I am an Administrator and instructor of American Environmental policies at Barry University/PACE in Miami Shores, FL. I am also a concerned resident of the state of Florida who believes in 'balanced' development.

I want to make it clear to you and your colleagues that I am not against progress and development in our great state of Florida. What I do oppose is compromising and/or destroying natural habitats like the South Miami Pinelands that are unique and vital for the people of Florida's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

I join all the voices you have heard from to allow us a say in protecting this area. There are ways to reach a compromise on this proposed development and I would like to join in the discussion at a Public Hearing.

Sincerely,

Dr. Judith O. Brown (Please accept as electronic signature)

Dr. Judith O, Brown
Barry University/PACE

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Please deny the current proposal
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:15:37 PM

Adding that much more traffic to SW 152 Av will make it impossible for emergency vehicles to move through the gridlocked traffic and put out a Forrest fire in whatever pine rocklands have not been paved over. SouthMiami Vice Mayor Bob Welsh

WARNING: Bob Welsh is for the time being an elected official. All emails with public officials are public records and could possibly wind up in Community Newspapers, whose editor, in my opinion, has a serious editing problem!

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Please do not develop on the Pine Rocklands!
Date: Monday, May 15, 2017 3:45:09 PM

To Whom it may concern:

Please do NOT develop on the Pine Rocklands! We don't need any more development of apartments and another Walmart Shopping Center.

We have dozens of that, but yet, we ONLY have this ONE Pine Rockland that constitutes some of the last 1.5% of a unique habitat outside of Everglades National Park.

I will not be able to attend the meeting but I wanted you to know how I, a resident and citizen of this wonderful State of Florida and USA felt.

I urge you NOT to allow developers to destroy the PINE ROCKLANDS near Zoo Miami!

No more apartments, NO more Walmarts, and NO more development! Leave some beauty and nature for us!!!!

Sincerely,

Gisela Gomar-Salzverg

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Please do not develop the Miami Pine Rocklands
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 12:38:49 AM

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please do not develop the Miami Pine Rocklands.

The history of Miami's Pine Rocklands can be described as death by a billion cuts. This unique habitat once dominated Miami's Coastal Ridge. As virtually the only high ground - above the fresh wetlands of sawgrass and cypress and the salt wetlands of Mangroves, and above hurricane storm-surge, it was the only land available to early pioneers and later waves of settlers.

First there were homesteads and farms. Agriculture for export began to expand. Beginning around 1850 with the establishment of Lemon City, a settlement began to grow. Settlements along the Miami River, in Coconut Grove and Cutler provided ports.

There were thousands of acres of land... especially Pineland... so why worry?

Then Flagler's railroad arrived, and Miami became a resort destination. Within a few years, a land-boom exploded. The Pines were harvested mercilessly as a building material, and acre after acre were taken for homes, streets, stores, industry, tourism and agriculture.

Over the next 100 years, land booms came and went. Population pressure grew. Heavy equipment became increasingly powerful. Tract housing development dominated, leading to complete removal of all plants and trees.

As a result, around 186,000 acres were wiped off the map, and with them went virtually every plant, tree, mammal, bat, bird, reptile, insect, tiger beetle, etc. Only 2% remains, so every remaining acre is extraordinarily valuable.

When the University of Miami (UM) was given the Richmond Pine Rocklands, it was with the proviso that they would provide stewardship to the tract, protecting its priceless value. They broke that commitment year after year and decade after decade.

UM excluded their own faculty from assessing the biodiversity of the Pine Rocklands because the faculty would have held their University accountable in the Faculty Senate. Instead, they hired outside consultants who could be muzzled with non-disclosure agreements

When a fire broke out there, the outside consultants identified a prime opportunity to remove invasive exotic species such as Burma reed and Brazilian pepper. Not only did UM fail to take appropriate and responsible action, they suppressed the publication of these reports to shirk their responsibility for this blatant neglect.

The public has a right to know about UM's destructive policies, breaking covenants, and allowing these public resources to become damaged. Consultant records should be subpoenaed, and made public record. Legal protection and financial incentives should be provided to whistle-blowers. We-the-People have a right to know.

This systematic policy of "demolition by neglect" is now being used to justify the complete demolition of many acres under this HCP. While it is true that this site is deeply infested by invasive exotics, it is by no means lost.

Fire is essential to the health of Pine Rocklands. Any HCP that could curtail or limit the use of controlled burns is an unconscionable extension of "demolition by neglect". If retail and residential development is embedded in this habitat, controlled burns will become impossible. That is unacceptable.

Based on my professional experiences with the removal of invasive exotic plants and trees, an aggressive campaign to control and remove the invasives would be completely successful. In fact,

our organization has discovered that following fire, Burma reed becomes extremely easy to remove manually. I would be happy to share this knowledge and our methods with a responsible agency doing stewardship in the Pine Rocklands.

The numerous endangered species known to exist there are already sufficiently documented to stop the destruction of this habitat. It appears to be the only remaining refuge of the Miami Tiger Beetle.

The HCP fails to adequately protect this priceless tract. These are some of the reasons*:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected:developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is 1.23:1 at most. This is not within the "range of reason", especially for a project that amounts to the taking of a major remnant portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is essential to this habitat, but it is not feasible with the planned 900 apartments, a Walmart, mall, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." No proposed alternatives provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative). Off-site mitigation is not acceptable, since no habitat restoration can fully replace such priceless natural resources.

Large tracts of Pine Rocklands - with their greater capacity for biodiversity - are priceless. This is the last and largest tract outside the boundaries of Everglades National Park. Please take all necessary steps to stop this development from moving forward. It must be preserved for future generations.

Sincerely,

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Please do not issue a Federal Permit for the Pine Rockland in Miami, Florida
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:20:15 PM

To the caring staff of the Fish and Wildlife Service,

I hope this plea is read by people who want better for the generations who proceed us. Please protect and defend. Please do not allow acres of land, once in federal ownership and given to the University of Miami, to be destroyed and reborn as a box retail store, strip shopping center and 900 apartments. This land is one of the last plots with rarely seen flora and fauna outside of Everglades National Park. It is a portion of the last 2% of pine rockland on the globe. The list of butterflies and insects reflect the last of the area's natives. These natives are on the brink because the county's parks provide only spotty coverage at great distances.

I have live in South Florida since 1970 and it is a tortured environment. Every day the word "traffic" is used as a curse word. This particular area, that is about to be bulldozed, is located next to one of the most congested intersections next to a State Turnpike exit. The shame of this development is that it quietly destroys the most vulnerable, and in turn creates a more hostile and polluted place to reside.

Please do not issue a federal permit allowing this land to be commercialized.

I appreciate your allowing me to speak for the plants and animals who have no voice.

Ellen Berger

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Pls save our habitat
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:38:15 PM

Please do not approve the destruction of yet another part of FL's ecosystem! PLEASE PRESERVE THE PINE ROCKLAND HABITAT!

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Preservation of Environmentally Endangered Lands - Pine Rocklands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 12:18:03 PM

Dear U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,

Please deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 acres of intact or restorable pine rockland habitat for a shopping center and apartment complex. Though the plan also envisions setting aside about 100 acres for non-development (onsite and off) I believe that does not compensate for the irreplaceable habitat which will be lost in the process.

At the very least, please prepare the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan.

Please preserve these Environmentally Endangered Lands, the Pine Rocklands. South Florida's fragile ecosystem cannot handle anymore development.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our fragile ecosystem.

Joan Gove

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Preservation of endangered Pine Rocklands
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 5:41:04 PM

Dear Sir/Madam:

As a resident of Miami-Dade County, I am writing to express my opposition to the granting of Federal Kill permits for the Coral Reef Commons Project in South Dade County. My opposition stems from a number of reasons and I sincerely hope you take into consideration the seriousness of allowing this next step in eventual development to go through.

First and foremost, preservation is vital for the long term survival of our ecosystem. Dade County has seen its Pine Rockland forests shrink to a staggering 1.5% of what used to cover an extensive area along the rock ridge between Homestead and Greater Miami. Not only is it important to preserve the unique vegetation but there are critically endangered species that depend on this habitat found no where else in the world.

I am not what you would call a “tree hugger” but it’s clear to me that our survival as a species is totally dependent on our ability to “save the planet”, and that action begins in our own backyard. We need to turn the tide on the damage we have inflicted on the earth’s flora and fauna and start being part of the “solution” to our numerous environmental woes.

Also, the idea that this development can take place and that there would still be the potential to maintain a further fragmented portion of this pristine forest is preposterous. How would the Service be able to execute the seasonal burning that is required to maintain this habitat without the waft of smoke wandering towards the dense residential complex? And wouldn’t the customers and children at the Walmart be subject to smoke inhalation and exposure?

Furthermore, there is absolutely no viable reason to add 900 units to an area that is already overdeveloped and heavily burdened with traffic. Moreover, Walmart is not the economic panacea that it’s oftentimes perceived to be. Studies from across the country have consistently shown that adding a Walmart to the neighborhood does not bring the increase in jobs and retail spending that the company promises. What it does do is push out small businesses. For every two jobs a Walmart creates, three local jobs are killed. Walmart wages actually contribute to the loss of middle-class income in towns and cities. And chain stores, like Walmart, send the majority of their revenues out of the community.

I thank you for taking the time to read this email. I sincerely hope you take my views into consideration and deny the Federal Kill permit.

Maria Bures

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Preserve Rare Pine Rockland Forest In Southern Miami-Dade
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 2:40:17 AM

Please intervene to
Preserve Rare Pine Rockland Forest In Southern Miami-Dade!

Less than 2 percent of Miami-Dade County's original pine rockland remains outside of Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve.

Once this land is developed, that's it! There is so little natural land left in this country, for your children and theirs, please,
Preserve Rare Pine Rockland Forest In Southern Miami-Dade!

Cassandra Robertson

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Preserve our Pine Rocklands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:08:10 PM

Please do not allow developers to destroy the Pine Rocklands near Zoo Miami. Development will enlilate this unique habitat where critically endangered plants and animals live. Also, there are not any comparable wildlife areas to be found. Do not wipe out this unique enclave.

Over-development is already causing traffic deadlock in that area. Congestion is rampant because of existing overdevelopment. I pray the rumor that a Walmart is planned for construction on this treasured land is a sick lie.

Please safeguard this small natural haven for the enjoyment of area residents and to preserve the life of the wild animals and plants that depend upon it.

Sincerely,

Laurie

Laurie L. Overholser

[REDACTED]

MARBAN + OVERHOLSER

[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Preserve the Pine Rocklands: response to draft Coral Reef Commons HCP and EA
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 8:47:29 AM

- There is no “mitigation” regarding what is left of our pine rockland ecosystems.
- The community does not need another Walmart or more land development at the expense of ecologically significant natural habitats
- There is no return from “development” for natural ecosystems
- I have been to Zoo Miami countless times and have observed acres of unused parking lot that, more than likely, were part of the original pine rockland
- Miami-Dade County and the State of Florida gave the University of Miami stewardship over this property and, a supposedly enlightened site of higher education, unconscionably sold the land to private development for revenue.
- Stewardship of natural space is everyone’s responsibility, but in the case of the Coral Reef property, County government and an institution of alleged “higher learning” have failed.
- Florida International University is no better than UM. It has recently sacrificed a part of its nature preserve for the sake of athletic practice fields.

You appear to be the only agencies left to do the right thing.

Please do the right thing,

Kenneth E. Johnson, Ph.D.
Florida International University

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Proposed Destruction of Pine Rocklands in Miami-Dade County, Florida
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 12:32:03 PM

Dear Mr. Dell,

For eight years before terming out, I was a member of the Village Council of Pinecrest, Florida, a few miles up US 1 from the subject property and I assure you that local public sentiment reflects my views.

It is outrageous that consideration is being given to destroying the integrity of one of the largest remaining pine rockland communities still existing on earth. It is home to a variety of rare plant species in an ecosystem that should remain intact rather than be carved into pieces. Even considering that South Florida is notorious for over-development, locating this proposed development in a pristine tropical forest is particularly egregious. We have plenty of Wal-Marts already.

Further, I am appalled that the recent public hearing, if you could call it that, was held online.

Sincerely,

Bob Ross

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: crc_hcp@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Protect Pine Rocklands - stop the development
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 6:55:23 PM

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This letter is in regard to Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan Agency/Docket Number FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223

This systematic policy of "demolition by neglect" is being used to justify the complete demolition of many acres under this HCP. While it is true that this site is deeply infested by invasive exotics, it is by no means lost.

Fire is essential to the health of Pine Rocklands. Any HCP that could curtail or limit the use of controlled burns is an unconscionable extension of "demolition by neglect". If retail and residential development is embedded in this habitat, controlled burns will become impossible. That is unacceptable.

The numerous endangered species known to exist there are already sufficiently documented to stop the destruction of this habitat. It appears to be the only remaining refuge of the Miami Tiger Beetle.

The HCP fails to adequately protect this priceless tract. These are some of the reasons*:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected:developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is 1.23:1 at most. This is not within the "range of reason", especially for a project that amounts to the taking of a major remnant portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is essential to this habitat, but it is not feasible with the planned 900 apartments, a Walmart, mall, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." No proposed alternatives provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative). Off-site mitigation is not acceptable, since no habitat restoration can fully replace such priceless natural resources.

Large tracts of Pine Rocklands - with their greater capacity for biodiversity - are priceless. This is the last and largest tract outside the boundaries of Everglades National Park. Please take all necessary steps to stop this development from moving forward. It must be preserved for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

--

Dave Doebler

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Protect Pinelands Rocklands in Miami Dade County
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 11:41:08 PM

Please do not permit the destruction of one of the remaining uplands areas that protect pinelands in Miami Dade County. This area is a distinct environmental treasure that represents how Florida was prior to European Colonization. A number of rare and endangered species inhabit this area. This area should be preserved as it is today and not destroyed for shopping stores and other developments. Many migratory birds depend on these types of habitat to travel through between winter and summer habitats. Also, a number of Florida species inhabit this area.

The area holds both plants and animal species that are rare. It is an ideal area for protection.

**Regards,
Drew Martin**

[REDACTED]

It has been confirmed that the endangered Bartram's scrub hairstreak, Florida bonneted bat, Florida brickell-bush, Deltoid spurge and tiny polygala occur on the property. The endangered Florida leafwing butterfly historically occurred on the property as well and enjoys federally designated critical habitat there.

Another rare insect, the Miami tiger beetle, also calls this land home. The beetle was thought to be extinct, having not been observed for 50 years, but it was rediscovered in 2011.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Protect the Richmond Pine Rockland in Miami from mixed use development by Univ. of Miami and its partner
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 5:03:26 PM

Pine Rockland is virtually gone from its last perch in South Florida. Development continues to grow in South Florida.

I'm writing you today to plead the case against the proposed development that, make no mistake, will destroy one of the last remaining parcels of Pine Rockland.

Surveying of the site for the occurrence of rare species and proposed mitigation is inadequate. The necessary prescribed burning would be impossible, ensuring none of the habitat--certainly not enough for the wildlife--could survive.

For future generations this habitat should be valued and preserved for both biological and historic purposes. Alternative sites for development are available; a replacement for this priceless habitat is not possible.

Thanks for your consideration. I hope I will be able to visit the Richmond Pine Rockland soon, and that its date with the chopping block will be canceled.

All the best,

--

Howard Youth
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Protecting Florida
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:28:31 PM

Please do not consider developing sensitive and valuable Wild and open spaces. People come to Florida to enjoy the natural beauty that is UNIQUE and can be used for recreational use and tourism. We need undeveloped space for watersheds as well as habitat for rare plants and animals.

Malls can be built in areas that are economically depressed in need of an makeover that will provide jobs.

Please make choices that will benefit Floridians, tourists and our wildlife.

There is no shortage of malls. Plenty of places need focused re-development.

Please protect my beautiful state. It is being consumed too quickly and thoughtlessly.

Thank you, Kate Lansbury (33486)

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: David_dell@fws.gov; [Ashleigh Blackford](mailto:Ashleigh.Blackford@fws.gov); crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [SunshineNews](#)
Subject: Public Comment on CRC HCP
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 4:31:14 PM
Attachments: [Rockland Resolutions.zip](#)
[Untitled attachment 00004.htm](#)

Re: Public Comment about Proposed Coral Reed Commons HCP

As a long time resident of Miami Dade County who's raised my family here for some 4 decades, I have become increasingly concerned about continued development in the Globally Imperiled Richmond Pine Rocklands.

Recently I have seen more traffic and more development in the Richmond Pine Rocklands and a resulting loss of Habitat and observable Wildlife there.

Traffic is clogging and chocking the area and the Richmond Pine Rocklands' fragile Habitats have been terribly mis-managed despite numerous conservation plans that have generally ignored and mismanaged.

Some areas remain overgrown with invasive weeds overgrowing the habitat which is at risk of becoming inappropriate home for many Federally Listed Endangered plants and animals.

I fear the so-called CRC HVP" will be yet another misguided effort to balance development and preservation at the expense of the Protected Plants and Animals fighting for their survival there every day.

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed over a longp-enough period to truly track their life cycles and habitat use. Were there any Independent Bat Soundings to see how the protected Florida Bonneted Bat feeds and lives in the CRC Property? Why have other independent surveys found Florida Bonneted Bat soundings throughout the Richmond Tract, but NOT in the CRC site? Why have Miami Tiger Beetle sightings also been documented throughout the Richmond Pine Rocklands, but NOT in the CRC Site? Was the applicant' survey, conducted by a private engineering consultant, done when the Miami Tiger Beetle was underground in its' pupal stage and almost impossible to easily detect? Why is there no research into the horribly disruptive effect on wildlife of all the traffic going in and out of the proposed CRC site, as well as the effect of all the artificial lighting from 900 apartment units, a Walmart Super store and nearby strip mall requiring extensive nighttime illumination? What will the lighting impact be on listed/endangered species found there including the Florida Bonneted Bat, Miami Tiger Beetle, Rim Rock Crowned Snake, Gopher Tortoise and Bartram's Hairstreak Butterfly?

2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.

3. **Burning is crucial but impossible.** The proposed mitigation on what little land is being “preserved” and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart, and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.

4. **"No Good Alternatives."** All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative) are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").

5. **"Success" is illusory.** The developer's definition of “success” in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are “funny money.” A local biologist recently advised me:

The HCP proffers a quantitative “habitat functional assessment” for the CRC property (pages 82-90)...implying that the metrics developed are appropriate for ranking some CRC parcels as more worthy of development than others; This is not the case.

The habitat assessment is most heavily weighted toward each parcel's cover of canopy, non-native plants, and “pine rockland herbs” (20% for each factor, or 60% of total score). By using these particular metrics to evaluate parcels, the assessment uses to its advantage the property's history of fire-suppression and lack of exotic vegetation management. If, for example, the habitat assessment instead gave more weight to the presence of federally listed species, the presence of designated critical habitat, presence of butterfly nectar sources, and connectivity, then the scores would be much different, and would likely show that all unpaved areas within the CRC property are highly valuable. A complete habitat functional assessment of the CRC property should be executed which considers all ecological factors—not just ones that support the development goals. I also object to the characterization of “net conservation gain” that includes the addition of 50.96-acres of off-site mitigation. This off-site property is already under a conservation agreement through deed restriction and including it in the HFA does not change anything, as far as I can discern. To put it more simply, conserving something that is already conserved should not count.

6. **No penalty for failure.** The developer's “success criteria” for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and “take” the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of “success.”

7. **Failing grade for UM.** By their consultant's own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants “credit” for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource. Years ago, Miami Dade County offered to buy and preserve the South Campus Property (CRC Development Site) under it's Environmentally Endangered Lands Program. Not only did U of Miami refuse to consider the sale to preserve the land, but I have firsthand accounts how Miami Dade Employees were threatened with personal lawsuit if they pursued the proposal. In addition, a current member of the Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition was told by a University

of Miami Vice President years ago to “Fence off some areas (of its' South Campus in the Richmond Pine Rocklands) and put goats in before the biologists find out what's there”. Additionally, Federal Court Records going back to 2006 show the University of Miami paid the U-S Department of Justice almost \$400,000 to settle an investigation into contaminating the soil and water of the Richmond Pine Rocklands for some 20 years by Illegally dumping the radioactive remains of dead lab monkeys there. Yet those facts were reportedly not disclosed during the recent local zoning hearings which rezoned the land for commercial development.

There remains a growing Groundswell of Public Support to preserve and restore the globally imperiled Richmond Pine Rocklands and specifically the proposed CRC Site.

Here’s one recent example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDKliYvog4o>

While several local Municipalities have recently passed formal resolutions supporting preserving the Richmond Pine Rocklands, NONE have enacted any formal actions supporting the destruction of the South Campus/CRC site for any commercial development there.

I have attached several Municipal Resolutions supporting Preservation of the Pine Rocklands as well as some local elementary school students' recent post cards urging preservation of the Pine Rocklands for its endangered inhabitants.

RESOLUTION 14-60

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF CUTLER BAY, FLORIDA, OPPOSING THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF APPROXIMATELY 88 ACRES OF PINE ROCKLAND GENERALLY LOCATED ALONG S.W. 152 STREET AND S.W. 127TH AVENUE WITHIN UNINCORPORATED MIAMI-DADE COUNTY; PROVIDING FOR TRANSMITTAL; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, it has been recently reported that approximately 88 acres of forest land generally located along S.W. 152 Street and S.W. 127 Avenue in unincorporated Miami-Dade County is to be developed as a mixed use development (the "Property"); and

WHEREAS, the Property consists of one of the last intact tracts of endangered pine rockland ("Rockland") within Miami-Dade County; and

WHEREAS, Rockland is a globally imperiled habitat containing an array of rare plants, animals, and insects which are rare and exclusive to that habitat; and

WHEREAS, some of the endangered species for which Rockland provides a habitat include the bald eagle, indigo snake, the Florida bonneted bat, and two rare butterflies; and

WHEREAS, preservation of the native Rockland, and the species for which it provides a home, is of great importance for the protection of our native forest's unique and endangered environment; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Cutler Bay (the "Town") is concerned about the loss of this valuable Rockland and desires to express its opposition to the development of the Property; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council finds that this Resolution is in the best interest and welfare of the residents of the Town.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF CUTLER BAY, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Recitals. The above recitals are true and correct and are incorporated herein by this reference.

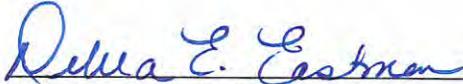
Section 2. Opposition. The Town Council hereby opposes the proposed development of the Property.

Section 3. Transmittal. The Town Council hereby authorizes the Town Clerk to transmit this Resolution to the Board of the Miami-Dade County Commissioners and Craig W. Aubrey, South Florida field supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Section 4. Effective Date. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 20th day of August, 2014.

Attest:


DEBRA E. EASTMAN, MMC
Town Clerk


EDWARD P. MACDOUGALL
Mayor



APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
LEGAL SUFFICIENCY FOR THE SOLE
USE OF THE TOWN OF CUTLER BAY:


WEISS, SEROTA, HELFMAN, PASTORIZA,
COLE & BONISKE, P.L.
Town Attorney

Moved By: Council Member Bell
Seconded By: Council Member Mixon

FINAL VOTE AT ADOPTION:

Mayor Edward P. MacDougall	yes
Vice Mayor Ernest N. Sochin	yes
Council Member Peggy R. Bell	yes
Council Member Sue Ellen Loyzelle	yes
Council Member Mary Ann Mixon	yes



CARLOS A. GIMENEZ
MAYOR
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

March 6, 2015

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

Re: Year one Amendment 1 allocation for the acquisition of globally-imperiled pine rocklands habitat in Miami-Dade County

Dear Governor Scott:

I am writing this letter to request that the State of Florida allocate funds pursuant to the Florida Water and Land Conservation Initiative, Florida Constitutional Amendment 1 to acquire certain environmentally sensitive pine rocklands located in Miami-Dade County.

As you know, 75.64 percent of Florida voters overwhelmingly approved Florida Constitutional Amendment 1 on November 4, 2014, which authorizes no less than 33 percent of net revenues collected from the existing excise tax on real estate documents to be used to acquire, restore, and improve land and water areas throughout Florida. The revenues collected pursuant to this amendment may be used to finance the acquisition and improvement of conservation land and outdoor recreation areas.

Miami-Dade County contains the majority of what is left of the Florida Natural Areas Inventory designated Globally-Imperiled Habitat, the pine rocklands. Originally 185,000 acres of pine rocklands forest existed throughout the County, but now only 3,700 acres remain outside of Everglades National Park. The largest pine rocklands outside the National Park is a tract within and adjacent to Zoo Miami in an area commonly referred to as the Richmond Pinelands, located in southern Miami-Dade County. While portions of these critically-endangered pinelands have been acquired and are protected by Miami-Dade County, other portions remain in private ownership, or are owned by non-county agencies and institutions. The Richmond Pinelands are known to contain state and federally listed endangered species.

Honorable Governor Rick Scott

Page 2

In August 2014, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service also designated portions of these lands as critical habitat for two federally listed endangered butterfly species. Acquisition of these lands provides the best opportunity for preservation of this unique and critically important habitat in this area.

Please accept this letter as my request for your consideration in allocating some portion of year one Amendment 1 proceeds to the acquisition of these critically important pine rocklands within the Richmond Pinelands.

Thank you for your attention and consideration. Please contact me to discuss this further at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Honorable Carlos A. Gimenez, Mayor
Miami-Dade County



Honorable Dennis C. Moss
Miami-Dade County
County Commissioner – District 9

c: Jack Osterholt, Deputy Mayor/Director
Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources

Michael Spring, Senior Advisor/Director
Cultural Affairs

Jack Kardys, Director
Parks Recreation and Open Spaces



City of Miami

Legislation

Resolution

City Hall
3500 Pan American
Drive
Miami, FL 33133
www.miamigov.com

File Number: 16-00509

Final Action Date:

A RESOLUTION OF THE MIAMI CITY COMMISSION SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF THE MIAMI TIGER BEETLE AS A THREATENED SPECIES AND URGING THE FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION AND THE UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TO DESIGNATE THE SAME; SUPPORTING THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE RICHMOND PINE ROCKLANDS; DIRECTING THE CITY CLERK TO TRANSMIT A COPY OF THIS RESOLUTION TO THE OFFICIALS STATED HEREIN.

WHEREAS, before a plant or animal species can receive the protection provided by the Endangered Species Act ("ESA"), it must first be added to the federal lists of endangered and threatened wildlife and plants, a process referred to as "listing"; and

WHEREAS, a species is added to the list when it is determined to be endangered or threatened because of any of the following factors: the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range; overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes; disease or predation; the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; and/or other natural or manmade factors affecting its survival; and

WHEREAS, the area bounded to the south by Southwest 152nd Street, to the north by Southwest 184th Street, to the east by Southwest 117th Avenue, and to the west by Southwest 137th Avenue, Miami, Florida, located adjacent to Zoo Miami, is one of Miami-Dade County's last remaining tracts of pine rockland, and is known as the Richmond Tract ("Richmond Tract"); and

WHEREAS, pine rockland habitats have diminished greatly in Miami-Dade County due to development; and

WHEREAS, pine rockland habitats support various rare plants, animals, and insects that are exclusive to said areas; and

WHEREAS, one of the rare insects of pine rockland habitats is the Miami Tiger Beetle ("Tiger Beetle"); and

WHEREAS, the Tiger Beetle was believed to be extinct until a survey detected the species at the Richmond Tract in 2007; and

WHEREAS, on June 29, 2015, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission received a request from, inter alia, the Center for Biological Diversity to evaluate the Tiger Beetle's status for listing as a state-designated threatened species; and

WHEREAS, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service is undergoing a similar process that includes public comment; and

WHEREAS, the City of Miami ("City") is concerned that the rare Tiger Beetle could become extinct

if preventative measures are not taken to conserve the same;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI, FLORIDA:

Section 1. The recitals and findings contained in the Preamble to this Resolution are adopted by reference and incorporated as if fully set forth in this Section.

Section 2. The Mayor and City Commission hereby express their support for the listing of the Tiger Beetle and the protection of the Richmond Tract under the Endangered Species Act by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

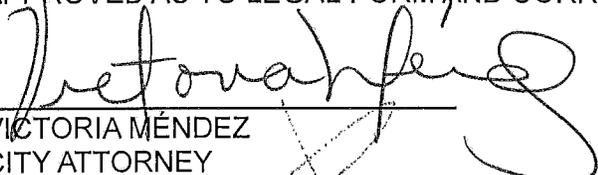
Section 3. The Mayor and City Commission hereby express their support for the listing of the Tiger Beetle as a state-designated threatened species by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Section 4. The Mayor and City Commission hereby express their support to preserve the Richmond Tract and all other pine rocklands in Miami-Dade County, including designating the Richmond Tract as a "Critically Endangered Habitat" under the ESA.

Section 5. The City Clerk is directed to transmit a copy of this Resolution to the Members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives that represent Miami-Dade County, Florida; the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; Members of the Miami-Dade County Legislative Delegation; the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission; and all elected municipal and county officials in Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Section 6. This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon its adoption and signature of the Mayor.{2}

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL FORM AND CORRECTNESS:


VICTORIA MÉNDEZ
CITY ATTORNEY

Footnotes:

{1} The herein authorization is further subject to compliance with all requirements that may be imposed by the City Attorney, including but not limited to those prescribed by applicable City Charter and Code provisions.

RESOLUTION 2015-5

A RESOLUTION OF THE VILLAGE OF PINECREST, FLORIDA, OPPOSING THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF PINE ROCKLAND ACREAGE NEAR ZOO MIAMI IN UNINCORPORATED MIAMI-DADE COUNTY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, forest land generally located at Southwest 152 Street and Southwest 127 Avenue, near Zoo Miami, in unincorporated Miami-Dade County, is being considered for development as a mixed use project; and

WHEREAS, the property consists of one of the last intact tracts of endangered pine rockland within Miami-Dade County; and

WHEREAS, pine rockland is a globally imperiled habitat containing an array of rare plants, animals, and insects which are rare and exclusive to that habitat; and

WHEREAS, some of the endangered species for which the property provides a habitat include the bald eagle, indigo snake, the Florida bonneted bat, and two rare butterflies; and

WHEREAS, as part of the development process, the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners will consider declaring the area blighted; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Pinecrest is concerned about the loss of this valuable natural area and desires to express its opposition to the development of the property;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE VILLAGE COUNCIL OF PINECREST, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

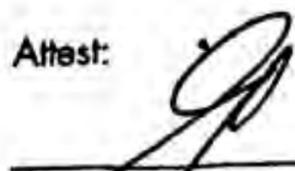
Section 1. That the Village Council hereby opposes the designation of the pine rockland property near Zoo Miami as blighted and further opposes the development of this natural area - one of the last intact tracts of endangered pine rockland within Miami-Dade County.

Section 2. This resolution shall be effective immediately upon adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 13th day of January, 2015.


Cindy Lerner, Mayor

Attest:


Guido H. Inguanzo, Jr., CMC
Village Clerk

1 RESOLUTION NO: 2016-03

2 A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND THE VILLAGE COUNCIL OF
3 THE VILLAGE OF PALMETTO BAY, FLORIDA, IN SUPPORT OF THE
4 MIAMI TIGER BEETLE AND ENCOURAGING BOTH THE FLORIDA
5 FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION AS WELL AS
6 THE US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TO DESIGNATE THE MIAMI
7 TIGER BEETLE AS A THREATENED SPECIES; PROVIDING FOR
8 TRANSMITTAL; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

9
10 WHEREAS, the Village Council of the Village of Palmetto Bay (the "Village") recognize that
11 one of the last tracts of endangered pine rockland ("Rockland") within Miami-Dade County is located
12 along S.W. 152 Street and S.W. 127 Avenue in unincorporated Miami-Dade County; and
13

14 WHEREAS, Rockland is a globally imperiled habitat containing an array of rare plants,
15 animals, and insects which are rare and exclusive to that habitat; and
16

17 WHEREAS, preservation of the native Rockland, and the species for which it provides a
18 home, is of great importance for the protection of our native forest's unique and endangered
19 environment; and
20

21 WHEREAS, one of the rare inhabitants of the Rockland is the Miami Tiger Beetle; and
22

23 WHEREAS, the Miami Tiger Beetle was presumed extinct until a recent survey detected the
24 species in the Rockland; and
25

26 WHEREAS, on June 29, 2015, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
27 received a request to evaluate the status of the Miami Tiger Beetle for listing as a state-designated
28 threatened species from the Center of Biological Diversity and individuals; and
29

30 WHEREAS, the US Fish and Wildlife Service is undergoing a similar process, and has
31 scheduled a January 13th Public Hearing at Miami Dade College Kendall Campus as part of its' rule
32 making process for its' proposal to list the Miami Tiger Beetle under the US Endangered Species Act;
33 and
34

35 WHEREAS, the Village is concerned that the rare Miami Tiger Beetle will become extinct
36 within Miami-Dade County and/or world-wide; and
37

38 WHEREAS, the Village Council finds that this Resolution is in the best interest and welfare
39 of the residents of the Village.
40

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND VILLAGE
COUNCIL OF THE VILLAGE OF PALMETTO BAY, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

41 Section 1. That each of the above stated recitals is hereby adopted and confirmed.

42
43 Section 2. The Village Council hereby expresses its support for the Florida Fish and

1 Wildlife Conservation Commission to include the Miami Tiger Beetle in its state-designated
2 Threatened species list.

3
4 **Section 3.** The Village Council hereby expresses its support for the U-S Fish and
5 Wildlife Service to list the Miami Tiger Beetle under the U-S Endangered Species Act.

6
7 **Section 4.** The Village Clerk is hereby directed to transmit this resolution to Florida Fish
8 and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners, Florida State Legislators representing the Village, and all elected
9 municipal officials in Miami-Dade County.

10
11 **Section 5.** The Village Clerk is hereby directed to transmit this resolution to members of the
12 U-S Fish and Wildlife Service, our south Dade members of the US Congress and US Senate.

13
14 **Section 6.** This resolution shall become effective immediately.
15

16 PASSED and ADOPTED this 4th day of January, 2016.

17
18
19 Attest: 
20 Meighan Alexander
21 Village Clerk
22


23
24 Eugene Flinn
25 Mayor
26

27 APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY FOR THE
28 USE AND RELIANCE OF THE VILLAGE OF PALMETTO BAY ONLY:
29


30 Dexter W. Lehtinen
31 Village Attorney
32

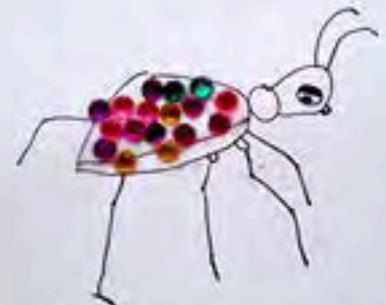
33
34 FINAL VOTE AT ADOPTION:

- 35 Council Member Karyn Cunningham YES
- 36 Council Member Tim Schaffer YES
- 37 Council Member Larissa Siegel Lara YES
- 38 Vice-Mayor John DuBois YES
- 39 Mayor Eugene Flinn YES

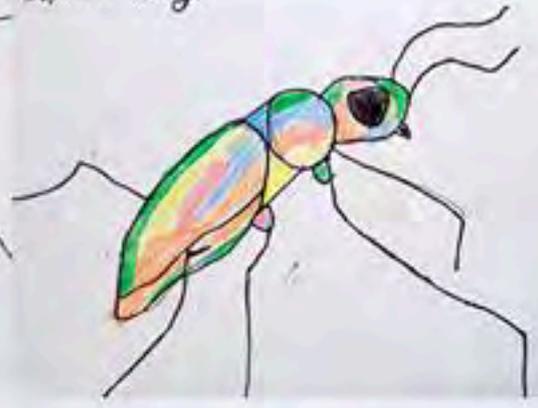
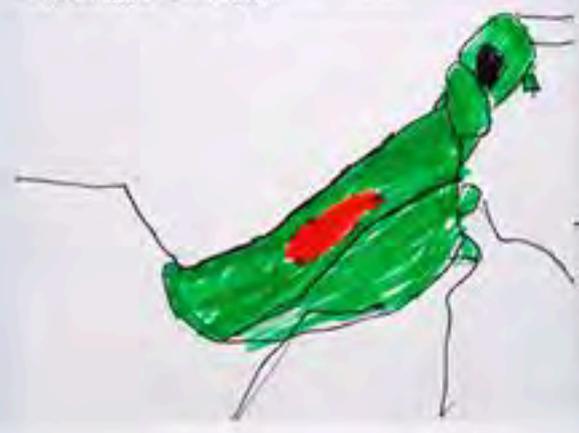
ADRIAN



Amarissa Edwards



Caitlin Wong



Please protect the Miami Tiger Beetle ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡ ♡

Cynthia Dahner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region
1875 Century Blvd, Suite 400
Atlanta, GA 30345

Cynthia Dahner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region
1875 Century Blvd, Suite 400
Atlanta, GA 30345

Please protect the miami tiger Beetle

Cynthia Dahner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region
1875 Century Blvd, Suite 400
Atlanta, GA 30345

Please Protect the Miami Tiger Beetles ♡

Cynthia Dahner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region
1875 Century Blvd, Suite 400
Atlanta, GA 30345

Please Protect the Miami Tiger Beetle ♡

Please Protect the Miami tiger beetle. Aaron

Cynthia Dahner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region
1875 Century Blvd, Suite 400
Atlanta, GA 30345

Please Protect the Miami Tiger beetle Mary

Cynthia Dahner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region
1875 Century Blvd, Suite 400
Atlanta, GA 30345



Please Protect the Miami Tiger Beetle

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Please Protect the Miami Tiger Beetle

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Please Protect the Miami Tiger Beetle

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1875 Century Blvd, Suite 400
Atlanta, GA 30345



Finally, I'd like to quote the FWS Mission (<https://www.fws.gov/info/pocketguide/fundamentals.html>) statement itself in urging the CRC HCP be rejected:

FWS Fundamentals

The Mission

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The Vision

We will continue to be a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service.

The Priorities

National Wildlife Refuge System: Conserving Our Lands and Resources

Landscape Conservation: Working With Others

Migratory Birds: Conservation and Management

Threatened and Endangered Species: Achieving Recovery and Preventing Extinction

Aquatic Species: National Fish Habitat Action Plan and Trust Species

Connecting People With Nature: Ensuring the Future of Conservation

The Conservation Principles

Stewardship: Our ethic is to conserve natural resources for future generations.

People: Our employees are our most valued asset.

Science: Our work is grounded in thorough, objective science.

Partnerships: We emphasize creative, innovative partnerships.

Professionalism: We hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards, strive for excellence and respect others.

Legacy: We ensure the future of natural resource conservation by connecting people with nature.

Service: It is our privilege to serve the American people.

I believe approving Incidental Take Permits under the CRC Proposed HCP would be contrary to the Mission of the FWS, and would jeopardize the future survival of dozens of rare and endangered plants and animals found in this “Globally Imperiled Habitat.

Al Sunshine
President
Miami Pine Rockands Coalition, Inc.
Florida Non-Profit
501(c)3

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Public Comment on Coral Reef Commons HCP and EA
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 9:01:33 AM

Good morning,

My name is Eduardo Varona, a concerned resident of Southern Miami-Dade County. I am a part time grass roots environmental activist with a following of over 2000 active participants dedicated to environmental protection and restoration.

I submit this public comment in demand that a full Environmental Impact Statement be conducted for the Coral Reef Commons proposed destruction of more of the globally critically endangered pine rockland ecosystem. With less than 1% of this endangered ecosystem left it is unconscionable that an EIS is not in the plans before a decision will be made.

I base my demand on the following criteria:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for as nobody was allowed on the property for years.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed as a pine land depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat. Except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative), the others are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."
7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

If we use the math within this model that FWS suggests here to protect this critical habitat, by showing no significant impact, we would ultimately eradicate Pinerocklands or all identified critical habit completely.

Again I demand a full EIS before a decision is rendered and before this environmental crime is allowed to proceed further.

Thank you, Eduardo Varona.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Public Comment on Coral Reef Commons HCP and EA
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 11:13:22 AM

Good morning,

My name is Barbara Condon. I live in South Miami-Dade County and am an active member of my community and an environmental activist.

I am concerned over the proposed destruction of a critically endangered pine rockland ecosystem, and find it inexcusable that a full environmental impact statement has not been conducted. To make a decision without being fully informed of the impact of that decision would be reckless and a dereliction of duty.

I request that you do not move this forward are based on the following concerns:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete and with no independent verification of its accuracy. It would be reckless to simply accept their biased report as fact.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate especially for a project contemplating the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial for the health of the pine lands, but rendered impossible due to the projects scope of 900 apartments, a walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. Mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat.
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based.
6. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."
7. By their consultant's own admission, the University of Miami has been a poor steward of the property, given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

Again, allowing this to move forward without a full, independent environmental impact study would be reckless. Do not allow this attack on critically endangered lands to proceed.

Thank you,

Barbara Condon
Cutler Bay, Florida

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Public comment
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:10:54 PM

To the US Fish and Wildlife Service,
I am a native Miamian who understands not only the global rarity of Miami-Dade's pine rocklands but also their essential place in the cultural and natural history of the region. Once widespread, "Dade County pine" was felled to build the pioneers' homes, wagons, docks, and the corduroy roads that made it possible to settle and farm the county. That was in an era when we did not know about the exceedingly rare, globally unique plants and animals that rely on this habitat.

Ignorance may have been our excuse for past destruction of the pine rocklands. But that's not a valid excuse anymore. For more than 30 years the US Fish and Wildlife Service has invested money, time, brainpower and dedication in the effort to conserve and restore Miami-Dade pine rocklands, working in partnership with Everglades National Park, the county, UF IFAS and others who understand the importance of this irreplaceable biome.

I urge USFWS to remain faithful to its own mission and respect the hard work of conserving these pine rocklands, which represent a biological a legacy of potential economic and ecological benefits not just for local residents but for the entire nation. Permitting the destruction of any of these pine rocklands constitutes a major environmental action for which a full environmental impact statement is required by federal law. I urge you to begin that process at once.

Sincerely,
Heather Dewar

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Heather Dewar
science & environment writer

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov; david_bell@fws.gov
Subject: Questions about Pine Rocklands /construction of a Walmart
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 2:39:25 PM

David and Ashleigh,

I hope I am reaching out to the right people and this is the right email but I wanted to express my concerns regarding the future proposed development in the middle of a pine Rocklands area near the zoo when there are so few trees left.

Even though the contractor claims it he has done efforts to protect the forest, truth be told, there will be a Walmart and a huge parking lot (and housing) built. There seems to be NO concern about the beetle that is already endangered, our bats, or crotons. They only survive in the few patches of trees that have been left untouched.

We all know a pine forest like this one cannot survive without fire. Without fire, the trees don't germinate. The native plants need fire for regeneration as well. Only the invasive plants do not survive. Again, how can a burning be done with a store and housing next to it? It is simply impossible.

It is sad to see that a beautiful untouched area, something different from all of Southern Florida is poised to disappear. Traffic is already horrible in that area. It will be worse when the apartments are built.

All these concerns should have been addressed before it came to this. Again, nature loses because of greed, money and stupidity. FWS can do something about this, NOW is the time.

Thanks,

Eric Semet

--

Eric Semet

#Yogastrong#Lafordedyoga#yogaeveryday#yogafun#yogaindividual

<https://www.yogaisoutheast.com/about/>

Eric Semet
RYT 200

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: REJECT the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 5:39:02 PM

Dear Sir or Madam,

I believe you should reject the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan for the following reasons:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is markedly inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas: developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is, at best, 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" especially when compared to other HCPs, and especially for a project that contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally imperiled ecosystem that is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial, but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pineland and depends entirely on a robust and periodic burn regimen, which would not be feasible, especially with approx. 2,000 people (900 apts), a Walmart and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas that must undergo burns. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pineland is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally imperiled habitat, and, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative), are either "straw men," or, in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative), seek to get mitigation credit for property that is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are, in essence, "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."
7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the University of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the Federal government (read: U.S. Taxpayers!) for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect this rare resource.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Regards,

Karl Fitzgerald
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: RE: Comments on Coral Reef Commons EA & HCP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:59:31 PM
Attachments: [Comments on Ram Coral Reef Commons EA and HCP.pdf](#)

Comments are attached.

Note: an edited and updated version of these comments will be sent in from the email address of Conservation Concepts LLC's Laura Reynolds. Should that submission be received on time, please refer to that document.

--

Zachariah A. Cosner
University of Miami, Biology, Ecosystem Science & Policy, History
Wildlands Restorations LLC, Conservation Concepts LLC
[REDACTED]



RE: Coral Reef Commons EA & HCP

May, 22nd, 2017

To whom it may concern,

Ashleigh Blackford & David Dell of the US Fish and Wildlife Service

The pine rocklands of South Florida are an immensely bio-diverse and critically endangered habitat which once stretched across 185,000 of the Miami Atlantic Coastal Ridge. This fire-dependent ecosystem is the most bio-diverse in the state of Florida, and hosts a variety of rare endemic species.

Over the course of the 20th century, the effects of development, deforestation, fragmentation and fire suppression have reduced the extent of this ecosystem to a paltry 1.5% of its original range. As such, many of the endemic species which once called this ecosystem home have been designated as threatened, endangered, or critically endangered, and the habitat itself is considered to be critically endangered. Of the 1.5% of pine rockland habitats which remains intact, a significant proportion occur in small “postage-stamp” communities. Few pine rockland habitats in Miami Dade County exceed 40 hectares, and as such can only support species requiring a minimum range. Presence of larger contiguous forest tracts (above 80 ha) is imperative for the survival of several pine rockland species with large minimum ranges such as the Florida Bonneted bat. Habitat fragmentation has hit these species the hardest, pushing many to the brink of extinction.

It is important to note that the preserved pine rockland habitats of Everglades National Park differ greatly from those of the Miami Rock Ridge in terms of geology, hydrology, and endemic species content from those of Miami-Dade County. The pine rocklands of Miami-Dade county boast a significantly greater native species richness (182 taxa/.16 ha in Miami-Dade vs 128 taxa/ .1 ha in ENP). Efforts to relocate highly endangered species such as the Miami Tiger Beetle to the more low-lying pine rocklands of Long Pine Key have met with failure as a result of the ecological distinctions between these subsets of pine rockland habitat. Furthermore, the elevation difference which distinguishes the pine rocklands of the Miami Rock Ridge from the more low lying pine rocklands found in Everglades National Park gives these parcels on the ridge a greater chance at long-term health and survival in the face of sea level rise, making these parcels an effective lifeboat habitat for many species which might otherwise face extinction. We mention these facts in order to stress the supreme importance of preserving the



last remaining parcels of pine rockland on the Miami Rock Ridge outside of Everglades National Park.

The area known as the Richmond Pine Rocklands on the upper Atlantic Coastal Ridge is the largest contiguous tract of pine rockland habitat outside of Everglades National Park.

The Pine rockland parcel in question contains many highly endangered endemic flora and fauna including the Miami Tiger Beetle, the Florida Leaf-wing Butterfly, the Bertram's Hairstreak butterfly, and several others. It is possible that many more highly endangered or threatened species may be present on the property, but this has yet to be determined due to the absence of virtually any comprehensive surveys of the property. Various individuals who spend significant time in this area have mentioned sightings of species such as the bonneted bat and the rim-rock crown snake, but this remains unconfirmed. The Richmond Pine Rocklands have also been designated as "critical habitat" for the Florida brickell-bush and Carter's small-flowered flax amongst other endangered floral species.

In the wake of hurricane Andrew, the United States Federal Government granted the University of Miami ownership of a large swath of the Richmond Pine Rocklands with a 30 year stipulation that the land be used for educational purposes. During this period the university used the site for animal testing purposes, and generally neglected the environmental needs of the habitat. In 2014 (virtually immediately after the expiration of its mandate to utilize the property educational purposes), the University sold 88 acres of this pine habitat to Ram Realty for the price of \$22 million.

Ram Realty now plans to construct 900 apartments, a Wal-Mart retail center, several other retail establishments, and potentially a school upon the property. This constitutes the first large scale development on a globally imperiled pine rockland habitat since Miami-Dade County launched its land buying program to preserve this crucial habitat in 1990. In pursuit of this development, Ram has submitted a Habitat Conservation Plan meant to assure the Fish and Wildlife Service that they are doing everything within their power to "avoid, minimize and mitigate the potential impacts of the take".

After careful review of the Environmental Assessment and Habitat Conservation Plan for the proposed development, we found the document to be wholly insufficient in its efforts to limit undue damage to the highly sensitive pine rockland ecosystem and the many endangered endemic species which inhabit the parcel in question.

The precise nature of our concerns with the plan as it currently stands are outlined below:



1. **Ram's Environmental Assessment lacks crucial data, remains incomplete and is insufficient overall for the scope of this project**

Simply put, the Environmental Assessment for this plan is grossly insufficient and should be replaced with a full Environmental Impact Statement. First and foremost, one must consider that the almost complete absence of comprehensive and open surveying of the property makes this assessment virtually meaningless. Without solid information on the true composition of species which occupy this site, it is literally impossible to determine what impacts the proposed project may have. This necessary step must be completed before an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement is accepted.

Furthermore, the Environmental Assessment is clearly incomplete and bears no mention of potential impacts on species from deforestation and development, nor does it contain a summary, nor an analysis of the ways in which the soil and other abiotic portions of the ecological community may be affected. Without these features Ram's EA can hardly claim to answer any of the most pressing questions regarding whether their take of species is accidental or incidental to the project. This question is absolutely vital to the matter at hand and must be addressed before any progress is made.

Finally, it is our belief that an Environmental Assessment alone is insufficient for this project. As stated previously, this project constitutes the first large scale development on highly endangered and ecologically sensitive pine rockland habitat since the beginning of Miami Dade County's conservation efforts in the 1990's. The project includes measures to clear-cut and develop over approximately half of the parcel in question, as well as bring upwards of 2,000 humans into the area. There is no realistic scenario in which this development does not negatively impact the species which occupy this area. As such, an Environmental Assessment is insufficient and a full Environmental Impact Statement must be provided.

2. **Ram relies on fundamentally flawed and misleading use of "Habitat Value Units" and "Habitat Value Assessment"**

The claims made in regard to "habitat value" and the potential increase in "habitat value units" supposedly wrought by the project is laughable at best and incredibly dangerous at worst. The section in question amounts to little more than Ram



reality attempting to misuse a classification/quantification system specifically designed for the management of existing pine rocklands and were never in any way designed to factor in the costs of habitat destruction or development. The authors of the system themselves have objected to its use in this manner. This section constitutes little more than the Ram attempting to write itself a blank check for habitat destruction and development. Ultimately, should the claims in this document be accepted, and the EA and development plans approved, an incredibly dangerous precedent will be set that will allow for the wholesale destruction and development of vast portions of the last remaining parcels of pine rockland forest on this Earth. All the developer need do is argue that the scraps of habitat left destroyed will be "better managed", and by that argument make the obscene claim that the pine rockland community is in fact better served by its own eradication. The last remaining pine rocklands of south Florida and the litany of highly endangered species which occupy them are not wanting for "better" vague, subjective, and single species specific management, they are wanting for the maintenance of the bare minimum of available range which is required for any hope of long term survival. There is too little pine rockland habitat remaining in existence for these claims of improved value to be taken credulously.

3. Ram provides insufficient assurance that the necessary fire regime will be carried out

South Florida pine rocklands are highly dependent upon regular fire regimes in order to remain healthy. Any alternatives to burning such as mechanical or chemical control of invasive species and brush are insufficient and incapable of producing long-term restoration. The necessity of relatively frequent burning is both attested in the HCP itself and borne out by research, which shows that when not paired with burning, mechanical and chemical controls may elicit soil disturbances, weedy species increases, and rapid hardwood re-sprouting¹. Thus, it is clear that in order to truly achieve any measure of success an appropriate fire regime must be not only be established, but also strictly adhered to.

While Ram's Habitat Conservation Plan does outline a proposed fire regime, the claim that they will truly be able to carry out these burns is highly suspect. The ability to

¹Menges, Gordon, 'SHOULD MECHANICAL TREATMENTS AND HERBICIDES BE USED AS FIRE SURROGATES TOMANAGE FLORIDA'S UPLANDS? A REVIEW', Archbold Biological Station, PO Box 2057, Lake Placid, FL 33870
(2)The Nature Conservancy, Department of Biology, PO Box 118526, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.
Florida Scientist, Volume 73.



conduct controlled burns is heavily constrained by the needs and sensitivities of the local population.

The smoke produced by controlled burns impairs lung functions and can cause numerous health impacts to the surrounding population². This risk is exacerbated in children, the elderly, and those with respiratory conditions. Considering the massive scope and residential capacity of the proposed development (not to mention the possible development of a public school upon the property as well) it seems virtually inevitable that many of these sensitive individuals will be present on the property.

Under the best management practices outlined in the Miami Dade County Natural Areas Management Plan, new projects should always “account for fire management needs of pine rockland sites”³. This development clearly fails that criterion by placing such a high density of settlement and use directly adjacent to the pine rockland habitat. Should this project reach fruition, upwards of 2,000 permanent residents may occupy the site, as well as many shoppers and potentially a large number of children (should the plans to build the school go through). With this high density of individuals on the property, it is inevitable that many may be particularly sensitive to the health impacts of burning, invariably compromising any attempts to adhere to a necessary and appropriate fire regime. In fact, the best available research shows that development near potential burn sites constitutes the greatest constraint on prescribed burning, and that in those landscapes which contain a mixture of protected, residential, and commodity producing lands, fire use is particularly constrained because of the “wildland-urban interface”⁴.

When one combines the inherent difficulties of carrying out a consistent controlled burn regime in a heavily settled area with the fact that the plan bears no actual repercussions for failure to adhere to said regime (a matter which will be addressed later in this document) Ram’s claims begin to look quite dubious. Before this plan can proceed, more certain measures must be implemented to ensure that Ram will be impelled to and capable of operating an appropriate controlled burn regime.

² Slaughter, et al. Association Between Lung Function and Exposure to Smoke Among Firefighters at Prescribed Burns. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene*. August 17, 2010.

³ <http://www.miamidade.gov/environment/library/reports/natural-areas-mgmt-plan.pdf>

⁴ Costanza, J. K., and A. Moody. 2011. Deciding where to burn: stakeholder priorities for prescribed burning of a fire-dependent ecosystem. *Ecology and Society* 16(1): 14. [online] URL: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol16/iss1/art14/>



4. The plan provides insufficient management of the ecologically deleterious impacts of large scale commercial/residential development adjacent to an environmentally sensitive pine rockland ecosystem

The proposed development would construct 900 single-unit apartments, a Wal-Mart retail center alongside several other commercial establishments, and leave the potential for a school to be built on the property as well. In total, over 2000 individuals may be living and operating in this area on a daily basis should the plan go through. Large scale commercial and residential development of this type inherently inflicts a colossal disturbing force on native ecosystems to which they are adjacent. This goes double for ecosystems as fragile and rare as the South Florida pine rocklands.

As it stands, Ram Realty's HCP does not sufficiently take into account the impacts of dense human settlement directly adjacent to the sensitive pine rockland ecosystem. The effects of large-scale human settlement which the plan fails to properly address include but are not limited to:

A. The introduction of invasive ornamental plants and the potential establishment of a perpetual source of invasive species seeds/spores.

Across various regions in the US and abroad, incidence of residential housing is positively associated with invasive exotic plant species richness^{5,6}. This is due to the tendency of residential developments to disturb land cover, introduce nonnative landscaping plants, and facilitate dispersal of propagules along roads. Many ornamental plants used in Florida are of an invasive exotic nature, and so it may be presumed that the risk would be especially great in regards to this development. Without some sort of measure to mandate use of native landscaping alongside other measures to reduce the incursion of nonnative species from both the proposed Wal-mart and the residential units, this HCP should not be considered fully complete. This requirement is fully in line with the Miami Dade County best practices for development adjacent to pine rockland sites⁷.

B. The introduction of invasive predators (felines specifically) which may significantly impact the populations of both migratory birds and endangered endemic fauna.

With the introduction of human residents into the midst of the sensitive environment which is the Richmond Pine Rocklands, so too will come other species.

⁵ Gavier-Pizarro, et al. Housing is positively associated with invasive exotic plant species richness in New England, USA. 1 October 2010. DOI: 10.1890/09-2168.1

⁶Hansen, et al.. EFFECTS OF EXURBAN DEVELOPMENT ON BIODIVERSITY: PATTERNS, MECHANISMS, AND RESEARCH NEEDS. 1 December 2005. DOI: 10.1890/05-5221

⁷ <http://www.miamidade.gov/environment/library/reports/natural-areas-mgmt-plan.pdf>



These include the aforementioned invasive exotic plant species, as well as another type of ecologically dangerous exotic species: the house cat. On average, house cats can depredate upwards of 0.7-1.6 birds per week, and play a major role in human induced decline in bird populations⁸. The influx of housecats into the area will significant damage to the populations of native and migratory birds, and measures must be taken to limit their population within the area.

C. Noise and light pollution.

Both noise and light pollution associated with commercial/residential development may elicit significant deleterious effects on native and migratory species. It is common practice for Wal-marts to flood their parking lots with bright LED light throughout the night. Furthermore, residential units often leave on lights throughout the night as well. This can create a great and unpredictable disturbing influence on the native ecosystem which can be quite difficult to predict.

The noise of trucks, cars, operation of machinery, and other practices that are to be expected should this development commence should also prove quite stressful to native species. As it stands, the HCP contains no plans or strategies to address either of these ecologically damaging influences of the proposed development.

D. Introduction of fertilizers and pesticides

The all but guaranteed use of pesticides which would take place throughout large swaths of the project area poses a particular threat to one of the pine rockland ecosystem's most endangered native species, the Miami Tiger Beetle. As an insect which feeds primarily on other insects, the Miami Tiger Beetle is at particular risk from the impacts of pesticide application. Any HCP which does not take the necessary limitation and management of pesticides into account should be deemed insufficient. The continued existence of this species, which exists only in the pine rocklands of the upper Atlantic Coastal Ridge (of which this is the largest remaining parcel) is too vulnerable to proceed without due caution and consideration.

As it stands, the only means by which this HCP attempts to limit the potential damage done by residents and other individuals during daily activities is via "Promote public education and awareness of pine rockland habitat and Goal 4: associated species" and through the use of vague and undefined "Best Management Practices for commercial and residential development" which go unspecified and have not assurance of truly being implemented. While education is an important and valuable tool, on its

⁸ Lepczyk, Mertig, Liu. Landowners and cat predation across rural-to-urban landscapes. *Biological Conservation* Volume 115, Issue 2, February 2004, Pages 191–201. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0006-3207\(03\)00107-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0006-3207(03)00107-1)



own it is fully insufficient as a means of avoiding the potential negative effects of human habitation. Further considerations must be taken into consideration that might better manage and mitigate the risks of noise, light, and exotic species introduction as well as encourage or mandate use of native species in landscaping throughout the area. Furthermore,

5. The project provides insufficient mitigation and misleading claims regarding off-site mitigation

The HCP in question makes several questionable claims related to its use of offsite Mitigation. The authors of the plan claim that “the Project will result in prescribed burning on 50.96 acres of Off-site Mitigation Area”, amongst other claims of increased net habitat function as a result of offsite mitigation

However, the land which the HCP attempts to utilize for off-site mitigation is in fact already under a conservation easement. The management regime which the University is currently required to uphold includes the implementation of controlled burns on the property. Thus, many of the claims made in regard to the actual ecological improvement of this land should be considered fallacious.

Furthermore, even in the absence of these misleading claims regarding their off-site mitigation, the off-site mitigation regime outlined would still be insufficient. Off-site mitigation of this variety should bear a 5-1 ratio of lands developed over to lands protected. This project abjectly fails to meet this criterion and manages (even under their dubious claims) to protect 1.23 acres of land for every one developed over at best. The fact that this ecosystem is globally imperiled further pushes this ratio outside the reasonable range for off-site mitigation.

The simple fact of the matter is that there is not enough South Florida pine rockland habitat in existence for off-site mitigation to serve as a viable strategy. The ecosystem has been whittled down to its last 1.5% and simply cannot weather any more destruction.

6. Overall, there is insufficient surveying and scientific understanding of the requirements of endangered species affected by the plan

As the largest contiguous stretch of pine rockland Habitat remaining outside of Everglades National Park, the Richmond pine rocklands hosts a bevy of highly endangered endemic species. These include the Miami Tiger Beetle, the Florida



Bonneted Bat, the Rim-Rock Crown Snake, the Bartram's Hairstreak Butterfly, the Florida Leaf-wing Butterfly, and many others.

It is quite possible and in fact likely that many other highly endangered flora and fauna species inhabit this area. Multiple individuals have made claims of sighting endangered species in the area such as the Rim-rock crown snake and others. However, Ram has consistently barred researchers from surveying the property, and imposed restrictive non-disclosure agreements upon all those allowed in. This creates a blackout of knowledge that might prove deadly to those endangered species whose presence is being obscured. The project should not proceed until a far more thorough course of surveying is completed.

There is great reason to believe that the pine rockland habitat in question is far more healthy and contains a far greater variety of rare native species than Ram would have us believe. One recent count conducted in
Furthermore, many of the species which inhabit this parcel are quite rare, and as such little information and research exists which might offer us a better understanding of the specific habitat needs which they require. As such, any project upon this parcel should proceed with an especially grand abundance of caution. As it stands, the Habitat Conservation Plan put forth by Ram fails to meet this criterion.

7. The plan relies on known bad-actors

During the University of Miami's stewardship of the property in question the university consistently failed to provide any necessary upkeep of the property, going so far as to deny the habitat of the controlled burns upon which it relies. The management strategy of the University of Miami (and Ram Realty for that matter) can be characterized as purposeful neglect and abuse, meant to degrade the habitat to the
Neither actor should be

8. No Penalty Exists for Failure

This Habitat Conservation plan is unreliable merely by virtue of the fact that there is no penalty outlined for failure to adhere to any of the measures for preservation laid out. This fact is particularly egregious when it comes to the burn regime, a burn regime which will become infeasible upon the projects development.

9. Faulty Alternative System

The alternatives to the plan listed in the HCP do not truly reflect the range of potential alternatives. No effort was taken to determine the impacts and effects of



environmental restoration without adjacent development or of environmental restoration alongside a scaled-down version of the project.

Recommendations:

We at Conservation Concepts LLC recommend the following:

1. A full Environmental Impact Statement should be prepared for this project. The sensitivity and ecological significance of this habitat is simply too great for safety and precaution to be taken lightly.
2. The HCP as it currently stands is insufficient in its measures to protect the numerous endangered endemic species of the Richmond Pine Rocklands, and should be thrown out in favor of an improved version.
3. Some sort of measure must be implemented to penalize failure to adhere to the measures outlined in this plan. Absent such a feature, there can be no assurance whatsoever that the methods and strategies outlined in this plan will actually be carried forth, and there is much reason to doubt that they will be.

-Comments of Zachariah A. Cosner & Laura L. Reynolds-

Conservation Concepts LLC

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: RE: Richman Pine Rockland Development
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:59:56 PM

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford:

As a concerned citizen of Miami-Dade County, I am concerned about further unchecked development that allows for urban sprawl and further traffic burden to the community. I would like to inform you of my objection to the development planned within the Richman Pine Rockland complex known as Coral Reef Commons.

Coral Reef Commons is a development that will further degrade and fragment, the last remaining and largest contiguous acres of pine rockland outside of Everglades National Park, a habitat that is globally endangered.

Thank you,

JF Barros DDS

Jose Francisco Barros, DDS

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

■

From: [REDACTED]
To: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; david_dell@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: RICHMOND PINE ROCKLANDS
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 5:42:15 PM

Dear Mr. Bell and Ms. Blackford,

We need to save Florida's Pine Rocklands from being destroyed. There is less than 2% of Pine Rocklands left in South Florida.

As you know, Ram Realty has plans to cover develop most of what is left of the Pine Rocklands and put up a Walmart, 900 condos, a school, and several other smaller stores. That doesn't leave enough Pineland left for the wildlife habitat filled with many endangered species. Not to mention the trees that will be destroyed.

Ram says it will maintain the Pinelands. How will they do the required burns that are necessary to Pine Rock Lands with development mixed in with the Pine Rocklands. Will the people who move there know that they will have to deal with the smoke from the burns?

Has anyone done a traffic study for the increased number of people who would be living in an already congested area. How about sea level rise? It's so important that the Pine Rockland Ridge will survive because it is the highest point in the area. And critical wildlife would be able to survive if left alone.

How about the added need for water consumption in the area? Has that been addressed?

An independent study needs to be done at the Richmond Pine Rocklands site. Not one paid for by the developer. Is it fair that those who have money to pay for a study by the scientists can have an advantage over the Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition that may not have money for scientists.

Also, timing on when those scientists look for wildlife on the land makes a big difference as to when the wildlife are spotted. There should be several chances to look for the wildlife at different times of the day or night. Such as when bats come out.

Please do not give a "take permit". It will endanger the wildlife that are in low numbers by using mitigation. And the so called stepping stones to connect them to the fragmented preserved areas will not work.

Please remember that Wilderness is not a luxury but, a necessity for the human spirit and wildlife survival. We need to remember that we can't be so greedy that we forget why there are trees and wildlife which are apart of our ecosystem on earth. Because the Richmond Pine Rocklands have become so rare many species will also become rare.

Please keep more links in the chain of our ecosystem from disappearing.
Each link (creatures, trees) of our ecosystem has a purpose.

Thank you,
Valerie Robbin



From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Re: Richmond Pine Rockland vs. Coral Reef Commons by Ram Realty
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 7:50:11 PM

Please see the following reasons for my opposition to the proposed commercial/residential project by Ram Realty:

- 1) The pine rockland habitat site in question is an endangered, imperiled environment. The plants and animals native to the pine rockland require this land in order to exist. The area is already reduced to a point that instills concern for these native species, thus development of any kind will only stress an already stressed environment.
- 2) The Richmond Pine Rockland and its inhabitants are rare, unique and irreplaceable. The Wal-Mart., L.A. Fitness, Chili's and condos are common, routine and unspecialized.
- 3) Solutions offered by Ram Realty and its supporters such as "certain building placement" are woefully inadequate since they generate fragmentation. Please consider the Everglades Park and its Panther Program (Florida Panther Recovery Plan, 3rd Revision, The Florida Panther Recovery Team & South Florida Ecological Services Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and the Everglades Park and disrupted water flow to Florida Bay (Kissimmee River History, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 2006; and Progress Towards Restoring the Everglades: Second Biennial Review (Brief), National Research Council(September 2008)). Ram Realty and supporters have not addressed critical concerns: What is the effect on water demand within this area due to the increased building/human activity? The effect of heat islands, roads/traffic, lights interfering with animal behaviors, polluted runoff from parking lots....?

I could offer positives for protecting and nurturing the pine rockland such as the aesthetic and intrinsic value it provides. But that's not science and it's my understanding these comments are to be based in scientific fact. However, decisions are not made in a vacuum and awareness surrounding the history of this debacle land sale by the University of Miami (do they have an Environmental Studies Department?) is requisite. If the UM was remiss in its responsibility to this land, then they should make restitution for any degradation they allowed. This point is important because Ram Realty and developer, Peter Cummings, may claim the land is "overgrown and beyond restoring" ("Developer offers to link forest around Walmart", Jenny Staletovich, Miami Herald, May 11, 2015). Decision-makers should not be swayed by such tactics ("Rare Forest Endures - At Least For Now", Jenny Staletovich, Miami Herald, May 7, 2017). Also, topics of job creation and donations to charities have been voiced. Again, these distractions to muddy the waters must be recognized for what they are. The question of the fate of the pine rockland deserves critical, deliberate thinking that recognizes not only the science, but other factors, such as carbon reclamation, water dispersion, and potential plant/animal medicinal benefits.

At the very least, intense scrutiny of the Coral Reef Commons plan is paramount. This plan is not only a bad plan because it's lacking, it's a bad plan because it's in the wrong place. The Richmond Pine Rockland needs to be protected and a responsible community/entity should assume the role of steward in trust to ensure its continued existence.

Sincerely,

Debra Guendelsberger
May 20, 2017

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Re: Comments on Coral Reef Commons EA & HCP
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 12:27:22 AM

Please disregard this email and the document enclosed. Consider this draft of the comments rescinded in favor of the version sent from the email address: ConservationconceptsLLC.org

On Mon, May 22, 2017 at 11:58 PM, Zac cosner [REDACTED] wrote:

Comments are attached.

Note: an edited and updated version of these comments will be sent in from the email address of Conservation Concepts LLC's Laura Reynolds. Should that submission be received on time, please refer to that document.

--

Zachariah A. Cosner
University of Miami, Biology, Ecosystem Science & Policy, History
Wildlands Restorations LLC, Conservation Concepts LLC
[REDACTED]

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Zachariah A. Cosner
University of Miami, Biology, Ecosystem Science & Policy, History
Wildlands Restorations LLC, Conservation Concepts LLC
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Re: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:34:56 PM

May 22, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office, Ecological Services
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
Via email: David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
South Florida Ecological Services
1339 20th St.
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Via email: Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

FWS Response via email crc_hcp@fws.gov

Re: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan

To whom it may concern:

I am opposing the Federal Kill Permits for Developers to start bulldozing the Richmond Pine Rocklands.

“Eat, drink and be merry.” Fill your pockets to overflowing today, for tomorrow we won’t be here and it will be the younger generation suffering the illnesses of our thoughtless decisions. Please consider the points and concerns raised by my fellow citizens of SW Miami-Dade County who do not wish to see this precious land developed.

Sincerely,

Claudia McIntosh

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Richman Pine Rockland Development
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:56:53 PM

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford:

As a concerned citizen of Miami-Dade County, bird watcher, and plant enthusiast I would like to inform you of my objection to the development planned within the Richman Pine Rockland complex known as Coral Reef Commons.

Coral Reef Commons is a development that will further degrade and fragment, the last remaining and largest contiguous acres of pine rockland outside of Everglades National Park, a habitat that is globally endangered. This natural forest community is so important to migratory birds as a stopover and to those birds that would use the site to nest. The surveys conducted were not complete in that it took part during a very short period of time that would not properly note those birds.

Once bulldozed there will be no more pine rockland. The thought of mitigation is ridiculous if there is no more pine rockland to replace. I ask you to deny any permit for this development to go forward and preserve this endangered habitat.

Thank you,

JF Barros DDS

Jose Francisco Barros, DDS

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Richmond Pine Rockland"s on the chopping block
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 3:41:12 PM

Dear David Dell and Fish and Wildlife Service,

I am appalled at the recent information that I received through tropical Audubon that the Richmond Pine Rockland, one of the last remaining ecological wild places in Miami is destined to become just another strip mall and condominium . It hurts me to know that land like that which preserves the last remaining Pine Rockland territory that is home to many endangered species is doomed to be another strip mall and apartment complex .

Below are the reasons why the Coral Reef Commons project should be rejected !!!

Reasons why Fish and Wildlife should reject the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan include but are not limited to:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.

2. Their proposed mitigation is markedly inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas: developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is, at best, 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" especially when compared to other HCPs, and especially for a project that contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally imperiled ecosystem that is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.

3. Burning is crucial, but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pineland and depends entirely on a robust and periodic burn regimen, which would not be feasible, especially with approx. 2,000 people (900 apts), a Walmart and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas that must undergo burns. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pineland is not an adequate substitute for fire.

4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally imperiled habitat, and, except for

Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative), are either "straw men," or, in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative), seek to get mitigation credit for property that is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").

5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."

6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."

7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the University of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the Federal government (read: U.S. Taxpayers!) for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the rare resource.

I hope you take the above reasons into consideration and keep them rare beautiful land in tact !!

Thank You,

Adriene Barmann
South Florida Resident for 56 years

--

Adriene Barmann RN, OCN, BSN

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Richmond Pine Rockland/Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 3:01:30 PM

Fish and Wildlife Service

Developing the last remaining rare rock pine land on which many endangered species depend makes NO SENSE!
Aren't you all suppose to protect our wildlife, both plants and animal?? There are other places in this county to build houses and shopping centers. Just why are you so pro development?
I and many others strongly object.

Sincerely
Lane Park

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Richmond Pine Rocklands on Chopping Block
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 3:56:46 PM

There are things in Nature that can not be replaced, once they are gone they are gone forever. People need to learn to control their destructive instincts for the sake of our own future survival. I know that money and greed are two powerful drivers of behavior and if you leave the decision making to those that have only those two desires they will not make the moral decision that will benefit mankind as a whole.
Please save the Rocklands

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Richmond Pine Rocklands
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 11:06:29 PM

Dear Mr. Bell, and Ms. Blackford,

I am very concerned about the fact that there are some questions as to why some of the endangered species were not found on the Richmond Pine Rocklands where RAM Realty wants to put a Walmart, School, 900 condos and other buildings.

1. The developer's **"science" is flawed and incomplete**. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes and others) were not found because they were not properly surveyed. Some species are underground half of the year and only appear at certain times of the year. And weather can make a difference as to when they are noticeable.

2. Correct me if I'm wrong but, why wasn't it required to have an independent survey or study done of the wildlife and endangered plant life? When I suggest independent, I mean not hired by RAM. RAM Realty had an advantage of several years to do a study. And it's my understanding that RAM Realty did not make the property accessible to scientists of the Miami Pine Rockland coalition to do the surveys. Or were limited to the time they were permitted to gather their findings of endangered plants and animals.

3. Another thing to consider is a recent study forecasting tremendous Pine Rocklands loss over the coming years from rising Sea Levels around South Florida. There is a document prepared by by the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact Steering Committee which means by 2100, sea level is projected to rise 31-81 inches above 1992 mean sea level. That's a loss of 93.5% of existing pine rockland. If I understood the study correctly. The small percentage currently left at the Richmond Tract will be the only remaining suitable habitat for species to live.

4. I'm assuming you have their latest plans of how they want to develop the land. It is fragmented and makes it difficult for wildlife to move about to other sections. RAM says they have "stepping stones" to connect the habitat. Not wide enough for the wildlife to know that it connects to another habitat. Also, it's my understanding that the 50 acres or so that is across Coral Reef Drive is not their property because it's already designated as a conservation area. Yet, I believe they say they are keeping it as a preserve. Please check that out. They make it look like they are doing something good for an area that is already preserved.

I appreciate this opportunity to express my concerns.
Sincerely,

Valerie Robbin



From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: Ashleigh.Blackford@fws.gov; david_dell@fws.gov
Subject: Richmond Pine Rocklands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 6:56:54 PM

Re: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Agency/Docket Number: FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223
Document Number: 2017-05767

My name is Brian Behr.
I have lived in Miami-Dade county in Florida for 39 years.

Ram Realty wishes to develop a portion of pine rocklands, which even they describe as a “globally-imperiled resource” Their plan is unacceptable. There has not even been proper surveying for most of the endangered animals on the property.

The developer is proposing a mitigation ratio of 1.23:1 (protected areas : developed areas), when it should be at least 5:1. Their proposed number is unacceptable and unreasonable, especially considering that the land in question is critical habitat for several endangered species, including one that was thought to be extinct. The truth is even worse than that. The off-site mitigation property should be removed from consideration - due to the fact it is not part of the property being developed is already protected by deed restrictions, and owned by another entity. Once this is done, the mitigation ratio drops to an appalling 0.66:1 (protected areas : developed areas). Worse still, the on-site land that will remain undeveloped will be broken up, with the largest part being only 23.92 acres. This will only increase the negative impacts of traffic, pollution and human intrusion.

Burning is the only way to renew pine rockland. Even the developer acknowledges this. Since there are no penalties for failure, this will NOT be done in the future. It is just not practical, as this area will have a 900 unit apartment complex (about 2500 residents), a public school, a Walmart, and other retail locations, all of which would be in close proximity to the area that has to be burned(which is not even contiguous).

The developer's definition of success for the HCP is self-defined and not based on independent science. As there is no material financial risk or penalty for failure, even that level is not guaranteed. Also, I have found no independent, scientific definition for “Habitat Value Units”, so I believe they should be discounted as meaningless. They even admit their development will fragment the on-site mitigation property(what little there is) and could negatively affect species. They do not have a meaningful plan to keep trespassers out of the natural areas or prevent introduced pet cats from hunting endangered or threatened species in the area. They also discuss how they will mitigate(reduce) the damage from pesticides, herbicides, lighting, and many other things. Reducing the damage still means damage is being done.

I urge FWS to choose Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative). If Ram Coral Reef chooses not to allow habitat management or restoration, that is their choice. There are many groups in the local area who would be glad to release the owners from liability and do this type of work for free.

Brian Behr
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: pickeringkyle@yahoo.com
Subject: Richmond pine rock lands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:20:36 PM

My name is Kyle Pickering and I am a resident of Vero Beach. I strongly urge you to deny any permits to ram realty in regards to their project in the Richmond pine rock lands. Less than 5% of the original pine rock land remains in south Florida, and to sacrifice that for a walmart, la fitness and other run of the mill development would be a tragedy. Please put the well being of the plants, animals, and local citizens ahead of the corporate interests. The entirety of the property should be preserved for future generations. Thank you, Kyle W. Pickering
Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Richmond pine rocklands
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 7:01:41 AM

I strongly oppose the commercial development the Richmond pine rocklands. It is unconscionable to me that a globally imperiled ecosystem and critical habitat for endangered species would be compromised for commercial development.

There is simply no ethical justification for allowing this unnecessary destruction of an irreplaceable natural resource.

David Downs
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Richmond tract HCP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:26:54 PM
Attachments: [MAY 2017 LETTER TO USFWS points.pdf](#)

Dear Ms. Blackford and Mr. Dell,
I have attached my comments regarding the CRC HCP.

Thank you,
Sandy Koi

<http://e-atala.blogspot.com>; <http://e-atala2.blogspot.com>

It is not your duty to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it. Pirke Avot 2:21

There are two ways to live your life: one is as if there are no miracles and the other is to live as if everything is a miracle. Albert Einstein

United States Fish and Wildlife Service
crc_hcp@fws.gov

17 May 2017

Dear United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS),

I am an entomologist who has been working in the pine rocklands of southeast Florida for nearly twenty years, and a resident of south Florida for twice as long. I have studied other pine rockland lepidopteran species, such as the Florida Duskywing butterfly (*Ephyriades brunneus*), the Bartram's scrub-hairstreak (BSH) (*Strymon acis bartrami*) and especially the Florida Atala (*Eumaeus atala*) butterfly, as well as other insect species that utilize the pine rocklands, such as the Miami tiger beetle (MTB) (*Cicindelidia floridana*).

The Richmond track development HCP and Incidental Take Permit application filed by RAM development contains not only exceptional scientific errors, but also considerable "spin" on "habitat enhancement" and "environmental functioning." To quote Luna Phillips from the webinar conference aired on April 27, 2017, the plan that RAM development has is to "create a detailed blueprint to restore and enhance the environmental function of the property through sustainable stewardship practices." How cutting down 86 acres of Florida slash pine canopy, saw palmetto and croton understory in a totally restorable pine rockland is "sustainable stewardship" and "enhancing environmental functioning" of this globally endangered ecosystem is bad science no matter how it is spun for the public. Bartram's scrub-hairstreaks require croton (*Croton linearis*), not parking lots, retail stores and residential apartments. 55 acres of onsite mitigation is also a "spin" as the off-site mitigation is not connected to the property and is already under protection.

It is also **not true** that this site is degraded beyond restoration. The property had become a waste-site with trash dumps because of severe neglect by the University of Miami. The land itself however had merely been scraped, but not otherwise degraded. Pine rocklands that are scraped will self-heal (endemic species will return in natural progression) in a few years once the invasive non-native species, such as Brazilian pepper, are removed and a managed fire regime is established. The condition of this site is due entirely to the neglect of the University of Miami. Pine trees regenerate on land that has been scraped. Recall that the entire area of the Everglades National Park, the remaining pine rocklands in Miami-Dade County as well as the entire Caribbean was timbered in the 1940's and what we have now is regenerated forests. The scraped area in the Coast Guard Communications Station are currently regenerating saplings and seedlings and if the area is not mowed will restore itself within twenty years.

The biological surveys for RAM's Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) are deeply flawed and inadequate. These two rare and pine rockland endemic wildlife species in particular, newly listed as endangered thanks to USFWS during these past three years, which will be severely impacted by this development, and could potentially become extinct: the Miami tiger beetle the Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly.

Note that Jonathan Mays and David Cook of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) are currently writing the critical habitat description and management plan

for the Miami Tiger Beetle. They have spent much time in the past year surveying for the beetle, with Miami-Dade County biologists, and we know that the beetles are on the ZooMiami property as well as the Coast Guard Communications site. It is requisite that USFWS wait for that report to be published before determining that RAM has addressed the impact that this development would have on the MTB, and that independent surveys are allowed on the RAM property to assess the population there.

The surveys that RAM performed were not sufficient to determine if the extent of the MTB locations or the population, and the surveys were not performed during the flight period of the insect. The larval burrows are literally the size of a pencil lead, and quick surveys like the ones described by RAM's. Those more qualified to speak about the MTB, such as Chris Wirth, will be addressing the issues around the beetle with more authority and knowledge than me, but I do know that the beetle has been located not only at the ZooMiami, but also at the USCG site.

The BSH butterflies are host plant specialists, using only *Croton linearis*, in the pine rocklands are highly sedentary (see the many papers by Salvato, Salvato and Hennessey listed below), and because they are small butterflies, they would be unlikely to cross large areas of development regardless of patches of "connectivity" RAM has added to the HCP. Development often means mosquito control spraying as well, which would be highly detrimental to the butterflies (if there are any on the property after development) and beetles (Hennessey and Halbeck 1991, Hennessey et al. 1992, Hoang et al. 2011).

The BSH has never to my knowledge been observed anywhere but in pine rocklands or very near the pines in a field where croton is growing (i.e, it is not a butterfly found in private gardens regardless of how much croton may be planted there). I personally know three individuals who live in the neighborhood close to the Richmond tract, who have planted a butterfly garden with native plants including a few pine trees; *Atala* hairstreaks, and Martial scrub-hairstreak (*Strymon martialis*) have been documented in at least one of those gardens, but BSH has not yet been observed there.

I have also witnessed this butterfly not moving for at least 1.5 hours, as Salvato has noted numerous times in his papers. Also, because the butterfly pupates in the leaf litter, making detection challenging, it is inadequate to assume the butterfly is or is not present unless on-going monthly surveys are performed over at least a years' time. We know the species has been observed and photographed on this site before it was sold by the university, and RAM's surveys are inadequate to claim the BSH is not present.

Burning is another issue that has not been addressed properly by RAM. It is known that burning permits were denied for the University (one of the reasons it was neglected), but RAM claims that it will burn the property to maintain it---how will that be possible when the permit was denied by Miami-Dade County when it was undeveloped? Burning is necessary to maintain the pine rocklands (Snyder 1986 and many others). Hand-removal does not provide the micro-nutrients and adequate stimulation for the native indigenous pine rockland plants to thrive.

The pine rocklands protected by the EEL program state that the city "...should encourage zoning around its properties that is most compatible with management of pine rockland fragments.

Proper management of pine rockland fragments includes prescribed burning (which can generate heavy amounts of smoke), controlled access by people, and minimizing edge effects. Surrounding land use can impact any of these management techniques.

“Construction of hospitals, schools, apartments, and hotels around EEL sites should be discouraged because of conflicts with smoke generation during prescribed fires. In support of this, the EEL program should develop a map of smoke corridors for EEL properties during prescribed burning, which the Miami-Dade County Planning and Zoning Department could utilize to more effectively plan zoning and natural areas protection in these areas. EEL Program, Management plan, Part II, Management of specific habitat types, Chapter 1, Pine Rockland habitat, p. 29, section 4.2.2 Zoning around and between parcels, para. 3.”

This RAM HCP development does not meet these above-stated objectives.

Note also that two new species were recently discovered at ZooMiami, a species of trapdoor spider in the genus *Ummidia* (not yet identified to species), and an *Enicospilus* wasp parasitoid of the Faithful Beauty moth (*Composia fidelissima*). Adequate surveys at the “CRC” property has not enabled scientists to look for other species that may be on the property.

Florida Natural Areas Inventory listed the critically imperiled Miami cave crayfish (*Procambarus milleri*) as present on the Richmond tract as well, which has not been addressed by the HCP submitted by RAM. The crayfish is listed as endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Cordeiro 2010). From the IUCN site: “This species was formerly known from two localities in Miami, Dade County, Florida (Franz *et al.* 1994). These two sites were 24 km apart (Radice and Loftus 1995). This species was recently found again in 1992 (Radice and Loftus 1995), after last being recorded in 1968 and subsequently described three years later (Hobbs 1971). This species is now known from 14 -15 sites in southern Dade County, mostly from man-made groundwater wells (P. Moler pers. comm. 2010). All known occurrences are found within an area of 210 km² (30 km x 7 km NatureServe 2009).”

Gopher tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*) are also present in the surrounding sites, (ZooMiami, Coast Guard, Martinez and Robert Morgan). This HCP does not indicate that gopher tortoises, or Florida box turtles (*Terrapene carolina baueri*) for that matter, have been surveyed and it is suspected that both are located on the RAM property as well.

The impact of tree removal and understory destruction regarding carbon storage has not been assessed by RAM. Trees produce oxygen, and intact forest areas create much more oxygen and store much more carbon than concrete and buildings. I do not have actual quantitative data on that, but I think it is easy for USFWS scientists to recognize the difference.

Bonneted bat populations have not been addressed by the HCP; it is known that the bat has been monitored and documented, again in the surrounding sites. The Institute for Regional Conservation is currently monitoring for the bat at the ISCG site and I suggest denying further development in the area until that study has been completed. As several people mentioned in the webinar, the animals do not recognize property lines and we know that the bat has been documented everywhere in the area except the RAM property, where they have not surveyed for it.

Also, there are plant species on the property that are highly endangered (Table 1). Note in the table that 89% of the plants located on the property are native. This is not degraded property as RAM claims; it is neglected property. Woodmansee completed a new floristic survey in 2014, with very similar results, but the tables are not set up in the same way making comparison difficult. The native plants listed in 2000 are still located on the property.

Table 1. A copy from the Floristic Survey of the Richmond Pine Rockland properties completed by the Institute for Regional Conservation (IRC) in 2000. Note that the significant number of endemic endangered, threatened and rare pine rockland plants at the property labeled as “University of Miami South Campus” is the property scheduled to be developed if permitted by USFWS. Recent surveys by IRC indicate continued persistence of these plants on the surrounding properties.

Table 23:
Floristic Summary of
RICHMOND PINE ROCKLANDS

	Total Species	Exotic	Native	Total Rare	State Listed	Federal	FNAI ¹	IRC ²
<i>Federal Correctional Institution</i>	177	22	155	25	19	1	12	8
<i>Luis Martinez U.S. Army Reserve Center</i>	232	45	187	28	24	1	17	8
<i>National Institute of Health, GSA</i>	132	20	112	13	10	1	9	2
<i>Robert Morgan Technical Institute</i>	145	27	118	20	18	1	12	1
<i>U.S. Air Force Property</i>	148	14	134	18	14	2	11	4
<i>U.S. Coast Guard Communications Station</i>	177	24	153	28	21	2	13	10
<i>U.S. Coast Guard Housing</i>	137	28	109	13	10	0	8	1
<i>U.S. Coastal Civil Engineering Property</i>	122	8	114	16	12	2	9	5
<i>U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)</i>	179	18	161	23	19	2	13	4
<i>U.S. Naval Observatory</i>	249	52	197	30	22	1	15	12
University of Miami South Campus	228	25	203	25	19	2	13	9

¹ Florida Natural Areas Inventory, taxa listed as Critically Imperiled (S1) or Imperiled (S2) in Florida
² The Institute for Regional Conservation, taxa listed as Critically Imperiled (R1) or Imperiled (R2) in southern Florida

Light pollution has not been addressed, both for the neighbors in the area or for the nocturnal species in the pine rocklands.

Noise pollution has not been addressed.

Nocturnal species have not been addressed (we know there are coyotes on the ZooMiami property).

We have already lost three species of butterflies because of habitat destruction. Allowing this development to occur is expediting extinction of several more species, as there is no other place for them to go. The claim that “...measure that will be taken will completely offset the impact of

any incidental taking of the covered species” is absolutely incorrect and another attempt by RAM to ‘spin’ their story. The additional mitigation land is not part of the contiguous tract of land and it is not additional land at all! How will this property be “actively managed” and by whom? Creating ‘four acres as stepping stones’ to replace 138 acres of habitat is ludicrous.

RAM has also spun the continuity of the adjacent sites. This is backwards. This RAM property is the connectivity for the adjacent lands, not the other way around. THIS property provides a key continuity for the species that live on the adjacent locations. There is no place for these animals to go. This is an intact ecosystem as is, albeit with some invasive species and trash. The environmental function of the property will be significantly impacted in a detrimental way, not ‘enhanced’ by development. The importance of this entire 700-850 acres of pine rocklands is vital for the survival of the endangered species, plants and animals that live on these contiguous properties. Fragmenting it further with an unneeded (and unwanted) development is bordering on being criminal in my scientific opinion.

Independent surveys need to be taken by qualified scientists to assess the endangered, threatened and imperiled species that inhabit this tract. I suggest strongly that the USFWS reject the HCP and EA as submitted. I would urge you to require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

This development is very controversial and significantly affects the neighborhood in very detrimental ways, from noise, light pollution, increased traffic (which I also feel RAM has not adequately addressed as I have had to travel the surrounding roads many times and they are already traffic nightmares). Walmart has been shown to depress an area, impact neighborhood shops to the point of causing economic meltdown and small businesses closing down, bring in significant trash and other undesirable features to locations where it has been established (Meilach 2012 and many others).

Designating the Richmond tract as “degraded” by this applicant-developed self-grading of habitat impact also sets a precedent for other developers to give themselves whatever they want in regard to environmental assessment of the quality of lands! As I said above, this pine rockland is not degraded at all and is fully able to be restored.

Although I realize that the political environment often ties the hands of those whose jobs it is to protect our wildlife, I am nonetheless quite disappointed in the apparent disregard for the science that upholds the decision to act immediately to prevent further damage to this globally endangered ecosystem, or further habitat loss for the species, often as rare and endemic as the biomes they inhabit.

While I know that at least some of the USFWS scientists care very deeply about our wildlife, plants and wild lands, I cannot comprehend why this *wanton* destruction is allowed to occur, private land or not! There are literally acres of derelict, rock-plowed and truly degraded former pine rockland properties for sale near Krome Avenue and SW 88th (Kendall Drive) that could be paved over with little damage to virtually any species because there is no wildlife habitat remaining. This has been suggested repeatedly to the developer, but the business seems determined to destroy the Richmond tract.

I am increasingly dismayed by the lack of true protection our wildlands and animal wildlife has been given, in addition to the virtually complete discount of our endemic and rare plant species, outside of some finely written reports, superb management plans that are not implemented, and detailed information about species that are slowly but surely being allowed to go extinct before our eyes, such as the Zestos and Meske's skippers, for instance.

If this HCP is approved for this development, it will destroy a large portion of the remaining 1.5% of the remaining pine rocklands in Miami-Dade County outside of Everglades National Park. Because the listed species on this property will be severely impacted, this is not an "incidental take" but a very real potential for extinction, and which will be a breach of the responsibilities of USFWS. I urge USFWS to require, demand an EIS.

Sincerely,

Sandy Koi, MS

References:

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From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Rockland Pines property
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 10:37:44 PM

I oppose building a Walmart on this property. There are endangered species on the land. The ecosystem will be destroyed. Traffic is already horrendous and we already have enough shopping centers. People need green spaces, not concrete jungles.

Roberta Read

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Rockland property
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 7:14:28 PM

First of all I hope this email reaches you well second of all do we really need another Walmart and another theme park in Florida and on top of it to destroy a precious piece of property with Native species on it. do we really need another one of those I think not this is obviously all just about money and not about the concerns of the environment please stop this project Rick Borguss

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S® 6, an AT&T 4G LTE smartphone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Rocklands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:28:35 PM

Please save all remaining pine rocklands in Dade County. I can't believe the University of Miami had the nerve to sell it to begin with, but we could not stop what we did not know. You are what little is left in terms of oversight development. Use your power wisely, forcefully, and stop the destruction of what little is left.

Sincerely,
Sean Atkinson
Immediate Tech Support

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: SAVE DON'T PAVE
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 12:35:20 PM

I am OPPOSING Kill Permits for the UM/Ram Coral Reef Commons Project oppose bulldozing and paving over the largest privately owned tract of Pine Rocklands in the Country to make way for a Walmart Strip Mall.

I am also Opposing the Federal Kill Permits for Developers to start bulldozing the Richmond Pine Rocklands. Here are points i would like to emphasize:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provided sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat, and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative) are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."
7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

Comments should be sent to:

The public is invited to submit comments on the draft Coral Reef Commons HCP and EA 60 days after publication in the Federal Register. Written comments can be submitted by one of the following methods:

Electronically to:

crc_hcp@fws.gov

Email to:

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office, Ecological Services
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
Ashleigh Blackford
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
South Florida Ecological Services
1339 20th St.
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov
The draft HCP and EA can be viewed on web at
Ecological Services | Southeast Region
FWS.GOV

Sincerely

Sandy Loesche

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: SAVE RICHMOND PINE ROCKLANDS
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 11:14:21 AM

It's disheartening to learn that this vital ecosystem is on the chopping block. I say no!

The area is rare, found only in South Florida and the Caribbean. What used to stretch from Florida City to the Miami River has been fragmented by construction.

You may think it's nothing, but it's everything to certain endangered species. Destroy it and you destroy their chance of survival.

Please, I urge you to conserve the Richmond Pine Docklands.

Sincerely,
Danielle Barcion
Miami Resident

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: STOP KILLING OF PINE ROCKLANDS
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 3:48:56 PM

Hello,

I am a citizen of the United States and a resident of Miami-Dade County and I am 100% against the building of this Walmart strip mall. You will kill a highly endangered habitat for a Walmart that you can find 20 minutes away in any direction? Please stop this preposterous action and put a halt to anymore planning of this Walmart. We need more forests, not anymore Walmarts!

Regards,
A very concerned citizen

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Save It!!! Don't Pave it!!!
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 10:31:42 AM

No more Walmart's!!! Please!!!

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Save Our Native, Rare Forests. Reject the Coral Reef Commons
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 11:19:57 PM

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Dylann Turffs
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Save Pine Ridge!
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 9:11:41 AM

I am absolutely opposed to the granting of Federal Kill Permits for the Coral Reef Commons! To permanently do away with what remains of this unique and fragile habitat irreparably puts down the lives, and in the end, the continuation of species that rely on the safety of this particular refuge. Destroying this unique, native habitat permanently obliterates what little remains of one of Southern Florida's unique ecosystems.

Please do not allow further development of this area as it is our responsibility as inhabitants, and as intelligent caretakers of Earth to ensure that we manage and care for our world responsibly.

To reduce and destroy our ecosystems, destroys humanity!
Linda Kay Bryant

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Save Pine Rocklands!
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:24:25 PM

Protect this area. No Development!

Sincerely,

Belky Hernandez

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Save Pine Rocklands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 9:55:44 PM

Dear Sir or Madam,

Please do everything possible to safeguard this rare, endangered habitat - pine rocklands.

Thank you in advance for your attention.

With kind regards,

Felix Becerra

[REDACTED]

Sent from my mobile device - not while driving.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Save pine rockland habitat
Date: Monday, May 15, 2017 11:06:43 AM

To Whom It May Concern,

Pine rockland was once one of the dominant habitats in South Florida. It is home to the highest native plant biodiversity of any Florida ecosystem and is one of the rarest types of forest in the entire world. Nevertheless, today less than 2 percent of pine rockland habitat remains in Miami-Dade County. Of the dwindling remnants of pine rockland in South Florida, the largest habitat patch outside a National Park is the South Dade Richmond Pine Complex, which is scheduled to be bulldozed, or at the least, further fragmented to construct yet another residential and commercial complex.

In addition to threatening one of the few remnants of a globally imperiled habitat, the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan imperils numerous at-risk species, including Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Florida bonneted bat, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, Miami tiger beetle, white-crowned pigeon, Florida Brickell bush, and Carter's small flowered flax.

Every vanishing patch of pine rockland, and each species that it supports, warrant protection. They are a rare and a unique part of the country's natural history, and should be protected in perpetuity. Strip malls are an ephemeral and ubiquitous feature of the American landscape which deserve none of the same considerations.

Please do not approve any habitat conservation plan that threatens to replace a single square-yard of precious pine rockland habitat.

Sincerely,
Charlotte Talham

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Save the Miami Pine Rocklands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:37:39 PM

Hello...Please help us save the last and largest tract of Pine Rocklands outside the boundaries of Everglades National Park... Please stop this development from moving forward. It must be preserved for future generations. With only 2% remaining of the Pine Rocklands, every remaining acre is extraordinarily valuable to save the numerous endangered species known to exist here. Please help us stop the destruction of this habitat. Most of the endangered animals known to be on the site (butterflies, the Miami Tiger beetle who only lives here and snakes) were not properly surveyed for and no habitat restoration can fully replace these priceless natural resources. No proposed alternative provides the mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat except for the No Action Alternative. Please listen to us and don't allow this crime to occur. Don't take this important piece of land away from our children.

Sincerely,
Concerned Miami native, resident, Florida nature lover and mother of 8 year old girl,
Elisa Menendez

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Save the Pine Rocklands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:40:45 AM

Good Morning,

Miami Dade has so few areas that are undeveloped. A mere fifty years ago, our area was covered in beautiful pine rock land. Now it is disappearing at a rapid pace.

I urge you to save the small pine rock land area near the Zoo Miami for future generations. We can always find a new location for a Walmart and other development, but we can't find any more pine rock lands.

Please do what is best for the county! Save the pine rock land!

Thank you,

Janet Nostro

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Save the Pine Rocklands
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 8:42:56 PM

I oppose the granting of Federal Kill Permits for the "Coral Reef Commons" Project. So little is left of the Pine Rocklands. We need to preserve this native habitat for future generations.

Thank you,
Vickie

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Save the Pine Rocklands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:55:55 PM

Dear U. S. Fish & Wildlife Folks,

This is a comment on the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) prepared for the Coral Reef Commons in the pine rocklands of South Miami-Dade.

I'm writing to ask the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to deny the current proposal to develop approximately 86 acres of intact or restorable pine rockland habitat for a shopping center and apartment complex. The companion conservation plan does not compensate for the irreplaceable habitat which will be lost. I ask that you prepare the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required by NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) for a "major federal action" before moving forward with this plan.

Thank you,
Sabrina Carle

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov; David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Save the Pine Rocklands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 5:51:09 PM

The endangered insects and animals in the Miami Pine Rocklands need to be protected. Many procedural elements of the Kill License process have been done improperly and covertly.

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provided sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat,
and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative)
are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to

destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and “take” the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of “success.”

7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant’s own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants “credit” for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

Sincerely,

Dawn McCarthy

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: david_dell@fws.gov; ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov
Subject: Save the Richmond Pine Rocklands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:11:49 PM

Please take note and save the Richmond Pine Rocklands. We won't have another chance.

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
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Constance L. Brandenburg, P.A.
Attorney at Law

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Save the pine rockland species and oppose the coral reef commons project
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 8:19:44 PM

I have been a science teacher for 20 years and have volunteered and helped rebuild and maintain a pine rockland habitat. I recently went with Audubon birdwatching in the Zoo Miami Pine Rockland and was very impressed at the biodiversity present. It disheartens me to think that such a beautiful, unique habitat can be paved over to establish a Walmart and more housing. Both of these businesses can easily be placed in other nearby locations. This is a very sensitive habitat and small changes in and around the land and adjacent land have will huge and many times unexpected impacts on this ecosystem.

As citizens, we are relying of the Fish and Wildlife department to do the right thing and protect all of the species that live on this globally endangered habitat. We need as much of this habitat that is left because not only is there very little of this habitat that remains, but climate change is having negative effects on species globally. We cannot just rely on protecting Everglades Pine Rockland habitat because research has already shown huge changes in the Everglades biodiversity. For example, look at how inland mangroves have spread in the Everglades. How can we keep destroying Pine Rockland habitat when experts have already come to the conclusion that climate change is and will continue to alter habitat. Our only hope of saving all of the Pine Rockland endangered species is by preserving all of their habitat that remains.

In addition, I believe that it is important to really assess the land that the companies want to develop on. I know they claim that they have already assessed the land. However, how can we be sure that the job was done thoroughly and honestly if independently hired experts have not be allowed to survey the land.

In our efforts to preserve endangered species, it is essential to determine what endangered species are currently living, nesting, or obtaining resources from this land. I feel we need an independent survey of the land in order to make sure the information that is being given to us is correct and not biased and is based on numerous surveys of the land by unbiased experts in the field.

These unbiased experts should be allowed to survey the land throughout the year and perform an extended study in order to have a better understanding of all of the species that rely of this part of the ecosystem. There may be other species that rely on this land that are seasonal like endangered tiger beetle that may need protection as well. However without an unbiased survey, we will never know.

Lastly, as we learned with the Florida Panther, habitat fragmentation has a huge impact on population size. Dividing this already small tract will decrease the population of endangered animals found in this area. Not to mention the extra stress that these organisms will be forced to experience from the noise pollution created by construction and the extra traffic entering the area. Also there will be an increase in air pollution and other pollutants that will enter into this ecosystem. We can't possibly **really** believe that the developers plan to "help" the pine rocklands will actually really help anyone but themselves.

Plus, how can we expect developers to help the remaining pine rocklands when through their own admission the University of Miami did a terrible job at maintaining the land! How can we reward University of Miami for not taking care of the land and the organisms living there in the first place.

Again, I implore you to not destroy this habitat by allowing them to build on it. I have worked for years in habitat conservation efforts to restore pine rockland areas and it is such a unique and sensitive habitat. I am sure that this tract of land is the last hope that the endangered species have.

As an environmental science teacher I often discuss the Endangered Species Act. Students and citizens really believe that this act was meant to save endangered species from becoming extinct and to provide these species with government protection. The Endangered Species Act should not be manipulated to serve the interests of multi-million dollar corporations. These companies should not be allowed to trample over the rights of the endangered organisms living in this globally imperiled habitat.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Crc_Hcp](#)
Subject: Save the rock land near the Miami zoo
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 10:06:50 AM

Please do not grant permission to build on the rocklands near the Miami Zoo

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Say YES to Pine Rocklands: Say NO to Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 11:48:49 AM

Dear People:

There are many reasons NOT to approve the building of Coral Reef Commons.

This land was polluted with nuclear waste that the University of Miami buried there. Though some efforts were made to clean it up, radio active animal carcasses are still being uncovered.

This land is likely to be unreachable, because of rising sea level, before the 30 year estimated lifetime of this Commons will expire.

Not the most important reason is that the traffic will be impossible - especially during rush hours. It is already stop-and-go at those times.

Some of the most important reasons for NOT granting the right to build 900 "garden" apartments are listed below.

Reasons why include but are not limited to:

1. The developer's "**science**" is **flawed and incomplete**. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed **mitigation is markedly inadequate**. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas: developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is, at best, 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" especially when compared to other HCPs, and especially for a project that contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally imperiled ecosystem that is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. **Burning is crucial, but impossible**. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pineland and depends entirely on a robust and periodic burn regimen, which would not be feasible, especially with approx. 2,000 people (900 apts), a Walmart and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas that must undergo burns. As

noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pineland is not an adequate substitute for fire.

4. **"No Good Alternatives."** All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally imperiled habitat, and, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative), are either "straw men," or, in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative), seek to get mitigation credit for property that is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").

5. **"Success" is illusory.** The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are, in essence, "funny money."

6. **No penalty for failure.** The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."

7. **Failing grade for UM.** By their consultant's own admission, the University of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the Federal government (read: U.S. Taxpayers!) for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect this rare resource.

Please do not grant building permits to the developers or the University of Miami.

Thank you! - Sally B. Philips, EdD, CPPT

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Scanned Comments with Timely Postmarks
Date: Thursday, May 25, 2017 8:06:20 AM
Attachments: [scanned comment timely postmarkDOC005.pdf](#)
[scanned comment timely postmarkDOC003.pdf](#)
[scan comment timely postmark.pdf](#)

3 comment letters

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

NOTE: All email correspondence and attachments received from or sent to me are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be disclosed to third parties.

May 19, 2017

RECEIVED ADMIN ES

TO: David Dell
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Service

MAY 25 2017

BY: SM

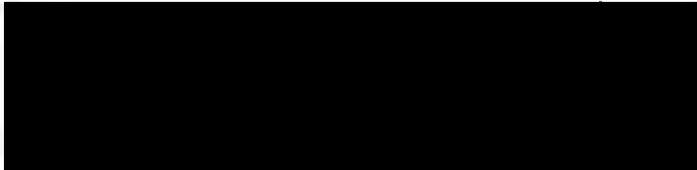
Oh boy do we have a big problem. The proposed development of the Pine Rockland in Miami-Dade County is inexcusable. I don't know how I am going to look ~~by~~ five year old granddaughter in the eye and tell her I am part of a system that is going to kill off endangered plants and animals for a shopping center and an amusement park. Yes, housing units and a school are planned but those do not need to be build on such sensitive land. Look, I ~~am~~ understand the need for development but this is not the place.

I'm sure those of you who entered the Service did so because you care about our environment. Please let the US Fish and Wildlife Service protect the Pine Dockland tract for all of us so that noise and traffic don't replace the habitat of the Atala Butterfly and Bonneted Bats.

Respectfully,



Richard Burgess



Sara Lehman



RECEIVED ADMIN ES

MAY 25 2017

BY: 

Dear Mr. Dell,

As a voting resident of Miami-Dade for many years I am very distressed with the planned development of the pine rockland area south of 152nd Street. I am especially concerned about the loss of endangered species in the area as well as the potential damage to this important ecosystem. Our community needs this parcel of land in our environment more than we need another shopping center, water park, theme park or housing units. My children and grandchildren need native, unmolested land. How can we afford to leave a cement legacy?

I strongly object to the development of the pine dockland area and the impact it will have on the bonnet bats, butterflies and the last remaining beetles of their kind in the area.

Sincerely,

Sara Lehman

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 30345

May 17, 2017

RECEIVED ADMIN ES

MAY 25 2017

BY: SM

RE: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan

I have volunteered at Zoo Miami for over 25 years and have had occasion to visit and wonder at the surrounding Pine Rockland. It is an amazing urban oasis. This beautiful habitat is the last refuge for many wonderful but endangered plants and animals. I cannot imagine that they can hold on much longer if more of their last refuge is denied to them. They will not only have less area to survive, but what remains will be forever altered.

Life sustaining fires will be suppressed. Will Walmart tolerate a prescribed burn that causes a smoky haze over the Blue Light Special on aisle three? Will the people who move into the new apartments tolerate the smoke that inconveniences them, smells acrid, drops ashes in the pool and blackens their landscape?

Will the rare and endangered be able to tolerate the increased toxins in the exhaust from the cars and trucks that will be added to the air? SW 152 Street is already at its car choked capacity. Much of the day cars already idle at a standstill spewing exhaust. It will get worse with the increased traffic the new development brings.

As with all Walmarts, there will be a large parking lot. Will the animals be able to cross the expanse of parking lot without harm from the traffic or simply the heat of pavement? It will be impossible to dig their burrows in this inhospitable expanse. We don't have to worry about the endangered plants because it is unlikely they will be able to grow up through the asphalt.

My understanding is that the original purpose was to preserve this acreage, but due to benign neglect by the University of Miami, it was allowed to degrade. Because of the existing seed bank and the viable surrounding forest, the property could be easily restored to a working part of the whole.

I cannot conceive of agency tasked with protecting the environment even contemplating altering this globally imperiled ecosystem to accommodate a development that, unlike this unique ecosystem, can be located anywhere and not only survive but prosper and be profitable as well.

Sincerely,



Mary T. Rose

[Redacted]

CC: ASHLEIGH BLACKFORD

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Some of the reasons why Fish and Wildlife should reject the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 2:29:51 PM

All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally imperiled habitat, and, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative). Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas: developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is, at best, 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" especially when compared to other HCPs, and especially for a project that contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally imperiled ecosystem that is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.

The University of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the Federal government (read: U.S. Taxpayers!) for educational, not profit, purposes! The proposed project is certainly not educational!

Jo-Ann Jennier

Concerned citizen for the endangered Florida Pine-Rocklands Ecosystem

From: [Dell, David](#)
To: [FW4 CRC_HCP](#)
Subject: Stack of Form Letters Received April 25, 2017
Date: Wednesday, May 24, 2017 3:08:21 PM
Attachments: [stack of 50 form letters recieved at RO April 25 2017.pdf](#)

David Dell
Southeast Region
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator
404/679-7313
fax: 7081
david_dell@fws.gov

NOTE: All email correspondence and attachments received from or sent to me are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be disclosed to third parties.

April 5, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
David_dell@rwf.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov

Re: Request for Local Public Hearing FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223, Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Incidental Take Permit Application and Environmental Assessment for Commercial Mixed-Use Development; Miami-Dade County, FL ; and, 90 Day Public Comment Request

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford,

As a concerned Florida resident, I respectfully request a public hearing on the above-referenced proposed incidental take permit and environmental assessment on the commercial mixed-use development locally known as Coral Reef Commons. I request that this public hearing take place during the comment period and in a location and timeframe that ensures members of the public will be able to meaningfully participate. A public hearing would align with the stated importance of public hearings in the Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality.

Additionally, I respectfully request the public comment period be extended to ninety (90) days to allow the public additional time to examine the proposed Coral Reef commons Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). In light of the three (3) years the applicants have had to develop the HCP in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), I believe this request is warranted and is not unreasonable.

Native habitats in Florida are rapidly disappearing and pine rockland is a globally endangered native habitat. Coral Reef Commons would negatively affect the largest remaining pine rockland outside of the Everglades National Park. This important community provides vital habitat for many endangered species, including those at issue in the subject permit application (see reverse side).

The proposed project has created a substantial environmental controversy and substantial interest in a public hearing. *Many concerned residents oppose the project and strongly support preservation of the last remaining pine rocklands outside of the Everglades.* As stakeholders in the future of the pine rocklands, concerned residents would like the opportunity to attend a public hearing on the application.

Sincerely,



April 5, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

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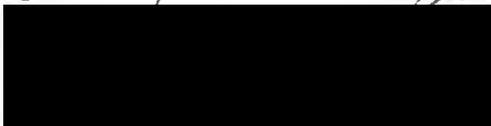
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April 5, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
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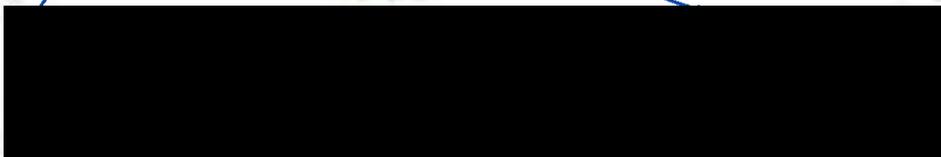
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Sincerely,

Louise Ross



April 5, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

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Sincerely,

Maria L. Barza


April 5, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

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Sincerely,

Brian H. Wolf M.D.



April 5, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov

Re: Request for Local Public Hearing FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223, Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Incidental Take Permit Application and Environmental Assessment for Commercial Mixed-Use Development; Miami-Dade County, FL ; and, 90 Day Public Comment Request

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Sincerely,

Bew Gerald



April 5, 2017

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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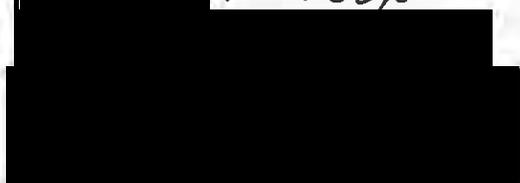
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Valerie Robben



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Handwritten signature of Connie J. Washburn in cursive script.



A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the typed name of the sender.

April 5, 2017

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Sincerely,



April 5, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
David_delli@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
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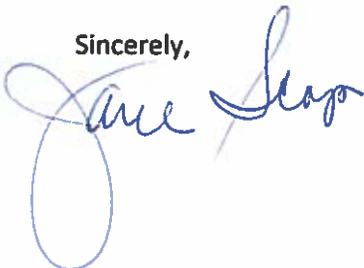
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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jane Skop". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

April 5, 2017

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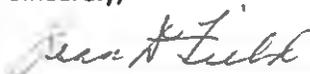
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Sincerely,

Bobbie Richards



April 5, 2017

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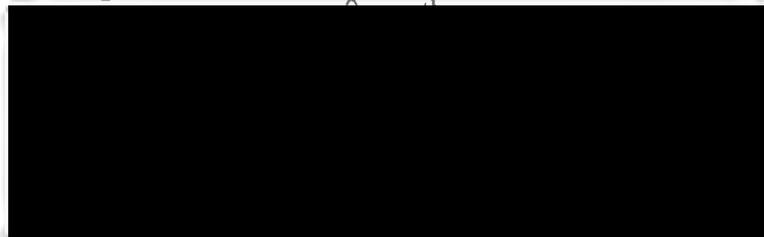
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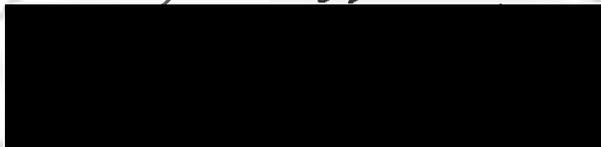
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Mikolaj Plater Zybek



April 5, 2017

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Claudia Tenzer
CTenzer



April 5, 2017

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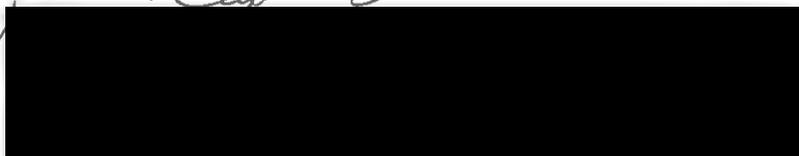
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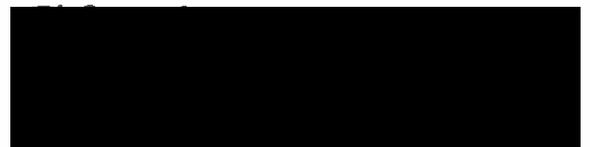
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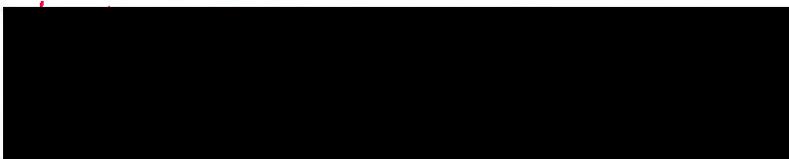
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Sybil Granton Wheeler

[Redacted signature block]

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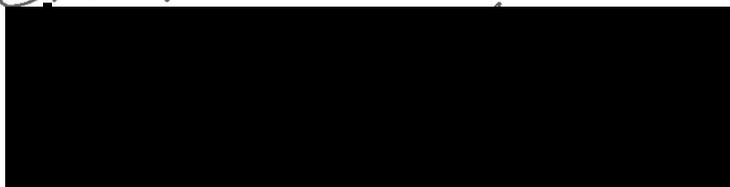
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Christi + Tom Sherouse



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Atlanta Regional Office
1875 Century Blvd.
Atlanta, GA 30345
David_dell@fws.gov

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov

Re: Request for Local Public Hearing FWS-R4-ES-2016-N223, Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Incidental Take Permit Application and Environmental Assessment for Commercial Mixed-Use Development; Miami-Dade County, FL ; and, 90 Day Public Comment Request

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Sincerely,

Swan & Paul Yome



April 5, 2017

David Dell
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1875 Century Blvd.
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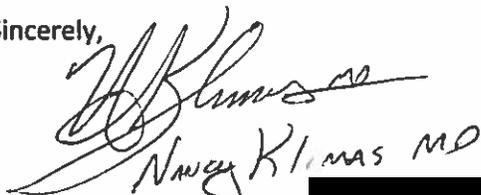
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Sincerely,


Nancy Klimas MD



April 5, 2017

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1875 Century Blvd.
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Sincerely,

Milda Vaivada
Milda Vaivada



April 5, 2017

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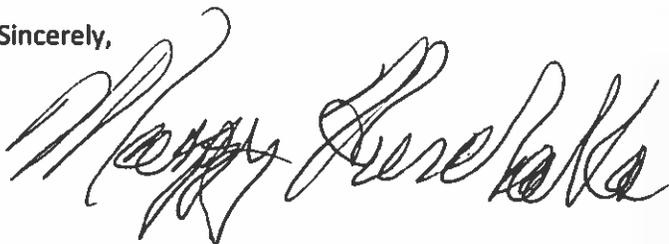
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Sincerely,

Coral Dawn Warner
Coral Dawn Warner



April 5, 2017

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1875 Century Blvd.
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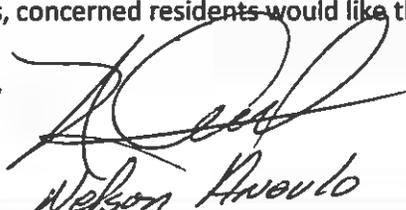
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Sincerely,



Nelson Azevedo



April 5, 2017

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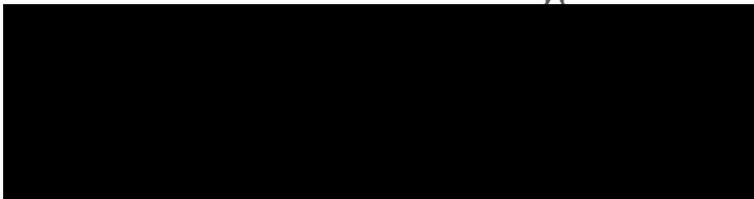
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Sincerely,

María Elena Angulo



April 5, 2017

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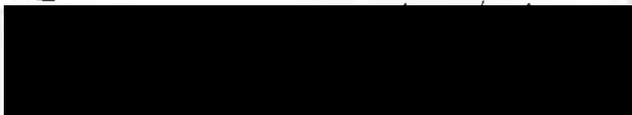
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Edith Perez
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April 5, 2017

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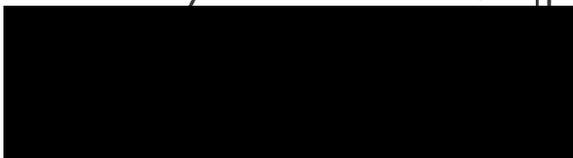
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Sincerely, *Kimberly E. Anspaugh*



April 5, 2017

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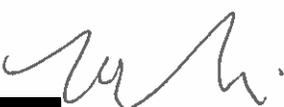
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Marcy Sosnowski 



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Native habitats in Florida are rapidly disappearing and pine rockland is a globally endangered native habitat. Coral Reef Commons would negatively affect the largest remaining pine rockland outside of the Everglades National Park. This important community provides vital habitat for many endangered species, including those at issue in the subject permit application (see reverse side).

The proposed project has created a substantial environmental controversy and substantial interest in a public hearing. *Many concerned residents oppose the project and strongly support preservation of the last remaining pine rocklands outside of the Everglades.* As stakeholders in the future of the pine rocklands, concerned residents would like the opportunity to attend a public hearing on the application.

Sincerely,



From: [REDACTED]
To: David_dell@fws.gov; Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Stop Coral Reef Commons
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 11:06:07 PM

Dear David and Ashleigh,

Please, people who live around the Richmond Pine Rocklands don't even want or value new development in this area. You know as well as I that this plot of land shouldn't be build upon, but restored to create as much habitat as we can considering how little of it we have left. You must know that even a developer with the best of intentions falls short of what people like the Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition could do to restore the land. There is no reason to believe that these developers will make good on their promise to restore the fraction they've set aside, they are building on a majority of it! Please protect this habitat, because Ram Realty won't be the last developers who want a slice of what's left of Miami's "available space", and they'll always come with the best intentions. Just a little more! Now or eventually you will have to say no more. Now is a good time, and especially in this tract of land. This is an important tract to endangered species and one of the largest remaining. We can find people to restore it without putting our faith in opportunistic entrepreneurs, plus you will have the enthusiastic help of the MPRC comprising of many members of the community, with thousands more Miamians and Floridians sympathetic and supportive to the group and myself. I'm artist from Palm Beach County who felt so sadden and frustrated when I heard of this happening to yet another invaluable tract of habitat. The story keeps repeating! I volunteer and travel tirelessly back and forth to Miami and spending hours upon hours illustrating the MPRC's endangered species coloring book and making art about the habitat to raise awareness however I can. This is important to me and so many others who can't stand to see all our remaining habitats turn into shopping, with our native species paying a heavy price. Say no to Ram, please!

--

~Kim Heise

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Stop Coral Reef Commons
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 8:42:12 PM

Please, people who live around the Richmond Pine Rocklands don't even want or value new development in this area. You know as well as I that this plot of land shouldn't be build upon, but restored to create as much habitat as we can considering how little of it we have left. You must know that even a developer with the best of intentions falls short of what people like the Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition could do to restore the land. There is no reason to believe that these developers will make good on their promise to restore the fraction they've set aside, they are building on a majority of it! Please protect this habitat, because Ram Realty won't be the last developers who want a slice of what's left of Miami's "available space", and they'll always come with the best intentions. Just a little more! Now or eventually you will have to say no more. Now is a good time, and especially in this tract of land. This is an important tract to endangered species and one of the largest remaining. We can find people to restore it without putting our faith in opportunistic entrepreneurs, plus you will have the enthusiastic help of the MPRC comprising of many members of the community, with thousands more Miamians and Floridians sympathetic and supportive to the group and myself. I'm n artist from Palm Beach County who felt so saddened and frustrated when I heard of this happening to yet another invaluable tract of habitat. The story keeps repeating! I volunteer and travel tirelessly back and forth to Miami and spending hours upon hours illustrating the MPRC's endangered species coloring book and making art about the habitat to raise awareness however I can. This is important to me and so many of your neighbors who can't stand to see all our remaining habitats turn into shopping, with our native species paying a heavy price. Don't compromise, say no to Ram, please!

--

~Kim Heise

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Stop the Coral Reef Commons
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 11:19:56 PM

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons. As an employee within Everglades National Park, I witness every day how crucial these habitats are for south Florida's incredible plants and wildlife, who cannot speak for themselves. There will always be other opportunities for humans to develop shopping empires for selfish economic gains. Meanwhile, we are running out of time to preserve south Florida's pine rocklands.

Please make the ethical, intelligent choice and start prioritizing the environment.

Thank you,

Katie Sykes
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Stop the Madness
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:12:06 AM

Please deny the current proposal to develop the 86 acres of pine rockland habitat. Florida DOES NOT NEED ANY MORE SHOPPING CENTERS!!! We need to concentrate on preserving our irreplaceable habitat.

Before accepting or denying this proposal, it is required by NEPA to prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement. Please do this.

Karin Sanders
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Support Coral Reef Commonz
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 9:52:54 AM

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best for preservation of this habitat. I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for a housing development is crucial for this area. This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present there now and allow for future generations to enjoy this area. I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you
Grace Sanchez-Martinez
Kendall, FL

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [Esther Monzon-Aguirre](#)
Subject: Support for Coral Reef Commons
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 1:59:06 PM

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 30345
Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach FL 32960

*Subject Line: Support for Coral Reef Commons
Until recently I lived very close to the proposed Coral Reef Commons Project. I support the Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan, because it will provide opportunities for improved sustainability of the pine rock land in the area.*

*I hope you will approve the plan.
Thank you,*

Erika Soler

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Support for Coral Reef Commons
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 10:03:13 AM

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 30345
Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach FL 32960

*Subject Line: Support for Coral Reef Commons
Until recently I lived very close to the proposed Coral Reef Commons Project. I support the Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan, because it will provide opportunities for improved sustainability of the pine rock land in the area.*

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,

Terence McKinley

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Support for Coral Reef Commons
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 2:00:35 PM

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 30345
Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach FL 32960

*Subject Line: Support for Coral Reef Commons
Until recently I lived very close to the proposed Coral Reef Commons Project. I support the Coral Reef Commons Habitat Conservation Plan, because it will provide opportunities for improved sustainability of the pine rock land in the area.*

*I hope you will approve the plan.
Thank you,*

Yvonne Soler McKinley

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Support for Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 9:42:26 AM
Attachments: [top.letterhead](#)

Dear Mr. Bell,

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. I support this project for many reasons, including a delivery of 700 jobs between permanent and during the construction period. The project includes housing, as well as a school site, police desk and transit stop. I understand the environmental concerns, but RAM Development is cleaning up the neglected land and removing invasive species with the participation of environmental groups and government authorities. RAM has taken the extraordinary step of setting aside land to build in perpetuity as a natural preserve.

I am committed to provide leadership to our community for relevant community economic development issues and putting our community to work and this project furthers that mission. I believe the HCP is a thoughtful plan that balances the environmentally sensitive issues while improving the economy of Miami-Dade County. I hope you will approve the plan.

Regards,

Ann McNeill
Chair

National Association of Black Women In Construction, Inc

Attachment top.letterhead (6573 Bytes) cannot be converted to PDF format.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Support of Coral Reef Commons HCP
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 7:53:32 AM

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. As a teacher I want my students to have many experiences with nature. The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future. I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,

Jama Garcia

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Support of Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 10:35:29 AM

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. I support this project for many reasons, including a delivery of 700 jobs between permanent and during the construction period. The project includes housing, as well as a school site, police desk and transit stop. I understand the environmental concerns, but RAM Development is cleaning up the neglected land and removing invasive species with the participation of environmental groups and government authorities. RAM has taken the extraordinary step of setting aside land to build in perpetuity as a natural preserve.

I am committed to provide leadership to our community for relevant community economic development issues and putting our community to work and this project furthers that mission. I believe the HCP is a thoughtful plan that balances the environmentally sensitive issues while improving the economy of Miami-Dade County.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you ,

Maxine Brandmark

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Support of Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 10:33:19 AM

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. I support this project for many reasons, including a delivery of 700 jobs between permanent and during the construction period. The project includes housing, as well as a school site, police desk and transit stop. I understand the environmental concerns, but RAM Development is cleaning up the neglected land and removing invasive species with the participation of environmental groups and government authorities. RAM has taken the extraordinary step of setting aside land to build in perpetuity as a natural preserve.

I am committed to provide leadership to our community for relevant community economic development issues and putting our community to work and this project furthers that mission. I believe the HCP is a thoughtful plan that balances the environmentally sensitive issues while improving the economy of Miami-Dade County. I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,

Nina Marie Roca,
Juris Doctor Candidate, May 2017
Florida International University College of Law
FIU Law Review, Articles Editor

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Support of Coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 10:41:07 AM

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. I support this project for many reasons, including a delivery of 700 jobs between permanent and during the construction period. The project includes housing, as well as a school site, police desk and transit stop. I understand the environmental concerns, but RAM Development is cleaning up the neglected land and removing invasive species with the participation of environmental groups and government authorities. RAM has taken the extraordinary step of setting aside land to build in perpetuity as a natural preserve.

I am committed to provide leadership to our community for relevant community economic development issues and putting our community to work and this project furthers that mission. I believe the HCP is a thoughtful plan that balances the environmentally sensitive issues while improving the economy of Miami-Dade County. I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you

Lorena M. Lama, MHSA
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Walmart NO, pinelands yes!
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:59:11 AM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this e-mail to protest the approval of the Coral Reef commons project. There are many endangered plants and animals who live on this tract of Florida pinelands. The proposals to save only small portions of this pineland will not be sufficient to protect them. That plus the amount of traffic and congestion that such a project will cause. There are many other areas that this project could be built on farther west on SW 152nd Ave. I ask you to vote NO on this project.

Bob Troy

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Watch Pine Rockland Film to Understand Why Coral Reef Commons HCP Is a Bad Deal for Species
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 10:27:25 AM

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

I produced a film that aired Earth Day 2012 on the Miami PBS Station WPBT featuring the imperiled Pine Rockland community found only in south Florida. Take a moment to watch and better understand what is at stake: <http://www.intonaturefilms.org/project/pine-rockland-composition/>

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Jennifer Brown
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: We have to reject the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 11:12:02 AM
Importance: High

Here are some reasons why Fish and Wildlife should reject the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan include but are not limited to:

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is markedly inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas: developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is, at best, 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" especially when compared to other HCPs, and especially for a project that contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally imperiled ecosystem that is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial, but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pineland and depends entirely on a robust and periodic burn regimen, which would not be feasible, especially with approx. 2,000 people (900 apts), a Walmart and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas that must undergo burns. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pineland is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provide sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally imperiled habitat, and, except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative), are either "straw men," or, in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative), seek to get mitigation credit for property that is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."
7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the University of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the Federal government (read: U.S. Taxpayers!) for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the rare resource.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: We need wildlife habitat more than development. (Coral Reef Commons)
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 3:49:44 AM

Hello, thanks for your time.

I'm writing to request you to provide pine rocklands plants and animals with the protections they urgently need to survive extinction. As you know, many of these species are found only in endangered pine rockland forests -- including the acres slated for the development of Coral Reef Commons.

The development project's promise to preserve some pine rockland habitat isn't good enough. The loss of this precious land could be a death sentence for many of these species, and the proposed habitat conservation plan doesn't account for the fact that, for some of the species, there's simply nowhere else to live. Nor does it explain how the Service will achieve its mandate of ensuring that these animals and plants not only survive but recover to the point where the protections of the Endangered Species Act are no longer needed.

Furthermore, I was disappointed to learn that despite tremendous public opposition to this project and support for the pine rockland forest habitat and its species, the Service declined to host a public hearing on the proposal. Please reconsider this misstep and give the public an opportunity to learn more about our amazing wildlife and the threats against them.

We don't need more development in South Florida. We do need to protect our wildlife -- including imperiled plants, beetles and butterflies -- and their forest home from vanishing.

Thank you,

Kristin Green
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Wetlands Development
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 1:09:57 PM

We do not need any more developments in florida and need to protect our wetlands period.

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Wild Florida lost forever
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:30:23 PM

Dear Sir,

Only 5 percent of this habitat exists in Florida directly where this development is proposed . I implore you to deny these permits.

Once the habitat is gone it's gone. No mitigation is going to make up for the treasures that are destroyed...gone forever.

Please rule in favor of wild Florida!

Thank you,
Karen Smith

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Wirth Comments
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 12:00:55 AM
Attachments: [Wirth Re Coral Reef Commons HCP.pdf](#)

Attached are my comments Re the CRC HCP

Department of Biological Sciences

May 22, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta, GA 30345

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960

Re: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan and associated appendices

Mr. Dell, Mrs. Blackford:

I am writing in response to the Service's March 23, 2017 public comment solicitation regarding the Draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for the proposed Coral Reef Commons (CRC) Development submitted by Ram Realty and University of Miami (the Applicant) In my review of the HCP documents I found a substantial amount of the best available scientific and commercially available data has been misrepresented, excluded, or not considered by the Applicant. The Applicant has additionally not completed adequate surveys of the CRC property for listed species. When the available data are incorporated, the HCP fails to adequately minimize or mitigate impacts and the CRC project has the potential to appreciably reduce the survival and recovery of some pine rockland endemics. Consequently, I urge the Service to deny an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) under the present HCP.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED] or via phone [REDACTED] if you have any questions concerning the content of this letter.

Sincerely,
Christopher Wirth

Attachments: Review of the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan

1.1 *Overview of the Project:*

The Applicant equates pine rocklands within Everglades National Park (ENP) with pine rocklands in metropolitan Miami-Dade County; however, ENP and metro Miami-Dade (including Richmond Heights) pine rocklands differ significantly across both biotic and abiotic factors (Maguire 1995, URS 2007), which strongly influences species composition (. The metro Miami-Dade pine rocklands have historically been subject to the most significant development and only ~1.8% (URS 2007) remain today. The Applicant additionally fails to note that, while a majority of extant pine rocklands are in some manner protected, the remaining rocklands are highly fragmented. This lack of connectivity presents significant, widespread challenges for habitat management and the continued survival of rockland species, chiefly due to fire suppression, heightened susceptibility to stochastic events, and increased potential for significant loss of genetic diversity (e.g. inbreeding depression) (Brooks et al. 2002, URS 2007). The Richmond Heights pine rocklands are the largest contiguous tract of such habitat in metro Miami-Dade (URS 2007) and further degradation or development of these rocklands likely represents a significant loss of habitat connectivity and the heightened probability of species extirpation and extinction.

The addition of the Applicant's Off-site Mitigation Area will not increase site habitat connectivity or significantly increase the total area of pine rocklands in the Richmond Heights tract, key factors for many species' long-term survival. Furthermore, this site is at near-term risk for significant connectivity disruption; Miami-Dade County is planning a major "Orlando-style" theme park, Miami Wilds, to the west and directly north of the off-site Mitigation Area. If this theme park is constructed it will significantly disrupt any remaining connectivity between the CRC east preserve and the northern Zoo Miami pine rockland preserves, nearly isolating both CRC preserves from the remainder of the Richmond pine rocklands.

1.1.4 *Species Covered*

The Applicant asserts the absence of numerous listed taxa from the CRC property without having completed adequate surveys; see detailed comments under section 3.1.

1.1.6 *CRC Property History*

Significant centrally-located portions of the Richmond Heights tract were historically (circa 1943) scraped to the limestone substrate during the construction of Naval Air Station Richmond; however, after the deactivation of the station much of the scraped area was neglected and recolonized by pine trees (Wirth 2015, 2016a). Today, the northern extent of Zoo Miami's pine rockland preserves lie on a portion of this historically scraped area, demonstrating historical site disturbance is a poor predictor for site habitat quality or site restoration potential (Wirth 2015, 2016a). Additionally, the Applicant's characterization of historically scraped areas as unsuitable for restoration is contradicted by their own historic areal imagery (HCP Figures 1-5), which show the continual regrowth of pines in historically scraped or cleared areas.

1.1.6 *CRC Property Permitting History*

The Applicant asserts synonymy of the Miami tiger beetle (MTB), *Cicindelidia floridana*, a Federally listed species, with *Cicindelidia scabrosa*, a non-listed species. This is a gross mischaracterization of the scientific consensus; the MTB is widely recognized in the scientific community as a full species (see CITE?). The Applicant's continued (Wirth 2016b) omission and distortion of the best available science concerning the MTB is unacceptable.

2.3 *Land Use/Vegetative Community Categories for the CRC Property*

The Applicant excludes key information from Possley et al (2014); the Applicant does cite the impracticality — and speculative impossibility — of pineland restoration through simple fire reintroduction, but omit reference to a pineland “ecological point-of-no-return” and two associated predictor variables, litter depth and tree density:

The ecological point-of-no-return for pine rocklands and other pyrogenic forests corresponds with the loss of flammability ... when litter depth and tree density reach a threshold, flammability is lost and managers must intervene to bring the system back to the point where it could carry a fire. Eventually, when the flammable species are no longer part of the system, it has effectively transitioned to an alternative stable state of a hardwood forest, and restoration to pineland simply by reintroducing fire is impractical and may, in fact, be impossible.

Both litter depth and tree density represent biologically significant predictors for an ecological point-of-no-return (Possley et al. 2014) but the Applicant neglects to incorporate such biologically meaningful variables in either the land use or vegetative community categorization, instead using a subjective, generalized “transitional concept” of pine rockland succession in combination with “existing habitat conditions, disturbance history, soils, and vegetative structure and composition.” The incorporation of site disturbance history further biases the Applicant’s categorization scheme as historical disturbance is a poor predictor of present-day habitat quality (Wirth 2015, 2016a).

3.1 *Survey Methodologies of CRC Property*

The Applicant conducted biological surveys for all floral and faunal species in a total of 16 days (HCP Table 3.1); the weather during all surveys was “mostly cloudy” or “light rain.” The mean survey start time was 9:44am and the mean survey end time was 3:06pm. Of the 16 surveys, 10 occurred in September 2014, four in October 2014, and one each in November 2014 and January 2015. Both the limited number of in-field days (which occurred at the end of several species’ activity periods, e.g. MTB) and potentially sub-optimal weather likely reduce the probability of detecting listed species and further surveys are needed, as additionally detailed below.

3.1.2 *BSHB Survey Methodology*

The Applicant conducted surveys for the BSHB on seven days in September and October 2014; however, peak numbers of adult BSHB are found in the early summer months (FWS 2014-18614). There is no mention of host plant inspection for larval BSHB. Consequently, the Applicant’s BSHB survey efforts to-date not adequate and further surveys for adult and larval BSHB should be conducted.

3.2.7 *Miami Tiger Beetle¹*

The Applicant grossly mischaracterizes the extent of MTB surveys on the CRC property; contrary to the assertion of “extensive” surveys, only ~1.7 ha (4.3 acres or ~3%) of the CRC property has been surveyed (FWS–R4–ES–2015–0164; 4500030113). The entirety of MTB surveys on the property consist of an initial inspection (no waypoints recorded) by Knisley’s unnamed colleague (EMAIL to BAUR), and a subsequent brief survey was conducted by Knisley (2013). At the time of this survey, Knisley was under the impression that the area in

¹ On page 56 the Applicant reproduces the following sentence from a previous HCP draft: “The Miami tiger beetle does not currently receive protection status on either the state or federal level.” As indicated by the Applicant in the same paragraph, this is inaccurate; the MTB was recently listed as Endangered, effective November 4, 2016.

question was a boundary parcel of Zoo property (BAUR); this fact is reflected in his report (Knisley 2013) and email correspondences (BAUR). The conflation of Knisley's survey of and habitat suitability assessment for ~3% of the property with the entirety of the CRC property lacks any scientific basis and does not represent the best available science, contrary to the Applicant's assertion. Further extensive surveys of the property are needed to determine MTB presence and habitat suitability.

3.2.3 *Eastern Indigo Snake*

and

3.2.4 *Rim Rock Crowned Snake*

The Applicant's surveys are entirely too limited for detection of either species; in the neighboring Zoo Miami pine rockland preserves researchers used a combination of repeated active searching and passive trapping, utilizing drift fences in combination with funnel and pitfall traps, to detect species presence (FWC 2011).

5.2.1 *Pine Roland Functional Assessment*

Given the highly limited biological surveys of the CRC property, the Applicant's assertion that listed taxa potentially present on the CRC property have "a low detection probability" is questionable, particularly as reliable survey methodologies exist for numerous taxa (e.g. BSHB, FBB, MTB, snakes) and numerous survey methods are referenced in the HCP, associated appendices, and cited literature.

While a precedence for habitat functional assessments is noted by the Applicant, no comparable habitat functional assessments appear to have been utilized in the HCP creation given the absence of methodological citations, unlike similar assessments (e.g. Progress Energy Florida 2011). As a result, the Applicant's methods do not appear to permit meaningful comparison of site function or assessment with existing functional assessments in the scientific literature.

Due to the functional assessment's simplistic design species from disparate ecological and taxonomic groups (e.g. both predators and herbivores, vertebrates and invertebrates) are "lumped" and the ecological requirements of all taxa approximated by six generalized functional characteristics of the surrogate pine rockland habitat (canopy cover, presence of non-native plants, fire frequency, soil condition, presence of native plant species, and habitat connectivity). Consequently, the Applicant's assessment method is likely to poorly estimate the presence or quality of necessary pine rockland characteristics for the diverse assemblage of species in question.

The Applicant assigns weights, from 0.10–0.20, to each of the six functional characteristics in habitat value unit (HVU) calculations without providing a methodological justification, only a subjective assessment of character "importance." This is highly irregular and the absence of clear weighting rational injects subjectivity and a high probability of biasing the assessment. This subjective weighting component further prohibits meaningful comparisons of the Applicant's assessment results to functional assessments in the literature.

Additional methodological problems plague the functional assessment; the scoring matrix design assumes a linear relationship between all habitat functional characteristics and habitat quality; this assumption is not substantiated. Such sweeping ecological assumptions should be thoroughly investigated and their predictive value confirmed before use in applied contexts. The use of site disturbance history (scraped) biases the Applicant's scoring matrix towards lows HVU scores as historical disturbance is a poor predictor of present-day habitat quality (Wirth 2015, 2016a). In combination, the lack of a robust design, lumping of species, and serious methodological flaws likely imbue serious bias into the HVU calculations for both initial and post-development scenarios.

Connectivity and Fragmentation (Habitat Matrix)

The Applicant's habitat connectivity calculation fails to adequately account for differential dispersal abilities across listed species, treating volant vertebrates (e.g. FBB), non-volant vertebrates (e.g. Rim Rock Crowned Snake), high-vagility invertebrates (e.g. BSHB), and low-vagility invertebrates (e.g. MTB) as equally like to disperse within and between the on-site preserves.

7.2 Stepping Stones

The Applicant does not indicate how the 3.88 acres of stepping stones will facilitate species movement between the preserves, particularly for the MTB, which requires open sandy areas, and snake species. Given the Applicant's comments about pine rockland plant species presence in the stepping stones, it is probable that these areas would only be attractive to herbivores. In the case of a species occupying a stepping stone over a long period of time what is the Applicant's proposed strategy to prevent take, accidental or intentional?

7.5.2 Mechanical Treatment

Mechanical treatment is not ecologically equivalent to prescribed burns and stimulates the growth of weedy invasives and hardwoods (Possley et al. 2014), therefore, mechanical treatment should be used infrequently and only as a last-resort.

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Given the lack of a robust design, lumping of species, and serious methodological flaws with the Applicant's habitat functional assessment (above), the conclusions of this section are not comparable with similar functional assessments and have limited biological applicability, even to pine rockland endemic species.

The Applicant does not indicate how suitable microhabitat (open sandy patches) will be created or maintained for the MTB adults or larvae. How will vegetation encroachment of microhabitat be prevented or minimized?

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The Applicant proposes two separate preserves, connected only by a 2.16-acre southern corridor. This long, narrow corridor is not a biologically realistic method of enhancing connectivity as many rockland species (e.g. BSHB, MTB) do not disperse far from suitable microhabitat (Salvato and Hennessey 2004, Knisley 2015). The corridor is additionally interrupted by fire break, maintained through mastication or mowing, presenting a further barrier² to species dispersal.

The Applicant's east preserve is presently separated from the Zoo Miami preserves by the main Zoo access road and wide median, planted with ornamental species. It is highly unlikely that any pine rockland species regularly or safely pass between these two areas given the heavy vehicle traffic and unsuitable vegetation. This meager connectivity will be eliminated if Miami Wilds is constructed, as the plans call for a ~52-acre parking lot and expanded access roads between the two preserve locations. What is the Applicant's plan to mitigate such connectivity loss?

² Firebreaks on the Applicant's off-site mitigation area are dominated by grasses and do not provide suitable habitat for MTB (Wirth, personal observations).

Of greatest concern, preliminary calculations indicate the Applicant's east and west preserves may not be of sufficient area to support populations of certain listed species in the long term. Using available MTB survey data (Knisley 2015), I calculated the harmonic mean of adult MTBs observed at Zoo Miami preserve areas A and B, a total area approximately 1.5× either CRC preserve, to estimate the effective population size (Frankham). The effective MTB population size at Zoo sites A and B for the years 2008-2012 and 2014 was ~75. Even assuming an effective population size of ~150, double the estimate to account for sampling error, this effective population size estimate is alarming low. If we extrapolate these numbers to the CRC property and hypothesize that MTB or a similar pine rockland species were present in either CRC preserve at similar numbers, it is probable, given the limited connectivity of the East and West preserves, compounded by firebreaks, that such a small, restricted populations would inbreed. Low effective population size, in the range suggested above for the MTB, and inbreeding are significant risk factors for extirpation and extinction in small populations (Brooks et al. 2002) as the degree of inbreeding is linked to effective population size and increases with the number of generations.

I request the Service or an independent researcher conduct replicate population viability analyses for similarly small, restricted, and potentially inbreeding population to determine long-term viability before issuing an ITP. Without a full an analysis it appears likely that the CRC project has the potential to cause the extirpation of certain spine rockland species, if present in similar numbers and restricted to the proposed CRC preserves.

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From: [REDACTED]
To: ashleigh_blackford@fws.gov; david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: Wirth HCP comments with full citations
Date: Tuesday, May 23, 2017 1:02:58 AM
Attachments: [Wirth Re Coral Reef Commons HCP.pdf](#)

Mr. Dell, Mrs. Blackford:

I neglected to include my full references with my previous comment submission (which were submitted within the comment deadline). Attached are my comments, unchanged except for the addition of references, concerning the HCP for Coral Reef Commons; I hope this is acceptable.

Sincerely,
Christopher Wirth

Department of Biological Sciences

May 22, 2017

David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta, GA 30345

Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960

Re: Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan and associated appendices

Mr. Dell, Mrs. Blackford:

I am writing in response to the Service's March 23, 2017 public comment solicitation regarding the Draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for the proposed Coral Reef Commons (CRC) Development submitted by Ram Realty and University of Miami (the Applicant). In my review of the HCP documents I found a substantial amount of the best available scientific and commercially available data has been misrepresented, excluded, or not considered by the Applicant. The Applicant has additionally not completed adequate surveys of the CRC property for listed species. When the available data are incorporated, the HCP fails to adequately minimize or mitigate impacts and the CRC project has the potential to appreciably reduce the survival and recovery of some pine rockland endemics. Consequently, I urge the Service to deny an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) under the present HCP.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED] or via phone ([REDACTED]) if you have any questions concerning the content of this letter.

Sincerely,
Christopher Wirth

Attachments: Review of the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan

1.1 Overview of the Project:

The Applicant equates pine rocklands within Everglades National Park (ENP) with pine rocklands in metropolitan Miami-Dade County; however, ENP and metro Miami-Dade (including Richmond Heights) pine rocklands differ significantly across both biotic and abiotic factors (Maguire 1995, URS Corporation et al. 2007), which strongly influences species composition. The metro Miami-Dade pine rocklands have historically been subject to the most significant development and only ~1.8% (URS Corporation et al. 2007) remain today. The Applicant additionally fails to note that, while a majority of extant pine rocklands are in some manner protected, the remaining rocklands are highly fragmented. This lack of connectivity presents significant, widespread challenges for habitat management and the continued survival of rockland species, chiefly due to fire suppression, heightened susceptibility to stochastic events, and increased potential for significant loss of genetic diversity (e.g. inbreeding depression) (Brooks et al. 2002, URS Corporation et al. 2007). The Richmond Heights pine rocklands are the largest contiguous tract of such habitat in metro Miami-Dade (URS Corporation et al. 2007) and further degradation or development of these rocklands likely represents a significant loss of habitat connectivity and the heightened probability of species extirpation and extinction.

The addition of the Applicant's Off-site Mitigation Area will not increase site habitat connectivity or significantly increase the total area of pine rocklands in the Richmond Heights tract, key factors for many species' long-term survival. Furthermore, this site is at near-term risk for significant connectivity disruption; Miami-Dade County is planning a major "Orlando-style" theme park, Miami Wilds, to the west and directly north of the off-site Mitigation Area. If this theme park is constructed it will significantly disrupt any remaining connectivity between the CRC east preserve and the northern Zoo Miami pine rockland preserves, nearly isolating both CRC preserves from the remainder of the Richmond pine rocklands.

1.1.4 Species Covered

The Applicant asserts the absence of numerous listed taxa from the CRC property without having completed adequate surveys; see detailed comments under section 3.1.

1.1.6 CRC Property History

Significant centrally-located portions of the Richmond Heights tract were historically (circa 1943) scraped to the limestone substrate during the construction of Naval Air Station Richmond; however, after the deactivation of the station much of the scraped area was neglected and recolonized by pine trees (Wirth 2016a). Today, the northern extent of Zoo Miami's pine rockland preserves lie on a portion of this historically scraped area, demonstrating historical site disturbance is a poor predictor for site habitat quality or site restoration potential (Wirth 2016a). Additionally, the Applicant's characterization of historically scraped areas as unsuitable for restoration is contradicted by their own historic areal imagery (HCP Figures 1-5), which show the continual regrowth of pines in historically scraped or cleared areas.

1.1.6 CRC Property Permitting History

The Applicant asserts synonymy of the Miami tiger beetle (MTB), *Cicindelidia floridana*, a Federally listed species, with *Cicindelidia scabrosa*, a non-listed species. This is a gross mischaracterization of the scientific consensus; the MTB is widely recognized in the scientific community as a full species (see Bousquet 2012, Pearson et al. 2015). The Applicant's continued (Wirth 2016b) omission and distortion of the best available science concerning the MTB is unacceptable.

2.3 Land Use/Vegetative Community Categories for the CRC Property

The Applicant excludes key information from Possley et al (2014); the Applicant does cite the impracticality — and speculative impossibility — of pineland restoration through simple fire reintroduction, but omit reference to a pineland “ecological point-of-no-return” and two associated predictor variables, litter depth and tree density:

The ecological point-of-no-return for pine rocklands and other pyrogenic forests corresponds with the loss of flammability ... when litter depth and tree density reach a threshold, flammability is lost and managers must intervene to bring the system back to the point where it could carry a fire. Eventually, when the flammable species are no longer part of the system, it has effectively transitioned to an alternative stable state of a hardwood forest, and restoration to pineland simply by reintroducing fire is impractical and may, in fact, be impossible.

Both litter depth and tree density represent biologically significant predictors for an ecological point-of-no-return (Possley et al. 2014) but the Applicant neglects to incorporate such biologically meaningful variables in either the land use or vegetative community categorization, instead using a subjective, generalized “transitional concept” of pine rockland succession in combination with “existing habitat conditions, disturbance history, soils, and vegetative structure and composition.” The incorporation of site disturbance history further biases the Applicant’s categorization scheme as historical disturbance is a poor predictor of present-day habitat quality (Wirth 2015, 2016a).

3.1 Survey Methodologies of CRC Property

The Applicant conducted biological surveys for all floral and faunal species in a total of 16 days (HCP Table 3.1); the weather during all surveys was “mostly cloudy” or “light rain.” The mean survey start time was 9:44am and the mean survey end time was 3:06pm. Of the 16 surveys, 10 occurred in September 2014, four in October 2014, and one each in November 2014 and January 2015. Both the limited number of in-field days (which occurred at the end of several species’ activity periods, e.g. MTB) and potentially sub-optimal weather likely reduce the probability of detecting listed species and further surveys are needed, as additionally detailed below.

3.1.2 BSHB Survey Methodology

The Applicant conducted surveys for the BSHB on seven days in September and October 2014; however, peak numbers of adult BSHB are found in the early summer months (USFWS 2014). There is no mention of host plant inspection for larval BSHB. Consequently, the Applicant’s BSHB survey efforts to-date are not adequate and further surveys for adult and larval BSHB should be conducted.

3.2.7 Miami Tiger Beetle¹

The Applicant grossly mischaracterizes the extent of MTB surveys on the CRC property; contrary to the assertion of “extensive” surveys, only ~1.7 ha (4.3 acres or ~3%) of the CRC property has been surveyed (USFWS 2016). The entirety of MTB surveys on the property consist of an initial inspection (no waypoints recorded) by Knisley’s unnamed colleague (Knisley 2014), and a subsequent brief survey was conducted by Knisley (2013). At the time of this survey, Knisley was under the impression that the area in question was a

¹ On page 56 the Applicant reproduces the following sentence from a previous HCP draft: “The Miami tiger beetle does not currently receive protection status on either the state or federal level.” As indicated by the Applicant in the same paragraph, this is inaccurate; the MTB was recently listed as Endangered, effective November 4, 2016.

boundary parcel of Zoo property (Knisley 2014); this fact is reflected in his report (Knisley 2013) and email correspondences (Knisley 2014). The conflation of Knisley's survey of and habitat suitability assessment for ~3% of the property with the entirety of the CRC property lacks any scientific basis and does not represent the best available science, contrary to the Applicant's assertion. Further extensive surveys of the property are needed to determine MTB presence and habitat suitability.

3.2.3 *Eastern Indigo Snake*

and

3.2.4 *Rim Rock Crowned Snake*

The Applicant's surveys are entirely too limited for detection of either species; in the neighboring Zoo Miami pine rockland preserves researchers used a combination of repeated active searching and passive trapping, utilizing drift fences in combination with funnel and pitfall traps, to detect species presence (FWC 2011).

5.2.1 *Pine Roland Functional Assessment*

Given the highly limited biological surveys of the CRC property, the Applicant's assertion that listed taxa potentially present on the CRC property have "a low detection probability" is questionable, particularly as reliable survey methodologies exist for numerous taxa (e.g. BSHB, FBB, MTB, snakes) and numerous survey methods are referenced in the HCP, associated appendices, and cited literature.

While a precedence for habitat functional assessments is noted by the Applicant, no comparable habitat functional assessments appear to have been utilized in the HCP creation given the absence of methodological citations, unlike similar assessments (e.g. Progress Energy Florida 2011). As a result, the Applicant's methods do not appear to permit meaningful comparison of site function or assessment with existing functional assessments in the scientific literature.

Due to the functional assessment's simplistic design species from disparate ecological and taxonomic groups (e.g. both predators and herbivores, vertebrates and invertebrates) are "lumped" and the ecological requirements of all taxa approximated by six generalized functional characteristics of the surrogate pine rockland habitat (canopy cover, presence of non-native plants, fire frequency, soil condition, presence of native plant species, and habitat connectivity). Consequently, the Applicant's assessment method is likely to poorly estimate the presence or quality of necessary pine rockland characteristics for the diverse assemblage of species in question.

The Applicant assigns weights, from 0.10–0.20, to each of the six functional characteristics in habitat value unit (HVU) calculations without providing a methodological justification, only a subjective assessment of character "importance." This is highly irregular and the absence of clear weighting rational injects subjectivity and a high probability of biasing the assessment. This subjective weighting component further prohibits meaningful comparisons of the Applicant's assessment results to functional assessments in the literature.

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The Applicant's habitat connectivity calculation fails to adequately account for differential dispersal abilities across listed species, treating volant vertebrates (e.g. FBB), non-volant vertebrates (e.g. Rim Rock Crowned Snake), high-vagility invertebrates (e.g. BSHB), and low-vagility invertebrates (e.g. MTB) as equally like to disperse within and between the on-site preserves.

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The Applicant does not indicate how the 3.88 acres of stepping stones will facilitate species movement between the preserves, particularly for the MTB, which requires open sandy areas, and snake species. Given the Applicant's comments about pine rockland plant species presence in the stepping stones, it is probable that these areas would only be attractive to herbivores. In the case of a species occupying a stepping stone over a long period of time what is the Applicant's proposed strategy to prevent take, accidental or intentional?

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Mechanical treatment is not ecologically equivalent to prescribed burns and stimulates the growth of weedy invasives and hardwoods (Possley et al. 2014), therefore, mechanical treatment should be used infrequently and only as a last-resort.

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Of greatest concern, preliminary calculations indicate the Applicant's east and west preserves may not be of sufficient area to support populations of certain listed species in the long term. Using available MTB survey data (Knisley 2015), I calculated the harmonic mean of adult MTBs observed at Zoo Miami preserve areas A and B, a total area approximately 1.5× either CRC preserve, to estimate the effective population size (Harmon and Braude 2010). The effective MTB population size at Zoo sites A and B for the years 2008-2012 and 2014 was ~75. Even assuming an effective population size of ~150, double the estimate to account for sampling error, this effective population size estimate is alarming low. If we extrapolate these numbers to the CRC property and hypothesize that MTB or a similar pine rockland species were present in either CRC preserve at similar numbers, it is probable, given the limited connectivity of the East and West preserves, compounded by firebreaks, that such a small, restricted populations would inbreed. Low effective population size, in the range suggested above for the MTB, and inbreeding are significant risk factors for extirpation and extinction in small populations (Brooks et al. 2002) as the degree of inbreeding is linked to effective population size and increases with the number of generations.

I request the Service or an independent researcher conduct replicate population viability analyses for similarly small, restricted, and potentially inbreeding population to determine long-term viability before issuing an ITP. Without a full an analysis it appears likely that the CRC project has the potential to cause the extirpation of certain pine rockland species, if present in low numbers and restricted to the proposed CRC preserves.

References

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From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Cc: EMonzonAguirre@EVServicsInc.com
Subject: alanacollante@gmail.com
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 1:46:44 PM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Jeamir Liranzo
Miami, FL
Enviado desde mi iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: comment on Coral Reef Commons HCP
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 10:48:30 PM

Dear Mr. Dell and Ms. Blackford,

I am a research technician at the University of Florida and work with the Bartram's scrub-hairstreak (as well as other endangered and imperiled butterflies) in the Florida Keys. I monitor the Big Pine Key population of BSHB monthly and assist with other research, including croton demography. It is clear that the population of BSHB on Big Pine Key is in sharp decline in recent years, largely due to fire suppression. I believe that the Big Pine Key population is likely to go extinct within the next 5-10 years unless dramatic management actions are undertaken quickly.

In part due to the population decline I am witnessing on Big Pine Key, I am incredibly dismayed that development would be allowed on land adjacent to one of the few remaining areas with relatively high abundances of BSHBs. I am concerned that only 60% of the croton is contained in the on-site preserves and that, according to the map on page 45 of the HCP, the eastern and western patches of pineland croton would be somewhat isolated from one another. Rather than fragmenting this habitat and relying on a narrow corridor for BSHBs to travel between the two patches, the developer should be required to reduce and/or alter the footprint of their development in order to maintain one contiguous patch of croton that conserves the existing croton plants rather than relying on plantings. The on-site preserves outlined in the plan are simply not sufficient to preserve the extant croton.

Thank you,
Sarah Steele Cabrera

Sarah R. Steele Cabrera
Research Technician, McGuire Center for Lepidoptera & Biodiversity

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: comment on Habitat Conservation Plan for Coral Reef Commons, Miami, FL
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 7:37:20 PM

Dear US Fish and Wildlife Service,

I write to comment on the Habitat Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment submitted by Ram Realty and the University of Miami for the Coral Reef Commons site in the Richmond Pine Rocklands of southern Miami Dade County. I urge FWS to come to the determination that this is a Federal Major Action and therefore requires a full Environmental Impact Statement. The size of the project (140 acres) in the largest remaining tract of imperiled pine rockland habitat still in private hands in the United States makes this an absolutely critical project to get right environmentally. The number of federally endangered species known to be at risk in this particular critical habitat has increased several times since the project was first announced in 2014, and several more endangered species may well be present (but an independent scientific survey has not been carried out). The project quite clearly meets the criteria for a "major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment," where "significantly" includes the "unique characteristics of the geographic area" (40 CFR 1508.27 of the US Code) and "The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species [Act](#) of 1973" (ibid.).

Pine rockland is endemic to South Florida, parts of the Bahamas, and parts of Cuba, and is one of the most threatened ecosystems in the world. Much of what is now urban and suburban South Florida was constructed by destroying pine rockland. This site, while small in a global sense, is of critical significance in the context of the South Florida human and natural environment, as one the last remaining significant tracts and a part of the larger Richmond Pine Rockland site. Only a full Environmental Impact Statement can properly assess the potential risks (and potential benefits) to this development.

Sincerely,
Tim Watson

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: comment on the draft Coral Reef Commons HCP and EA
Date: Monday, May 15, 2017 1:56:05 PM

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to comment on the draft Coral Reef Commons HCP and EA and urge you not to consider my comments in evaluating the EA and not to approve any plan that results in loss of any pine rocklands.

Pine rockland was once one of the dominant habitats in South Florida. It is home to the highest native plant biodiversity of any Florida ecosystem and is one of the rarest types of forest in the entire world. Nevertheless, today less than 2 percent of pine rockland habitat remains in Miami-Dade County. Of the dwindling remnants of pine rockland in South Florida, the largest habitat patch outside a National Park is the South Dade Richmond Pine Complex, which is scheduled to be bulldozed, or at the least, further fragmented to construct yet another residential and commercial complex.

I grew up playing and exploring in pine rockland in South Miami. Our house was built on 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ acre lot that was completely cleared by the builder (I found out as an adult that was not supposed to happen, more than $\frac{1}{2}$ the lot was supposed to be left natural). We played in the 2 acre lot behind us among pock marked slash pines, coontie and more. When I learned as an adult studying plant ecology, that this was a special, rare and unique habitat I was awed. Some remnants of this habitat remain among the houses built since I was there. But, they are fragmented. That is why I feel so strongly that this proposed development of a larger remnant is so unacceptable.

The many ecological and historical values of protecting and restoring the rock pinelands is so much more important than development of an unneeded and destructive big box store and related proposed development. In addition, the loss of natural infiltration of rainwater by creating large areas of impervious surfaces will contribute to increased stormwater runoff and all the pollutants it carries. Loss of groundwater recharge and increased pollution and flooding from the runoff should be considered,

In addition to threatening one of the few remnants of a globally imperiled habitat, the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan imperils numerous at-risk species, including Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Florida bonneted bat, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, Miami tiger beetle, white-crowned pigeon, Florida Brickell bush, and Carter's small flowered flax.

The listed species must be protected and the little habitat that still remains is critical to these species. Every vanishing patch of pine rockland, and each species that it supports, warrant protection. They are a rare and a unique part of the country's natural history, and should be protected in perpetuity. Strip malls are an ephemeral and ubiquitous feature of the American landscape which deserve none of the same considerations.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Please do not approve any habitat conservation plan that threatens to replace a single square-

yard of precious pine rockland habitat.

Sincerely,

Rosalyn F. Kilcollins



From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: comments on Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Sunday, May 21, 2017 11:42:02 AM

To whom it may concern,

I am a professional naturalist and have lived and worked in South Florida before. I know how imperiled pine rockland is. At one time it was one of the dominant natural communities in South Florida; now less than 2% remains in Miami-Dade county. It has the highest native plant biodiversity of any Florida ecosystem and is one of the rarest types of forest in the entire world. I saw firsthand how threatened South Florida's ecosystems are by invasive species; native species and their habitats need all the help they can get. The pine rockland patch under consideration for development is the largest outside a national park.

In addition to threatening one of the few remnants of a globally imperiled habitat, the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan imperils numerous at-risk species, including Bartram's scrub-hairstreak butterfly, Florida leafwing butterfly, Florida bonneted bat, eastern indigo snake, rim rock crowned snake, gopher tortoise, Miami tiger beetle, white-crowned pigeon, Florida Brickell bush, and Carter's small flowered flax.

Every vanishing patch of pine rockland, and each species that it supports, warrants protection. Haven't we done enough to ravage South Florida's unique ecosystems? We should be trying our hardest to save what few intact fragments remain.

Please do not approve any habitat conservation plan that threatens to replace a single square yard of pine rockland.

Sincerely,

Sonia DeYoung

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: comments on proposed development at Coral Reef Commons
Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017 3:15:12 PM
Attachments: [Koptur comments To the USFWS.pdf](#)
[Barrios_etal2011.pdf](#)
[Barrios_etal2016SEM_JPlantEcol.pdf](#)
[GeigerPrattKoptur2010.pdf](#)
[Jones&Koptur2015-Ecology_and_Evolution.pdf](#)
[Khorsand_Koptur_Coccothrinax.pdf](#)
[Koptur1992FlaEnt.pdf](#)

Dear USFWS,

Please find attached my comments. I attach pdfs of the first set of articles cited within, and send the others in another email as file size was too big for all to come in one message.

I feel very strongly that the sale of this property, donated to the University of Miami and later sold to raise capital for that university, was wrong. The planned development will destroy most of it, and harm the future of endangered plants and animals, as well as all endemic pine rockland species and our quality of life here in Miami.

Thank you for considering my objections, and I hope that something can be done to stop this environmental travesty. Please protect what remains of our natural environment and encourage the owners to preserve this land and create their shopping and entertainment project on already developed land, much of which is now abandoned.

Best wishes,
Suzanne

--

Suzanne Koptur, PhD
Professor of Biological Sciences and Co-Director
QBIC (Quantifying Biology In the Classroom)
<http://qbic.fiu.edu>

[REDACTED]

To the USFWS:

I have read the application for Coral Reef Commons and write with some objections for this request that will negatively affect endangered animals and plants. Many will speak for the conservation of Miami tiger beetles, Bartram's hairstreak butterfly, and the bonneted bat – I certainly care about them, and urge the conservation of this pine rockland site for these rare and charismatic animals. But few realize the importance of the plants, so important to all the animals of the pine rocklands, and also to the humans living in the vicinity, who benefit from their ecosystem services such as maintaining the watershed beneath the ground, purifying the water in the aquifer upon which we all depend.

Pine rocklands are critically imperiled (G1 conservation status – Natureserve 2015) and very little remains of the rocklands in the northern part of the original extent (Possley et al. 2008; FNAI 2010). As the soil types differ over the north-south span of the Miami rock ridge (O'Brien 1998), certain species are restricted to only part of the range of the pine rocklands. Those taxa restricted to the northern part, most heavily affected by urbanization, have very few places left to live. Small populations contain only a fraction of the genetic diversity of formerly large populations, and the fewer populations that persist, the less genetic diversity remains and less resilient populations are to environmental change and survival in recovery efforts (Maschinski et al. 2013).

Endemic rare pine rockland plants are negatively affected when pine rocklands are long unburned, as litter accumulates and hardwoods grow up and shade them (Koptur 2006). Their presence diminishes (Barrios et al. 2011) and reproduction declines (Linares & Koptur 2010; Barrios et al 2016), except perhaps those that are self-compatible and automatically self-pollinate (Geiger et al. 2010); seed germination and seedling establishment are prevented (Kennedy; Liu et al. 2005). Fewer individual plants with fewer flowers receive less pollination (Barrios et al 2013) and other mutualistic interactions such as ant protection of plants against herbivores are also affected (Koptur 1992; Koptur et al. 2015; Jones et al. 2017).

Many pine rockland plants need disturbance to maintain viable populations. The tiny polygala, a rare plant whose presence stopped the westward continuation of the 874 expressway, is often found in the same areas where the deltoid spurge is abundant. The tiny polygala is a short-lived perennial whose populations disappear periodically, only to reappear again after disturbance (Kernan et al. 1998). Silver palms benefit from carpenter bee pollinators only in areas large enough to have those pollinators (Khorsand & Koptur 2009).

But nothing affects rare species more than the elimination of their remaining habitat. Miami needs to preserve natural spaces much more than develop new shopping and entertainment areas. And if these are needed, surely we can repurpose/redevelop some of the many shopping mall areas that are now largely empty?

I urge the USFWS to make the owners of this property reconsider this development, and to do the right thing and preserve this large remaining pine rockland tract. Even though it is now degraded, it is possible to restore it to its former state by removing exotic plants and restoring the management needed to maintain habitat for not only endangered plants and animals, but for humans as well.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Koptur, PhD

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The effects of fire and fragmentation on occurrence and flowering of a rare perennial plant

Beyte Barrios · Gabriel Arellano ·
Suzanne Koptur

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Abstract The pine rocklands of southern Florida are a fire-dependent forest associated with outcroppings of limestone. Pine rockland plants have several adaptations to fire, and for many species burns increase plant growth, flowering, and seedling establishment. The pine rockland forest has been reduced and fragmented in recent decades. Outside of Everglades National Park, only two percent of the original pine rocklands remain, and are in the form of small fragments. Habitat fragmentation may have a negative effect on the biology of plants; we investigated the effects of both fire and fragmentation on *Angadenia berteroi* (A.DC.) Miers, a threatened species of the southern Florida pine rockland. We estimated the density and flowering of *A. berteroi* using adaptive cluster sampling in six study sites with different fire and disturbance histories. *A. berteroi* is more abundant in the largest fragments, and those having experienced fire most recently. However, fragmentation and lack of fire did not appear to have a great

impact on flowering or fruit production. Insights from this threatened species may provide impetus not only to conserve, but to properly manage remaining pine rocklands in south Florida.

Keywords *Angadenia berteroi* · Apocynaceae · Adaptive cluster sampling · Reproductive phenology · Pine rocklands

Introduction

The pine rockland forest is unique in the United States and is considered an imperiled habitat (Koptur 2006). Pine rockland forests are a mixture of tropical and temperate taxa (Snyder et al. 1990; US Fish and Wildlife Service 1999) dominated by a single canopy species, *Pinus elliottii*, the slash pine. The subcanopy holds a great variety of shrubs, hardwood trees, and palms, many of which are part of the tropical flora of the West Indies. The herb stratum is diverse, with more than 250 species of ferns, graminoids, and forbs (Snyder et al. 1990; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1999). The high levels of endemism in pine rockland forests may be explained by the presence of limestone outcropping and calcareous, phosphorus-limited soils. The calcium-rich loams and high pH contrast with the acidic quartz sand found in pine forests of northern Florida (O'Brien 1998).

Fire is a vital force, essential to the existence of pine rockland forests. Burns influence vegetation

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structure and species composition. Fires historically occurred in the early wet season (during May and June), with lightning strikes igniting accumulated dry litter, at intervals of 2–10 years (Snyder et al. 1990; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1999). Pinelands in Everglades National Park now are burned mostly by prescribed fires, while fires in the pine rockland fragments are frequently from arson. Within two decades of fire exclusion, pine rockland forest can become closed canopy tropical hardwood forest (known as “hammock”), and the pine trees and diverse herbaceous flora disappear (Snyder et al. 1990).

Pine rockland plants have various adaptations to fire: some herbs and shrubs resprout and grow rapidly after fire, while others respond to burns with improved growth, flowering, seed germination, and establishment of seedlings (Snyder et al. 1990; Spier and Snyder 1998). Some plant species produce more flowers and fruit after fire (Koptur 2006; Liu et al. 2005a; Moreno and Oechel 1991). Although increased reproduction may result from greater light, soil moisture, and nutrient availability after fire (Whelan 1995; Wroblewski and Kauffman 2003), some plants produce flowers in years without fires; this reproduction is also of great importance to plant population viability (Hiers et al. 2000; Wroblewski and Kauffman 2003; Borchert and Tyler 2009).

Plant species are able to exploit the increased resource availability following fire, and the survival of animals (pollinators and herbivores) after fire also affects plant reproduction (Whelan 1995; Liu et al. 2005a). In some native species of the pine rockland forest, fewer flowers have been reported due to increased herbivory after fire (Spier and Snyder 1998; Geiger 2002; Cardel and Koptur 2010).

Landscapes with pine rocklands have undergone dramatic human population growth over the last 100 years, leading to the destruction of most pine rockland habitat. Outside of Everglades National Park, only 2% of the original pine rocklands remain in many small fragments (Snyder et al. 1990; Koptur 2006).

In fragmented habitat, the disturbance regime is often altered (Cochrane 2001). Fragmentation results in an increased proportion of “edge” habitat, producing changes in microclimate and community structure at various distances from the edge (Margules and Pressey 2000). Structural changes may lead to

increased fuel loading and fire susceptibility (Cochrane and Schulze 1999). Increased leaf litter accumulation (due to fire suppression) affects species richness and diversity (Kirkman et al. 2001), because litter is a physical barrier to plant growth, inhibiting seed germination, and establishment. Litter modifies the forest floor environment, affecting soil moisture and nutrient availability (Hiers et al. 2007). The spatial distribution of fire is highly edge-related, with greater fire frequency in areas nearer to the edge (Cochrane 2001). However, fire suppression in proximity to human settlement has led to reductions in fire frequency and intensity, as well as loss of fire-resilient properties of the vegetation (Dellasala et al. 2004), and reduced sexual reproduction in fire-adapted species (Geiger 2002; Cardel and Koptur 2010). Altered microhabitats resulting from fire suppression can negatively influence flower and fruit production and inhibit seedling establishment (Wendelberger and Maschinski 2009). In some cases, the effect of fire on plant reproduction and growth can be masked by local environmental heterogeneity, changes in weather, and herbivory (Harrod and Halpern 2009).

Habitat fragmentation can affect the reproductive biology of all species (Yates and Ladd 2005), but environmental variation between fire episodes may have greatest effects on the reproductive biology and population dynamics of fire-dependent species, including those endemic to south Florida pine rockland. Plants that rely on insects for pollination are at a disadvantage in fragmented habitats, because size of fragments as well as the distance between fragments may affect the distribution and abundance of insect species (Artz and Waddington 2006).

In this study, we use the pineland golden trumpet, *Angadenia berteroi* (A.DC.) Miers (Apocynaceae), to examine the separate and combined effects of fire and fragmentation on endemic pine rockland plants. *A. berteroi* is a native, perennial sub-shrub listed as threatened by Florida Department of Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry (FDACS, DPI) (Gann et al. 2002). This wildflower grows in the pine rocklands, rockland hammocks, and marl prairies of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties (Gann et al. 2002; Wunderlin and Hansen 2003).

The broad distribution of *A. berteroi* in many pine rockland sites makes it an ideal species to study how fire and fragmentation affect flowering of a pollination-dependent native species, and how these two

factors affect the population structure and viability of this wildflower. The hypotheses are: (1) fires positively affect the abundance and reproduction of *A. berteroi*; and (2) fragmentation negatively affects the abundance and reproduction of this species. These hypotheses were tested with field observations in areas of different sizes and fire regimes. We quantified the effect of fires on the reproductive phenology of *A. berteroi* in extensive pine rockland habitat in Everglades National Park and in pine rockland fragments under the management of Miami-Dade County.

Materials and methods

Study species

Angadenia berteroi has opposite, coriaceous, entire leaves, with large, showy, yellow flowers. The flowers have no notable fragrance, but offer nectar as a pollinator reward. Within the flower, the five stamens are agglutinated to the stigma (as in other Apocynaceae), and the two carpels of the ovary are fused at the apex. The V-shaped fruit is made up of

two terete follicles, up to 5 cm long at maturity (Long and Lakela 1978; Barrios and Koptur 2011).

Study sites

We studied *A. berteroi* and its habitat variables in a total of six pine rockland forest sites scattered along the Miami Rock Ridge (Fig. 1). We selected four fragments of different size based on fire history data from Miami-Dade County: two fragments had high fire frequency (more than five burns since 1987), and two fragments had low fire frequency (fewer than four burns since 1987). We also used two sites from Everglades National Park, with fire return interval of 1–7 years (Sites 5 and 6). All the sites could be called fragments, except the Everglades National Park sites, which are within continuous pine rockland forest (Table 1). Fire history (Table 2) was determined using fire data provided by the Natural Areas Management (2008) and the fire history database from Everglades National Park (Everglades National Park Fire Management Office, personal communication, 2008). At each site, we chose an area to study that was representative of the reported fire history of that site; we did not include very small fires (less than 1% of the total site area) in determining the parameters in Table 2.

Fig. 1 Map of the pine rockland habitat in southern Florida 2007. Study sites shown, as described in Table 1

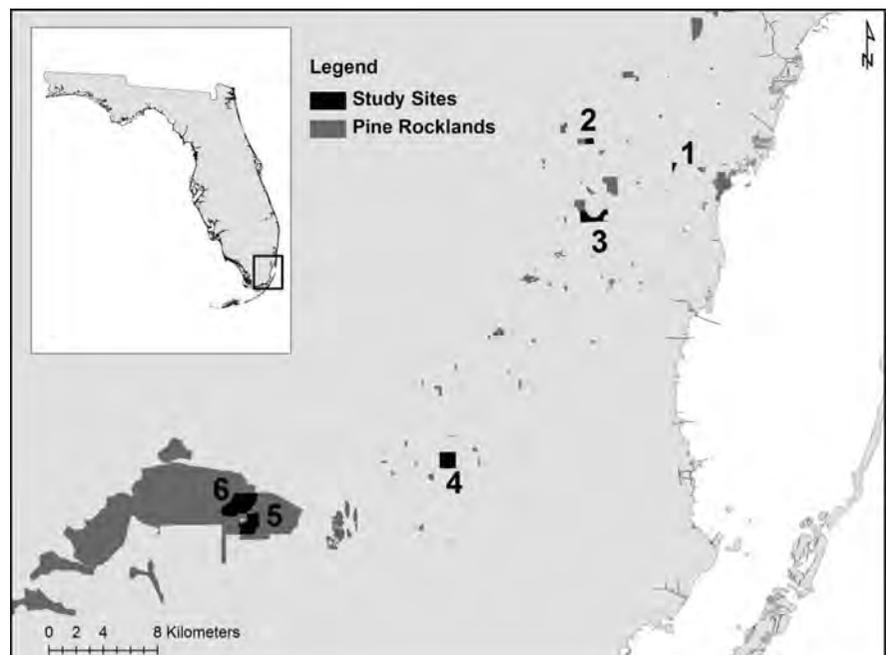


Table 1 Pine rockland study sites in Miami-Dade County, Florida, used for *A. berteroi* study

Site name	Site no.	Area (km ²)	UTM coordinates	
			Easting	Northing
Rockdale Preserve	1	0.11	566214	2835342
Nixon Smiley Park	2	0.51	560127	2837016
Larry & Penny Thompson Park	3	1.09	559449	2831668
Navy Wells Preserve	4	1.43	549776	2813432
Everglades II	5	1.76	535196	2808244
Everglades G	6	3.22	534659	2809774

Site names, number designation, area, and UTM coordinates (UTM Zone 17R, WGS 1984)

Table 2 Fire regime at each fragment and fire unit in Everglades National Park

Site	Fires since 1987	Years since last fire (2009)	Total area that was burned in the last fire (km ²)	Fire frequency	Fragment/continuous
1	1	8	0.01	Low	Small fragment
2	3	9	0.47	Low	Small fragment
3	38	2	0.32	High	Large fragment
4	10	1	0.30	High	Large fragment
5	8	3	1.69	High	Continuous
6	6	5	2.67	High	Continuous

Data (all columns except the last two) provided by the Natural Areas Management (2008) and the fire history database from Everglades National Park (ENP F.M.O., personal communication, 2008). Designations in last two columns made by authors

Abundance of pineland golden trumpet

To quantify the density of *A. berteroi* at each site, we used Adaptive Cluster Sampling (ACS; Thompson 1990, Philippi 2005). This sampling design is the most efficient method to estimate densities of low-abundance and rare species occurring as clustered individuals (Thompson 1990; Thompson and Seber 1996). A 40 × 50 m area was selected at each site, representative of the fire history of each fragment, avoiding edges; within that area 40–44 random quadrats (1 × 1 m) were selected, without replacement. We implemented the ACS method as follows: If *A. berteroi* was present in the quadrat, the quadrats neighboring the randomly chosen quadrat were added to the study. If a neighboring quadrat contained *A. berteroi*, it was incorporated into the network, and its neighbors were sampled. The criterion for sampling the adjacent quadrats was the presence of *A. berteroi*; consequently, we sampled quadrats until each network was enclosed by empty quadrats not containing *A. berteroi*. A neighborhood is defined as the four quadrats adjacent to the initial randomly sampled quadrat; a network is

either an initial sampled quadrat with *A. berteroi* present plus all the neighboring quadrats with it present, or an initial random quadrat without *A. berteroi* (Thompson 1990; Philippi 2005). Therefore, we studied 40–44 random quadrats at each site plus all quadrats neighboring those that included *A. berteroi*.

We recorded the number of individuals of *A. berteroi* in each quadrat. Each separate aerial stem was considered a separate individual, although we observed this species can have rhizomes that may connect one “individual” with another. We may, therefore, have overestimated the number of individuals, since individual stems may have been ramets of the same genet. The Horvitz–Thompson and Hansen–Hurwitz estimators of the population means in ACS allow unbiased estimation of the population means with unequal inclusion probabilities (Thompson 1990; Thompson and Seber 1994; Philippi 2005).

Habitat structure and fragmentation

We measured several habitat variables for the first 30 of the 40–44 random quadrats that were the initial

quadrats of the networks: litter depth, canopy closure, and sub-canopy closure. These are different measurements of habitat structure and physical indicators of time since the last fire. All estimates were obtained by taking the average of the values obtained for the four corners of every quadrat. We measured litter depth with a rigid wire and a rule scale to the nearest 0.5 cm. To estimate canopy closure, we counted how many squares of a forestry densiometer were occupied by canopy image, in each of the four corners of the quadrat at a height of 1.30 m, looking from the corner to the center of the quadrat. The same was done to estimate subcanopy closure, but at a height of only 0.5 m.

Fragment size was determined using geographic information system (GIS) data provided by the Fire History database from Everglades National Park and The GIS data generated by Florida Natural Areas Inventory (Public Lands-June 2008 shape files) for the Miami-Dade County fragments. The UTM coordinates were taken at the center point of the 40 × 50 m plot at each site (Table 1).

Fire regime

Fire history data for each site were available from two different sources: Everglades National Park and Miami-Dade County. We utilized information about fires since 1987 (Table 2), but since the fire data for only the Everglades sites were geographically detailed, we used the fragment overall fire frequency and “years-since-last-fire” for each site as an indicator of the fire history at each site (Table 2).

Habitat effects on the reproduction of *Angadenia berteroi*

We systematically selected 15–17 circular plots (1-m radius) that containing *A. berteroi*; at each site, these circular plots were in the same part of the site that included the 40 × 50 m plots, and located in a circular array around the center of the area. Flowering phenology was monitored every 2–4 weeks, from the first days of the flowering period to fruit maturity. Data were recorded for a period of 4 months (April through July, 2009) in all sites. The total number of aerial stems that produced flowers and fruits were recorded for each plot. In addition, for each stem we recorded the number of open flowers, number of flower buds, number of inflorescences, and the number of fruits. The

percentage of plants that flowered was estimated by counting all stems with inflorescences in the sample plots and dividing by the total number stems in each plot, averaging for each site. The flowering period, flowering peaks, and the maximum number of fruits per site are illustrated as means for each site.

Statistical analysis

To obtain accurate and unbiased estimates of population densities of *A. berteroi* (means and standard deviations at each site), we used the Horvitz–Thompson and Hansen–Hurwitz estimators (Philippi 2005). We calculated these estimators using the algorithm implemented in the macro available as an on-line supplement of Philippi (2005), Ecological Archives E086-058-S1, for SAS 9.1 (SAS 2003). Student’s *t* tests were performed by hand calculator with the mean and the standard deviation for both estimates obtained from the macro. We used the Bonferroni method to control type I error for all pairwise comparisons.

At the quadrat level, we used the first 30 random quadrats at each site for which we had data for number of individuals (of any height, from mature plants to seedlings with one or two pairs of leaves) and the measured site parameters. Since the data satisfied the assumptions, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for differences among sites for the site variable parameters. Bonferroni comparison tests were used post hoc to elucidate differences among sites. We performed correlation analyses, using Spearman’s rank correlation analysis to investigate the relationship between population abundance and the mean of the site parameters.

The proportions of plants at each site with flowers during the flowering peak, and fruits, were analyzed with χ^2 to assess the differences in flower and fruit production among sites. We used the Bonferroni method to control type I error for all pairwise comparisons. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 17 (SPSS 2009).

Results

Abundance of *A. berteroi*

The Horvitz–Thompson and Hansen–Hurwitz estimates of the population means for each site revealed

Table 3 Hansen–Hurwitz and Horvitz–Thompson estimates for *Angadenia berteroi* population abundance at the study sites listed in Table 1

Site	Networks	Hansen–Hurwitz estimator			Horvitz–Thompson estimator		
		Total	Mean	SD	Total	Mean	SD
Site 1	44	227.27	0.11 ^a	0.06	228.76	0.11 ^a	0.06
Site 2	43	304.11	0.15 ^b	0.07	313.60	0.16 ^b	0.07
Site 3	41	663.43	0.33 ^c	0.11	725.71	0.36 ^c	0.11
Site 4	44	363.64	0.18 ^b	0.09	370.61	0.19 ^b	0.09
Site 5	42	624.56	0.31 ^c	0.11	738.77	0.37 ^c	0.11
Site 6	40	1353.84	0.68 ^d	0.17	1406.07	0.70 ^d	0.17

Numbers are for total number of individuals and mean number of individuals per network. Superscript letters indicate significant differences with Student's *t* test analysis at the 0.05 significance level

significant differences in plant abundance among sites (Table 3). Abundance of *A. berteroi* was the highest in Site 6, while Sites 3 and 5 did not differ significantly, as well as Sites 2 and 4. Site 1, a smaller fragment with low fire frequency and 8 years since the last fire, had the lowest abundance of *A. berteroi* plants (Table 3).

Population mean estimates indicated that *A. berteroi* is more abundant in larger forest fragments with less time since the last fire (with the exception of Site 4). Overall, it appears that fragmentation plays a role in the density of *A. berteroi*.

Both canopy cover (at 1.3 m above ground) and subcanopy cover (0.5 m above ground) differed significantly among sites ($F_{5,173} = 61.98$, $P < 0.0001$, $F_{5,173} = 91.17$, $P < 0.0001$, respectively, Fig. 2a, b). Sites 1 and 2 (with historically low fire frequency) represent the sites with highest canopy cover and subcanopy cover. Although significantly different from the other sites, they did not differ significantly from each other in terms of subcanopy cover. Sites 3 and 5 had the lowest canopy cover and subcanopy cover, differing from the other sites with the exception of Site 6 in the case of subcanopy cover (subcanopy cover mean = 20.47, SE = 2.50). When we compared the mean of subcanopy cover, Site 4 was intermediate (Canopy cover mean = 39.07, SE = 3.6, subcanopy cover mean = 38.03, SE = 3.6) (Fig. 2). Litter depth differed significantly among sites ($F_{5,173} = 40.48$, $P < 0.0001$, Fig. 2). Sites 1 and 2 did not differ significantly from each other, and had the greatest litter depth. Site 5 had the lowest litter depth (mean = 0.11 cm, SE = 0.03), but did not differ significantly from Sites 3 and 4. Site 6

(mean = 3.19 cm, SE = 0.52) did not differ significantly from Sites 3 and 4, but was significantly different from Site 5 (Fig. 2). In addition, canopy and subcanopy cover were positively correlated with litter depth ($r = 0.69$, $P < 0.0001$, and $r = 0.68$, $P < 0.0001$, respectively). Canopy cover, subcanopy cover, and litter depth are negatively associated with population abundance of pineland golden trumpet. Sites 1 and 2, with highest canopy and subcanopy cover and litter depth (Fig. 2), were the fragment sites with the lowest overall fire frequency (Table 2); these sites also displayed the lowest density of *Angadenia berteroi*.

The site parameters we measured exhibited a strong correlation with the abundance of *A. berteroi* (Spearman ρ , Table 4), being significant in all cases, except litter depth, one of the estimates for fragmentation, and one of the estimates for percent cover at 1.3 m. Canopy cover and litter depth, both indicators of time since fire, were negatively correlated with *A. berteroi* abundance. The other variables (area of the fragment, fragmentation) showed a positive correlation with *A. berteroi* abundance (Table 4).

Habitat effects on reproduction of pineland golden trumpet

Flowering began at the end of the dry season, in early April, and continued into the early wet season, until late June, for four of the sites (Fig. 3). In Sites 1 and 4, the flowering period continued until at least mid July. The flowering peak occurred in early May at most of the sites. Fruit production began in early May, and lasted through July, when the majority of

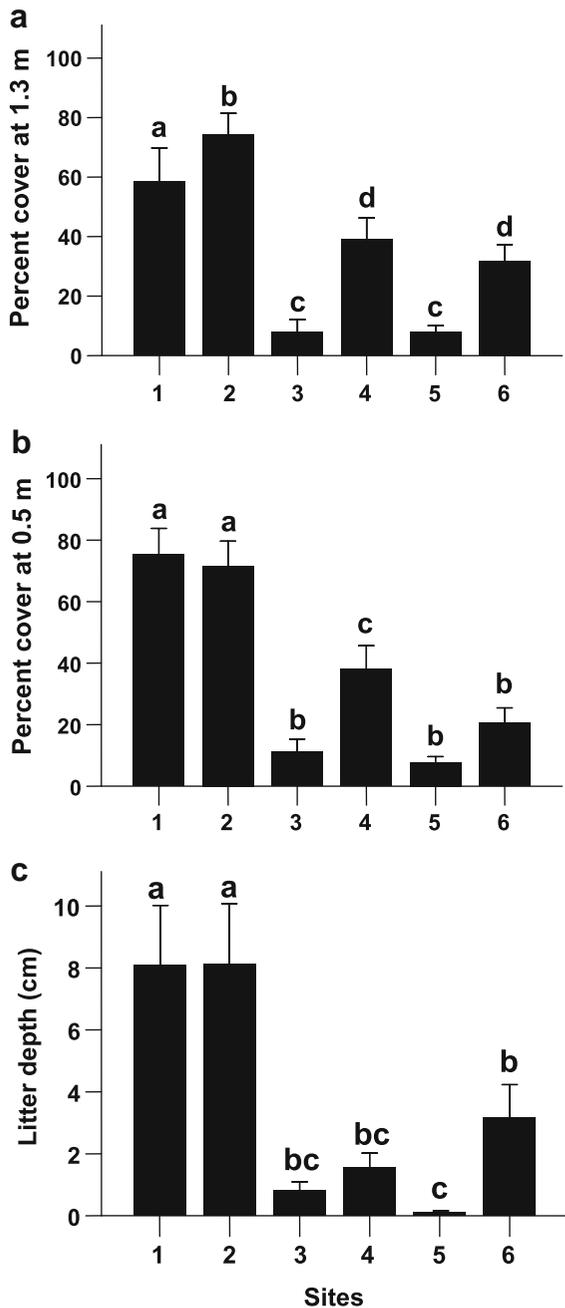


Fig. 2 Environmental variables (mean \pm 1 SE) measured for sites described in Table 1. **a** Percent cover of vegetation was determined by spherical densiometer at 1.3 m aboveground (canopy); **b** percent cover at 0.5 m (subcanopy); **c** Litter depth ($n = 30$). Sites with the same letter do not differ significantly with Bonferroni post hoc test analysis from each other ($P < 0.05$). Environmental variables were collected from a total of four pine rockland forest sites in Miami-Dade County (Sites 1 and 2 are small fragments, Site 3 and 4 are large fragments) and two burn units in Everglades National Park (Sites 5 and 6)

fruits had matured. Peak fruiting occurred in early June, about 4 weeks after the flowering peak.

The total number of plants that produced flowers during the flowering peak differed significantly among the six sites ($X^2_{5,n=470} = 58.31$, $P < 0.0001$). Post hoc tests showed Sites 3 and 6 (with very few flowers) differed significantly from Sites 1, 4, and 5 (Fig. 4a). Sites 4 and 5 had much higher proportions of plants with flowers (51.6 and 32.7% respectively). Sites 1 and 2 did not differ significantly from each other, intermediate between the other two groups. Sites 1, 4, and 5 did not significantly differ from each other (Fig. 4a). The maximum fruit set differed significantly among the six sites ($X^2_{5,n=472} = 22.489$, $P > 0.0001$, Fig. 4b). Sites 1, 4, and 5 did not significantly differ from each other. Site 1 had the highest number of fruits produced, while Site 6 had the lowest (Fig. 4b). The higher flowering rates reported at Site 4 and Site 5, with low litter depth and canopy cover (Fig. 2), may indicate that less time since fire has a positive effect on flowering. The results also indicate the positive relationship between light availability and flower production: more than 50% of the plots that produced flowers in the majority of the sites were found in open areas (edge or low canopy plots, Table 5).

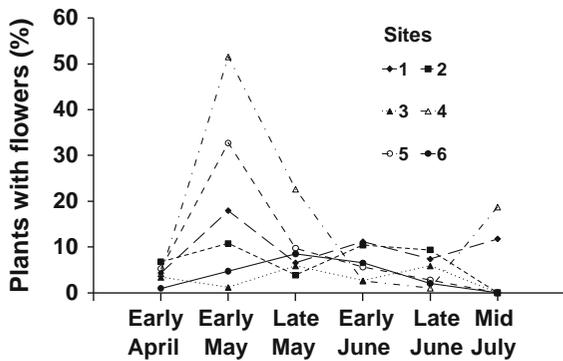
Discussion

Effects of fire and fragmentation were found only on the abundance of pineland golden trumpet. Our results showed that adaptive cluster sampling was efficient in determining the abundance of this species, because *A. berteroi* populations were composed normally of a few clusters of plants. The dispersal and establishment of seeds close to parent plants may explain this clumped distribution. In addition, *A. berteroi* exhibits clonal growth. Vegetative reproduction has been described in other Apocynaceae (Johnson et al. 1998) with shoots connected underground via rhizomes.

The Horvitz–Thompson and Hansen–Hurwitz estimates of the population means indicated that *A. berteroi* is more abundant in larger natural habitat sites with greater fire activity (as indicated by litter depth and canopy cover, and records of fire frequency). Fragment size appears to be associated with plant density, as continuous habitats like the sites located in

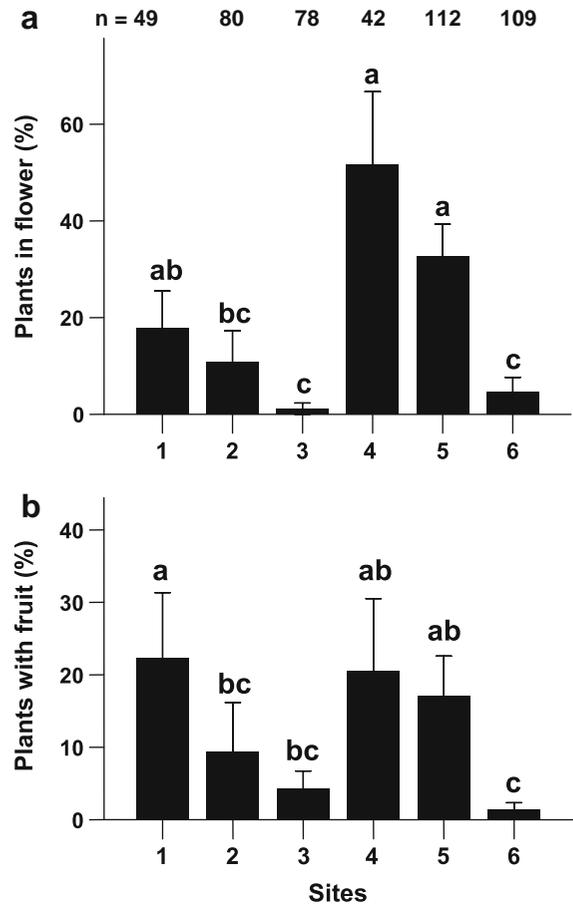
Table 4 Spearman's rho correlation between site parameters and the estimators of the population abundance means ($n = 6$)

Spearman's ρ correlation	Percent cover at 1.30 m	Percent cover at 0.5 m	Litter depth	Area	Fragmentation
Hansen–Hurwitz estimates	-0.771*	-0.771*	-0.543	0.829*	0.621
Horvitz–Thompson estimates	-0.714	-0.829*	-0.600	0.943*	0.828*

* $P < 0.05$ **Fig. 3** Flowering phenology of *Angadenia berteroi* at sites described in Table 1. **a** Percentage of plants that produced flowers during the study period (April–July 2009). Flowering phenology data were collected from Sites 1, 2 (small fragments); Sites 3, 4 (large fragments) from pine rockland forest sites in Miami-Dade County; and Sites 5 and 6, two burn units in Everglades National Park

Everglades National Park displayed the highest density of this species, followed by the larger fragments, with the exception of Site 4. These results are in contrast to the conclusions of O'Brien (1998), where fragment area did not affect abundance of *Galactia* species. The lower density of *A. berteroi* in Site 4 may also be explained by the high herbivory rate at the site; in summer 2008, 65% of marked plants were lost to herbivores. *Syntomeida epilais* (the oleander moth) is the primary herbivore of *A. berteroi*, with caterpillars often consuming all the foliage and flowers of stems they encounter. Once a plant was devoured, we were unlikely to detect that individual.

Our results also show that sites with higher abundance of *A. berteroi* are those with less time since the last fire; site parameters, such as litter depth and canopy closure, are negatively correlated with the abundance of *A. berteroi*. With fire exclusion, pine rockland can become closed canopy tropical hardwood forest (Snyder et al. 1990); increased canopy reduces light availability and contributes to litter development (Hiers et al. 2007). Increased litter

**Fig. 4** Mean maximum percentage of plants (mean \pm 1 SE) flowering and fruiting at the sites described in Table 1. **a** Flowering. **b** Fruiting. Sites with the same letter do not differ significantly from each other with χ^2 analysis ($P < 0.05$). Sites as in Figs. 1 and 2

depth and light reduction due to fire suppression create conditions where adult plants in the subcanopy are outcompeted and seedling establishment is inhibited (Hiers et al. 2007; Wendelberger and Maschinski 2009). The lower density of *A. berteroi* at Sites 1 and 2, with the lowest fire activity, suggests that fire plays a role in the density of this species. In the Florida Keys, time since the last fire was negatively

Table 5 Number of plots with *A. berteroi* plants that produced flowers during the flowering peak

Site	Number of plots monitored	Total plots with flowers	Plots that were in a open area that produced flowers	Percent of plots that produced flowers that were in a open area
1	17	7	4	57
2	16	4	2	50
3	17	1	1	100
4	16	10	8	80
5	15	13	11	85
6	15	3	0	0

The percent of these plots that were in an open area was estimated by plots that produced flowers that were in an open area over the total number of plots that produced flowers per site

correlated with population growth rates, and density, of *Chamaecrista keyensis* in pine rockland fragments that were more than 15 years postburn (Liu et al. 2005b).

Although alteration of the fire regime in fragmented landscapes affects plant abundance and seedling germination, the introduction of exotic species could also have adverse effects on the presence of rare native plants (Yates and Ladd 2005). O'Brien (1998) found that density of native species was negatively correlated with density of exotic species such as Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*). Possley et al. (2008) also reported that in a survey of pine rockland fragments, Navy Wells (Site 4 in this study) was the area with the highest mean cover of non-native plant species in the Redland region; the negative impact of non-native species could also explain the unexpectedly low density of *A. berteroi* at that site. Although we do not have data to examine the correlation between non-native species and the abundance of *A. berteroi*, the high incidence of non-native species reported in remaining pine rockland fragments, plus our field observations, suggest that introduction of exotics negatively affects *A. berteroi*.

In this study, we could not perform a more robust correlation between site parameters and the abundance of this native species, as the ACS design is not compatible with the available statistical programs (Philippi, personal communication). Even though our total sample size ($n = 6$) was relatively small, a positive correlation was found for *A. berteroi* abundance with fragment area, and a negative correlation with canopy closure and litter depth. Our data suggest that lack of fire and habitat

fragmentation negatively influence the abundance of this native species.

Angadenia berteroi has a short, well-defined flowering period that was synchronous in all sites studied. Well-defined flowering periods have been reported for several species in the Apocynaceae (Torres and Galetto 1999; Krings 2006; Sloan et al. 2007; DiTommaso et al. 2009). Snyder et al. (1990) also reported similar phenological synchrony for several herbaceous species native to the pine rocklands. Surprisingly, flower production does not show a correlation with fire, nor does fragmentation influence fruit set of *A. berteroi*. These results concur with those of Yates and Ladd (2005) who found that reproduction biology of a rare Myrtaceae shrub was not affected by fragmentation.

However, our results suggest that fire could stimulate flowering and fruit production, as shown by the higher flowering rates observed at Sites 4 and 5. Flowering appears to be stimulated by increased light availability as the result of recent fires (Harrod and Halpern 2009), or due to site heterogeneity in unburned areas: we observed greater flowering in plots that were in edge or low cover areas in the majority of the sites. Yates and Ladd (2005) also observed increased reproduction and germination on roadsides and disturbed areas with little plant cover. Other studies have shown that fire stimulates flowering in pine rockland plants (Snyder et al. 1990; Spier and Snyder 1998; Liu et al. 2005b; Cardel and Koptur 2010), but for some species in other fire-dependent ecosystems, reproduction is not strictly fire-dependent (Wroblewski and Kauffman 2003; Hiers et al. 2000; Borchert and Tyler 2009), and reproduction in years without fire plays an important role in

maintenance of the species in the ecosystem (Hiers et al. 2000).

The effects of fire can also be overridden by local environmental heterogeneity, herbivory, or other factors (Harrod and Halpern 2009). We found that Site 3 had few flowers during the flowering peak. This may be attributable to heavy flower damage by oleander moth caterpillars, as well as by beetles (Coleoptera) and orthopteran nymphs. We observed active herbivores and herbivory on plants in at least 25% of the plots in Site 3. Low flower production due to herbivory, and herbivory on flowers has been reported for several native species of the pine rockland forest (Spier and Snyder 1998; Cardel and Koptur 2010). Fire may stimulate flowering, making the plants more visible to herbivores, with the consequence of reduced numbers of flowers and fruits.

Angadenia berteroi is a threatened species of the pine rockland forest. Pine rockland habitat has been drastically reduced and fragmented in recent decades. Altered fire regimes in proximity to human settlement have led to reductions in fire frequency, and loss of fire resilient properties of the habitat. These changes result in increased fuel loading and fire susceptibility. Conservation efforts should be directed to the remaining forest fragments and concentrated on the restoration of the natural ecosystem processes with the implementation of prescribed fire at natural intervals and exotic plant control.

The aim of this study, to test the common assumption that fire and fragmentation influence both abundance and flowering of the native species of the pine rockland ecosystem, was met with mixed results. Fragment size and time since last fire both correlated with the abundance of *A. berteroi*. On the other hand, fragmentation did not have a great impact on reproduction of this native species, and while the effect of fire was not clearly established, the association of fire and factors that favored reproduction suggests that fire may favor reproduction. Other factors, such as herbivory, exotic invasion, soil composition, and local habitat characteristics, warrant further study, as they all may also have substantial effects on the abundance and reproduction of this native species.

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The effects of habitat fragmentation on the reproduction and abundance of *Angadenia berteroi*

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Abstract

Aims

The pine rocklands of southern Florida are a fire-dependent forest associated with outcrops of limestone. Pine rockland plants have several adaptations to fire, and for many species, burning increases plant growth, flowering and seedling establishment. The pine rockland forest has been reduced and fragmented in recent decades. Outside of Everglades National Park, only 2% of the original pine rocklands remain, and they are in the form of small fragments. Our objective is to investigate the effects of fragmentation and habitat quality on abundance and plant reproductive fitness of *Angadenia berteroi* (A.D.C.) Miers, a threatened species of the southern Florida pine rockland.

Methods

We estimated the density of plants using a stratified random sampling design, and reproductive fitness (in terms of percentage of plants with flowers and fruit) by walking transects in an array of habitat fragments of different sizes and degrees of isolation (distance

to the nearest fragment) as well as in continuous habitat. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to investigate how *A. berteroi* reproductive fitness was affected by fragmentation and habitat quality.

Important Findings

Habitat fragment size was correlated with the density of *A. berteroi*, but did not have a great impact on its reproductive success. However, habitat quality represented by litter depth and subcanopy cover had strong negative effects on the reproductive fitness of *A. berteroi*, suggesting that increased light availability and low litter cover resulting from recent fires may favor reproduction.

Key words: habitat fragmentation, habitat quality, isolation, fire, structural equation modeling, reproductive fitness, abundance

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INTRODUCTION

Habitat destruction and fragmentation are the principal causes of biodiversity loss. Habitat fragmentation affects the reproductive biology of a species (Yates and Ladd 2005), and can reduce species richness as well as genetic variability (the diversity of genotypes and alleles present in species or populations) (Vargas *et al.* 2006). For plants, reduction in genetic variability affects pollen quality and seed production (Aspinwall and Christian 1992; Vargas *et al.* 2006). Usually, there is reduced gene flow among plants in the remnant fragments compared with those in intact habitat (Aizen and Feinsinger 1994; Young *et al.* 1996). Thus, reductions in genetic variability may also increase the population's extinction risk through inbreeding

depression, ultimately diminishing the population's ability to respond to environmental disturbances (Frankham 2005). The genetic consequences of habitat fragmentation may result in fitness decline and increase the isolation of populations occupying the remaining fragments, consequently causing reduced population size in the fragments (Frankham 2005; Young *et al.* 1996), and ultimately affecting seed germination or seedling fitness due to the effects of inbreeding depression and lower genetic diversity caused by fragmentation (Honny and Jacquemyn 2007). Low population sizes can result in Allee effects, defined as positive (inverse) density dependence at low densities, where the fitness of individuals is lower than expected (Courchamp *et al.* 1999). However, for some herbs, habitat fragmentation does not affect the abundance of the

species, probably because the plants can disperse among fragments, or the fragments are larger than the minimum critical size for population maintenance (O'Brien 1998).

Both habitat destruction and fragmentation may modify ecological interactions between species, such as pollination and herbivory (Laurence 2002). Insect-pollinated plants may be at a disadvantage in fragmented habitats, because the size of fragments, as well as the distance between fragments, may have effects on the distribution and abundance of insect species (Artz and Waddington 2006). Additionally, plants in fragmented populations may exhibit reduced population density with reduced floral display and rewards that can result in fewer pollinations. Pollen quality may also decrease at low plant densities due to matings between siblings or other related individuals; pollen can also be wasted as a result of self-incompatibility mechanisms in self-incompatibles species (Coombs *et al.* 2009; Lamont *et al.* 1993; Levin *et al.* 2009).

The pine rockland ecosystem is unique in the United States and is considered an imperiled habitat (Koptur 2006). Pine rockland flora is a mixture of tropical and temperate taxa, with a very diverse understory (Snyder *et al.* 1990; US Fish and Wildlife Service 1999). Many of the more than 200 understory species are endemic, some are threatened and some are rare. The high levels of endemism in pine rockland ecosystems may be explained by the presence of unique limestone outcrops and calcareous, phosphorus-limited soils. The calcium-rich loams and high pH, along with the presence of iron and manganese, contrast with the acidic quartz sand found in pine forests of northern Florida (O'Brien 1998).

Landscapes where pine forests were once dominant have experienced dramatic human population growth over the last 100 years, leading to much destruction of pine rockland habitat. Outside of Everglades National Park, only 2% of the original pine rocklands remain in many small fragments (Koptur 2006; Snyder *et al.* 1990). The remaining pine rockland habitats are threatened because they are primarily fire maintained systems, but pineland fragments embedded within the urban landscape are not burned as frequently as they once were. Within two decades of fire exclusion, a pine rockland can become a closed-canopy subtropical dry forest (known as 'hardwood hammock'), resulting in the disappearance of pine trees and rich native herbaceous flora (Snyder *et al.* 1990). In addition, the accumulation of litter due to fire suppression adversely affects understory species richness and diversity (Kirkman *et al.* 2001). In this ecosystem, leaf litter represents a physical barrier to plant growth and inhibits seed germination and establishment (Hiers *et al.* 2007; Wendelberger and Maschinski 2009). Litter modifies the physical and chemical environment of the forest floor, affecting soil moisture and nutrient availability (Hiers *et al.* 2007) that ultimately influences the distribution and abundance of understory species in the pine forests.

Angadenia berteroi (A.DC.) Miers (Apocynaceae, Apocynoideae) is a tropical perennial subshrub with large yellow flowers; its distribution is south Florida, the Bahamas

and Cuba. In southern Florida, *A. berteroi* grows in the pine rocklands, rockland hammocks and marl prairies in Miami Dade and Monroe Counties (Gann *et al.* 2002; Wunderlin and Hansen 2011). This threatened perennial plant is more abundant in the largest pine rockland fragments with higher fire frequency (Barrios *et al.* 2011). *A. berteroi* flowers open before sunrise and last less than 12 h. The flowers have complex floral morphology (Barrios and Koptur 2011) that results in a specialized pollination system (Barrios *et al.* 2016). Fruit set from self-pollination is unlikely to occur because the species is predominantly self-incompatible (Barrios and Koptur 2011). Natural levels of fruit set in *A. berteroi* are low, probably due to low visitation by pollinators, mating between closely related individuals, or both (Barrios and Koptur 2011).

The widespread distribution of *A. berteroi*, nearly ubiquitous in pine rockland sites, makes it an ideal species to study how fragmentation affects the reproductive fitness of a pollinator-dependent native species. The objective of this research is to establish the effect of habitat fragmentation and habitat quality on abundance and plant reproductive fitness of *A. berteroi*. Since fragmentation can adversely affect the diversity and abundance of insect pollinators (Artz and Waddington 2006), we hypothesized that contiguous large tracts of habitat are more favorable for *A. berteroi*, and that both the reproductive success and fitness of the species will be positively correlated with the size of the forest fragment. Fragmentation is also linked to habitat quality. We hypothesized that deterioration of habitat quality resulting from the suppression of fires will have a negative impact on the reproductive success and fitness of *A. berteroi*. We assessed the influence of fragmentation and habitat quality, and their interactions with various factors affecting seedling density, flowering and fruit set, using structural equation modeling (SEM), a multivariate statistical approach that allows the evaluation of interactions among different variables (Grace 2006). The hypothetical model for the causal relationships among these factors is given in Fig. 1. We also used an experimental approach to evaluate the effect of habitat size on seedling emergence and vigor.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study sites

We measured reproductive traits of *A. berteroi* and its habitat variables in 13 pine rockland forest sites scattered along the Miami Rock Ridge, including fire management units within Everglades National Park (ENP) (Table 1). Study sites were chosen based on their size and degree of isolation from the continuous pine rocklands in ENP (Fig. 2; Table 1).

Habitat structure and fragmentation

Fragment size, fire history and distance to the nearest fragment for fire management units within the Park and the Miami-Dade County fragments were determined using the Fire History Geodatabase provided by Everglades National Park (ENP), and the geographic information system (GIS)

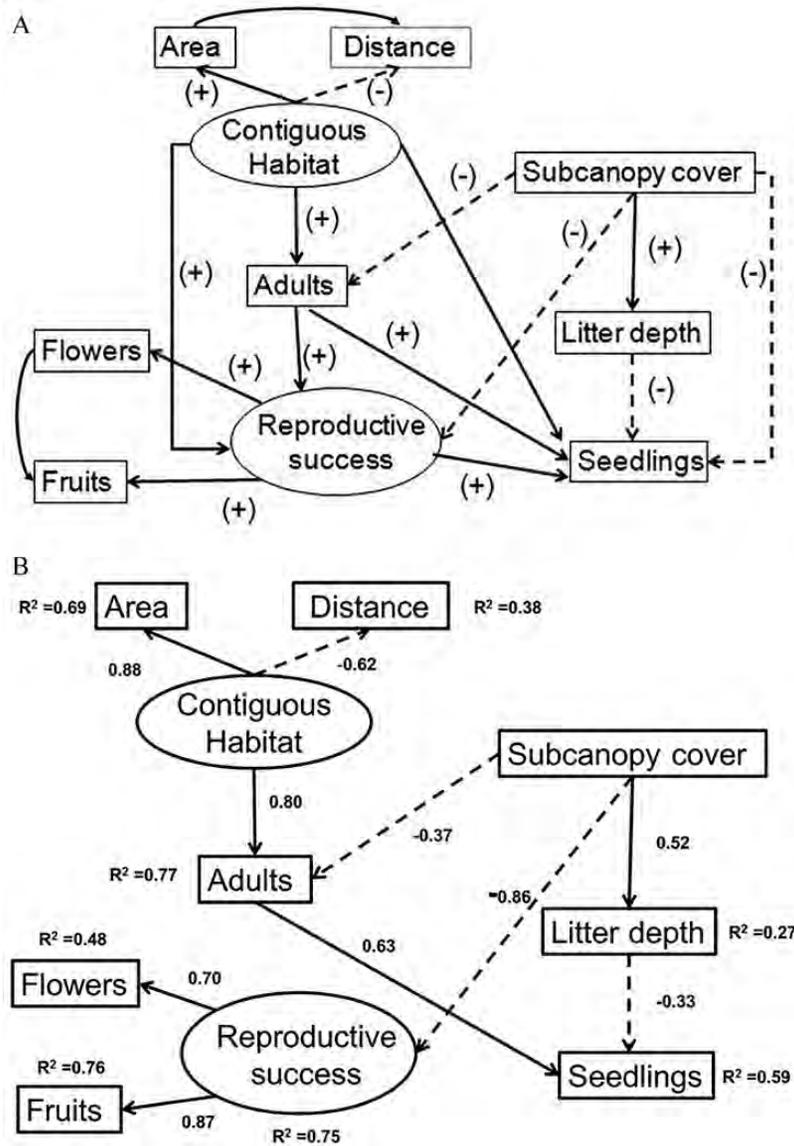


Figure 1: structural equation model illustrating the interactions between habitat fragmentation and quality with the reproductive fitness of *Angadenia berteroi*. Single arrows indicate directional relationships between the variables. Solid lines represent positive relationships and dashed lines represent negative relationships. **(A)** A priori basic model including all the variables and the potential relationships among them. **(B)** Actual model indicating significant relationships. Numerals near each path indicate standardized regression coefficient. Oval boxes are latent variables and square boxes are observed variables.

data generated by Florida Natural Areas Inventory (Public Lands-June 2008 shape files), respectively. Distance to the nearest fragment was determined as point-to-point linear distance between the centers of each fragment using ArcGIS version 10.0 (ESRI Inc.). We measured both litter depth and subcanopy closure, as both are considered representative of habitat quality, microhabitat structure and physical indicators of fire return interval, and both increase with time since the last fire (Snyder et al. 1990). Litter depth was measured with a rigid wire and a rule scale to the nearest 0.5 cm at three points across the plot diameter within each plot. Subcanopy closure was estimated by counting the number of squares of a forestry spherical densiometer occupied by canopy image excluding

pine trees. The densiometer readings were taken in four cardinal directions from the center of each plot at a height of 0.5 m, respectively.

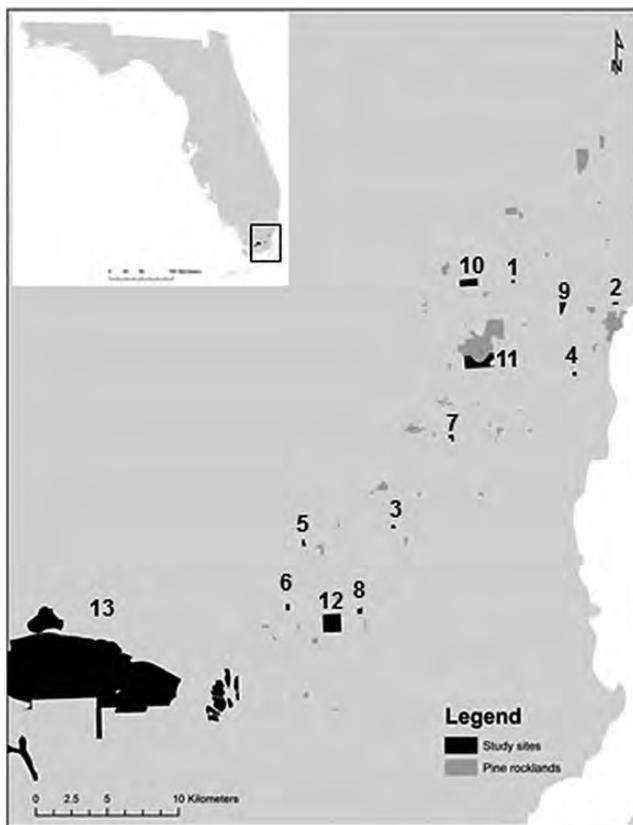
Fragmentation, abundance and reproductive fitness

We used a stratified random sampling design to quantify the density of *A. berteroi*. At each site, one to six 30×30 m blocks were selected, avoiding edges of the sites, and to ensure that 5% of the site was surveyed. In each block, we sampled 10, 1-m radius circular random plots. In each plot, we recorded the number of adults and seedlings of *A. berteroi*. Each separate aerial stem was considered a separate individual, and we

Table 1: Pine rockland study sites in Miami-Dade County, Florida, used for *Angadenia berteroi* study

Site names	Site number	Area (Acres)	Distance to nearest fragment (km)
Pine Shore Preserve	1	7.8	2.09
Ludlam Pineland	2	10.2	0.9
Ingraham Pineland	3	10.4	1.34
Ned Glenn Nature Preserve	4	11.0	0.43
West Biscayne Pineland	5	15.1	1.01
Palm Drive Pineland	6	20.0	1.59
Silver Palms Groves	7	20.4	1.22
Florida City Pineland	8	23.5	0.96
Rockdale Pineland	9	37.1	1.83
Nixon Smiley Pineland Preserve	10	120.0	1.2
Larry and Penny Thompson Park	11	270.0	0
Navy Wells Pineland	12	353.2	1.44
Long Pine Key	13	12 322.2	0

Site names, number designation, area and distance to the nearest fragment (as figured from central points).

**Figure 2:** map of the pine rockland habitat in southern Florida. Study sites shown here are described in Table 1.

defined seedling as individuals ≤ 10 cm in height and adults as individuals > 10 cm in height. We then calculated the density of adults and seedlings as individuals per m^2 .

To examine the effect of fragmentation on reproductive fitness, we determined the number of plants with flowers and fruits and the density of seedlings within each fragment. Two observers surveyed, by walking for 2 h at each site during the flowering peak in May, counting the total number of adult plants. To ensure that sampling distance covered by both observers in 2 h was the same, their walking speed was tested and was not found significantly different. The number of flowers per plant was recorded for each individual. We repeated these measurements in June during peak fruiting (Barrios *et al.* 2011), when we recorded the total number of plants and the number of fruits per plant. The percentage of flowering and fruiting plants was estimated by dividing the number of flowering and fruiting plants by the total number plants counted. The mean percentage of plants with flowers and fruits was used to estimate reproductive success of *A. berteroi* at each site. Both reproductive success and seedling density were used to estimate the reproductive fitness of *A. berteroi* (see online supplementary Appendices).

Statistical analysis

Our goal was to investigate the effect of habitat fragmentation on reproductive output using an integrative approach. For this, we used structural equation modelling (SEM) to explore the direct and indirect effect of predictors on response variables, taking into account the causal effects among variables (Grace 2006; Grace *et al.* 2014). SEM models represent network hypotheses and typically involve multiple regression equations. The SEM analysis starts by building an analytical model representing all the hypothetical causal links between predictors and response variables, based on previous studies of the ecological system. We sought to evaluate the direct and indirect effects of landscape variables (fragment size and distance to the nearest fragment) and site quality variables (litter depth and subcanopy closure) on *A. berteroi* density (adult and seedling) and reproductive output (percentage of individual plants with flowers and fruit) at the site level (Fig. 1A). For this analysis, adults and seedling density as well as the reproductive measurements and the habitat quality parameters were averaged for each of the 13 sites. The SEM Model includes two latent variables: habitat fragmentation and reproductive success. Habitat fragmentation was estimated in this model as a function of two measured variables: area of the fragment and point to point distance to the center of the nearest fragment. Reproductive success was measured in this model as a function of the mean percentage of plants with flowers and fruits.

We conducted a SEM analysis in R version 3.1.2 (R Core Team 2012) using the Lavaan package, 'latent variable analysis' (Rossee 2012). Direct effects were measured by standardized regression coefficients between the predictor and response variables, while the indirect effects were calculated as the sum of the products of all standardized regression coefficients over all paths between the predictor and the response variables. The maximum likelihood chi-square value was

used to estimate the fit of model, and the final model was chosen on the basis of the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) (Bollen et al. 2014). A non-significant goodness of fit test indicated that there is no significant discrepancy between model and data. Since our design considered each site as an experimental sample in order to accurately characterize landscape processes, our sample size was small ($N = 13$). We also tested the goodness of fit by Haughton's BIC test (HBIC) (Bollen et al. 2014). Prior to analysis, square root transformations were performed to achieve normality if the data were not normally distributed.

Seedling emergence and vigor

At least five mature fruits from seven sites (Sites 2, 3, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13) were collected. Seed mass (an indicator of seed quality) and offspring fitness (seedling germination and survivorship) were calculated for each site. Each seed was weighed to the nearest 0.1 mg, and the mean seed mass of 15–20 seeds per fruit was calculated for each fruit. From each site, a total of 330 seeds were weighed. Later, seeds within each site were mixed to eliminate genetic differentiation among fruits and 274 seeds per site were planted in six-pack trays, one seed per cell. The trays were placed on a mist bench for 2 weeks. Seed trays were moved to the greenhouse at the end of the second week, and we counted the number of seedlings present 3 weeks after planting. Seedling emergence was measured as the total number of seedlings that emerged by week 3, expressed as a percentage of the total number of seed sown. Seedling vigor was estimated from plant height at weeks 5 and 9 (Kearns and Inouye 1993). Percentage of seedlings present and plant height was compared across the different sites.

To see whether seed mass had an effect on germination success, we collected at least five mature fruits per site from five sites (sites 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13). Weighed seeds (573 in total) were soaked for 5 min in 5% bleach solution to sterilize the seeds, and were then rinsed thoroughly with distilled water. Seeds were placed in well plates that were filled with distilled water, with one seed per well. Five replicates were performed per site and 12 seeds per replicate were used. The seeds were germinated in a growth chamber at 25°C, 60% humidity, in a 12h/12h light/dark regime. We monitored seed germination daily for 2 weeks.

Statistical analysis

Data were checked for normality and equal variances before conducting statistical analyses. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for differences among sites for seed mass, percentage of seedlings present and plant height, as data were normally distributed. Post hoc tests were conducted using Tukey HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) to test for differences among sites. We performed correlation analyses using Spearman's coefficient to investigate the relationship between seed mass and germination success, and between seedling size with fragment size (Green and Salkind 2007; Zar 1999). Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS

(Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 21 (SPSS 2014).

RESULTS

Fragmentation, abundance and reproductive fitness

The structural equation model (Fig. 1B) containing all significant relationships found in the multiple regression analyses showed a good fit between the model and the data ($\chi^2_{17} = 15.05$, $P = 0.592$).

The SEM model revealed that adult density was significantly affected by habitat fragmentation and subcanopy cover. The area of a fragment had a positive effect on adult density, while distance to the nearest fragment and subcanopy cover had negative impact on adult density (Fig. 1B). Seedling density was directly and positively affected by adult density, and negatively by litter depth. As expected, subcanopy cover had positive effects on litter depth. Neither habitat fragmentation nor subcanopy cover had direct effects on seedling density. However, both habitat fragmentation and subcanopy cover had an indirect effect on seedling density, primarily through adult density and litter depth, respectively. Reproductive success, represented by number of plants with flowers and fruits, was negatively influenced by subcanopy cover, but we found no significant relationship between either fragmentation or adult density and reproductive success (Fig. 1B).

Seedling emergence and vigor

Seed weight differed significantly among sites ($F_{6, 330} = 27.88$, $P < 0.0001$, Table 2). Sites 2 and 13 had heavier seeds, while sites 10 and 3 had lighter seeds (Table 2). Despite those differences, the percentage of seeds producing seedlings in the greenhouse did not differ significantly among sites ($F_{6, 45} = 2.05$, $P = 0.083$). Additionally, seed germination was positively correlated with seed weight ($r = 0.34$, $P < 0.0001$). Seedling height differed significantly among sites at both 5 and 9 weeks ($F_{6, 168} = 8.08$, $P < 0.0001$; $F_{6, 168} = 7.38$, $P < 0.0001$ respectively, Table 2) after planting; furthermore, seedling height was negatively correlated with fragment size ($r = -0.41$, $P < 0.0001$).

DISCUSSION

In fragmented habitat, plant populations are adversely affected by declining habitat quality. In this study, the SEM model indicated that *A. berteroi* does best in large natural areas that are close to other pine rockland sites. Conversely, we also found that *A. berteroi* is less abundant in fragments with high subcanopy cover; an indicator of deteriorated habitat quality. These results are in accordance with our previous studies, where we found *A. berteroi* to be more abundant in larger fragments with higher fire frequency (Barrios et al. 2011). Another study (Possley et al. 2008) also reported that fragment size had a positive influence on understory species richness, and that *A. berteroi* is one of the species with the

Table 2: mean and standard deviation of seed mass, seedling emergence and plant height

Site	Seed mass (mg)	Seedlings emergence (%)	Height (m) week 5	Height (m) week 9
2	1.24±0.40 ^a	53.70±21.70 ^a	1.24±0.48 ^{ab}	1.88±0.61 ^{ab}
3	0.70±0.34 ^b	62.96±33.10 ^a	1.33±0.60 ^b	2.51±1.33 ^b
8	0.95±0.39 ^c	61.11±53.58 ^a	1.04±0.41 ^{abc}	1.91±0.92 ^{ab}
10	0.57±0.50 ^b	77.78±13.61 ^a	0.91±0.38 ^{ac}	1.65±0.87 ^a
11	0.96±0.33 ^c	41.67±34.56 ^a	0.73±0.23 ^c	1.34±0.41 ^a
12	1.01±0.29 ^c	63.89±34.02 ^a	0.94±0.34 ^c	1.32±0.56 ^a
13	1.30±0.20 ^a	91.67±9.13 ^a	0.75±0.20 ^{ac}	1.46±0.37 ^a

Sites with the same letter are not significantly different with Tukey HSD *post hoc* test.

greatest mean coverage in sites with high fire frequency. Our results also showed seedling density to be negatively correlated with litter depth, and indirectly correlated with subcanopy cover. Increased canopy cover contributes to greater litter development as well as reduces light availability for understory plants (Hiers *et al.* 2007). Increased litter depth and light reduction due to fire suppression alter the physical and chemical properties of the forest floor, and those changes inhibit seedling germination and establishment (Hiers *et al.* 2007; Wendelberger and Maschinski 2009). We found that seedling height was negatively correlated with fragment size; perhaps the tendency of smaller fragments to be overgrown has selected taller seedlings that can grow above the accumulated litter. Some species (e.g.; *Trifolium sp.*, Harrod and Halpern 2005, Harrod and Halpern 2009) have better germination in burned plots due to the removal of the inhibitory effects of litter accumulation, as well as the reduction of competitive plants and increased light availability. Time since the last fire was also negatively correlated with population growth rates of *Chamaecrista keyensis*, endemic herb of the lower Keys pine rocklands, which had reduced density in sites unburned for more than 15 years (Liu *et al.* 2005). Not all species are negatively affected by fragment size or isolation. For instance, herbaceous *Galactia* spp., also endemic to pine rocklands, were not affected by fragment size, though their abundance was negatively affected by plant cover (O'Brien 1998); competition for light, nutrients and space were suggested causes for their diminished abundance in overgrown sites (O'Brien 1998).

Lack of fire in pine rockland fragments may promote the number and growth of exotic species (O'Brien 1998), which play an important role in species composition by affecting seed germination, seedling establishment and occurrence of rare native plants (Yates and Ladd 2005). In many of the remaining pine rockland fragments of southern Florida, the increase in canopy cover is due to the invasion of non-native species (O'Brien 1998; Possley *et al.* 2008). Even though we do not have data to examine the correlation between non-native species and the abundance of *A. berteroi*, the negative correlation between *A. berteroi* density and subcanopy cover suggests that the introduction of exotics also negatively affects the population of this species. In our study, seedling density

at a site was not correlated with the percentage of individual plants with flowers and fruit in the SEM models, contrary to our expectations. This indicates that habitat quality (litter depth and subcanopy cover), which is also related to the time since last fire, plays a strong role in controlling seedling germination and establishment of *A. berteroi*.

We also found *A. berteroi* to be more abundant in less isolated fragments. These results concur with Lienert and Fischer (2003) who reported that both fragment size and isolation have negative effects on the abundance of *Primula farinosa* mainly because of the combined effects of inbreeding depression and lower genetic diversity in more isolated populations. Habitat loss and isolation are consequences of habitat fragmentation (Digiovinazzo *et al.* 2010), where isolation has a negative effect on species richness because it negatively affects migration between fragments. Although we do not have data to examine seed dispersal between fragments, *A. berteroi* seeds are wind dispersed, suggesting that dispersal of seeds to nearby fragments may easily occur (Barrios pers. obs). Bruna (2003) reported that dispersal between nearby fragments can ameliorate the negative effects of fragmentation on population growth rate and reproduction. More work on this aspect is needed, especially on the possibility of long distance dispersal with extreme weather events such as hurricanes.

Contrary to our expectation, we found no significant relationship between reproductive success and either adult density or fragmentation. Other studies have also shown that reproduction is unaffected by fragmentation (Bruna and Kress 2002; Yates and Ladd 2005); however, seed germination and establishment of *Heliconia acuminata*, an herbaceous perennial plant, are negatively affected by fragmentation, resulting in reductions of recruitment (Bruna 2002, 2003). Researchers have also reported that plant density has no effect on reproductive success, but habitat fragmentation and isolation have a negative effect on the reproductive success of *Cestrum parqui* (Solanaceae), as plants in small isolated populations were more likely to be pollination or pollen-limited than plants in larger populations (Aizen and Feinsinger 1994; Aguilar and Galetto 2004; Aguilar *et al.* 2006). *Angadenia berteroi*, predominantly self-incompatible and relying on pollinators for reproductive success (Barrios and Koptur 2011), was expected to reveal the adverse impact of fragment size and number of

adults on reproductive success. In our SEM results that confirm agreement between hypothetical and empirical models, a lack of strong direct effects of either fragmentation or number of adults on reproductive success simply emphasizes the importance of other factors related to habitat conditions for reproductive success of this species in fire-adapted pine rocklands.

Our SEM results also indicated that low canopy cover increases reproductive output of *A. berteroi* (Fig. 1). Yates and Ladd (2005) reported similar results, with increased reproduction and germination of *Verticordia fimbrilepis* on roadsides or in disturbed areas with little plant cover. Harrod and Halpern (2009) reported that flowering appears to be stimulated by increased light availability and low litter cover resulting from recent fires. In the case of *A. berteroi* also, previous work suggested that greater light availability has a positive impact on its reproductive success of *A. berteroi* (Barrios et al. 2011). Thus, the SEM results showing the direct significant effect of subcanopy cover on both reproductive success and seedling density corroborates earlier findings (Barrios et al. 2011), emphasizing the importance of low subcanopy cover for maintaining a healthy population of native species like *A. berteroi* in pine rocklands.

The effects of habitat fragmentation on seed germination and seedling fitness remain unclear. However, our results are in concordance with observations of Eisto et al. (2000) who reported that population size in the perennial herb *Campanula cervicaria* had no effect on its seed germination. These results were surprising since plants in small populations may have reduced fitness due to the effects of inbreeding depression and lower genetic diversity caused by fragmentation (Honnay and Jacquemyn 2007). The seed germination and seedling fitness of the *A. berteroi* populations sampled in this study may not have been affected by fragmentation, either because the fragments were large enough to maintain the minimum critical population size, or the fragments were not completely isolated from other sites, thus allowing seed and/or pollen dispersal between fragments.

The major finding of this study is the strong negative effect of habitat quality, rather than fragment area or plant density, on the reproductive success and seedling abundance of *A. berteroi*. Hobbs and Yates (2003) and McKechnie and Sargent (2013) found that altered local environmental conditions within remaining habitat can significantly alter the growth rate and reproduction of plant species. In addition to fragment quality, connectivity and landscape characteristics in which the habitats are embedded may also influence population survival and reproduction (Tschamtké and Brandl 2004). The habitat of *A. berteroi* has suffered from severe anthropogenic disturbance, both urbanization and agricultural intensification in recent decades (Snyder et al. 1990). The surrounding matrix (both agricultural or sand urban) may change habitat conditions in the fragments, affecting pollinator diversity and composition (Ahrne et al. 2009; Frankie et al. 2009; Carre et al. 2009), thus affecting

the reproductive success of the plants in the remaining fragments (Aguilar et al. 2006; Ferreira 2013; Newman et al. 2013).

In summary, although habitat fragmentation did not have a direct and great impact on reproductive success of *A. berteroi*, litter depth and subcanopy cover had strong negative effects on both its reproductive success and fitness. Since both litter depth and subcanopy cover in pine forests are a function of time since the last fire, we suggest that the increased light availability and low litter cover resulting from periodic fires favor reproduction of this native species of the southern Florida pine rocklands. These results emphasize the importance of fire as a tool for the habitat management and the conservation of this and other endemic species.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Supplementary material is available at *Journal of Plant Ecology* online.

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Breeding System of *Ruellia succulenta* Small (Acanthaceae)

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ABSTRACT This study examines the breeding system of *Ruellia succulenta* (Acanthaceae), an herbaceous perennial found in the pine rockland habitat of southern Florida. Hand pollination treatments were performed on 75 plants, 25 from each of three sites. Treatments applied to test plants included: 1) control (no manipulation), 2) anthers-removed, 3) self-pollinated, and 4) cross-pollinated. The pollination protocol investigated facultative autogamy, apomixis, and self-compatibility. Fruit set and seed number per fruit were recorded. In addition to determining breeding system, the data were used to evaluate inbreeding depression at the earliest life history stages (i.e., fruit and seed set), and to identify the mechanism of self-pollination. Results showed *R. succulenta* to be fully self-compatible and facultatively autogamous. Plants were unable to set fruit without pollen deposition, indicating the lack of apomixis. There is no evidence of inbreeding depression in fruit set or seed set for the self- vs. cross-pollinated treatments. The mechanism of autofertility appeared to be delayed self-pollination as the corolla abscised and the anthers were dragged past the persistent stigma.

INTRODUCTION A breeding system includes all facets of sex expression in a species, setting the pattern for the transmission of genes from one generation to the next among individuals within a population (Wyatt 1983). In general, self-compatibility (selfing) restricts gene flow and may lead to inbreeding, which results in reduced genetic variation within populations and increased genetic variation among populations. In contrast, outcrossing (self-incompatibility) enhances gene flow and may lead to the reduction of microhabitat divergence and genetic substructuring of populations (Hamrick and Godt 1990). The five basic types of plant mating systems are: 1) predominantly selfing, 2) predominantly outcrossing, 3) mixed mating (both selfing and outcrossing occurring), 4) partial apomixis, and 5) partial selfing of gametophytes as in ferns (Brown 1990).

The relationship between pollination and mating systems has become an area of active research (see review, Barrett and Harder

1996). Previously, many pollination studies focused on plant ecology whereas studies of mating systems emphasized theoretical consequences to population genetics (Barrett and Harder 1996). A growing body of literature, in contrast, focuses on the interaction between ecological factors of plant mating and the fitness of different mating patterns (Gregorius et al. 1987, Holsinger 1991, Lloyd 1992, Kohn and Barrett 1994). For pollination studies, experimental evidence of breeding system type is necessary to evaluate the link between pollination and seed production (Wyatt 1983, Barrett and Eckert 1990).

Herein, we investigate the breeding system of *Ruellia succulenta* Small, testing for self-compatibility vs. self-incompatibility. Data are also presented on this species' ability to self-pollinate. This report is part of a larger study evaluating the effects of habitat fragmentation on the reproduction of *R. succulenta*. Knowledge of the species' breeding system is essential in looking at habitat fragmentation effects (Spears 1987, Jennersten 1988, Lamont et al. 1993, Aizen and Feinsinger 1994, Oostermeijer et al. 1998, Morgan 1999, Cunningham 2000).

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METHODS

Study Species

The pineland petunia, *Ruellia succulenta*, is an herbaceous, long-lived perennial endemic to southern Florida (Avery and Loope 1980). The plant most commonly occurs in pine rockland (Snyder et al. 1990) but also is found in ecotones between short hydroperiod sawgrass prairies and muhly grass marshes. Plants are trailing to ascending, usually less than 50 cm tall with one to several (most often) to more than 30 (rare) stems. The showy, five-petaled, lavender (rarely white or pink) flowers have a salverform corolla and are produced in clusters in the leaf axils. Vouchers of representative individuals studied herein were deposited at the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden herbarium in Coral Gables, Florida.

Floral Components

We observed tagged buds on plants in the field and in the greenhouse to determine the sequence of maturation, flower opening time, and floral longevity. The following measurements were made on greenhouse plant flowers: corolla tube length, flower face diameter, stigma exertion, nectar concentration, nectar volume, number of pollen grains per flower, and number of ovules per ovary. Floral measurements were recorded in the greenhouse from 07:00 to 10:00. The corolla tube length was measured from the point of corolla tube constriction to the nectar (Barrow and Pickard 1985). Stigma exertion was calculated as the distance from the flower face to the lowest point of the bilobed stigma. Nectar volume was measured with calibrated microcapillary pipettes and the percent sugar (weight/weight) nectar concentration with a hand-held refractometer (Bellingham and Stanley, Kent, United Kingdom). The number of pollen grains per flower was estimated using the protocol outlined by Kearns and Inouye (1993). All anthers from a flower were removed and added to a vial of alcohol. An aliquot from this vial was added to a hemacytometer and the number of pollen grains was counted. The total number of pollen grains per flower was estimated from this sample. The number of ovules per ovary was obtained by dissecting ovaries from newly opened flowers and counting the number of ovules under a dissecting microscope.

Breeding System

Plants for the breeding system experiment were obtained from stem tip cuttings of adult plants. Stem tip cuttings (ca. 10 cm in length) were collected on 15 July 1999 from plants at three sites in Long Pine Key, Everglades National Park. The three sites were separated by several kilometers. One stem tip cutting was removed from 25 individual plants at each of the three sites and brought to the Florida International University greenhouse where they were planted in 6-celled plastic pots (15 × 10 cm) with potting mix (Pro-Mix, Quebec, Canada). No rooting compound was used. Initially, all cuttings were kept under a shade cloth covered misting table for 2 wks to maintain a high moisture level. All 75 cuttings rooted within two weeks and were transferred to 20 cm diameter plastic pots using the same potting mix. The plants were grown under ambient light in the greenhouse and were given half strength liquid fertilizer (Miracle-Gro, 30% N-15% P-30% K, Marysville, Ohio) additions on 22 October 1999 and 29 November 1999 to stimulate growth and flowering.

Flowers of *Ruellia succulenta* generally opened just after sunrise on clear days, but on cloudy/overcast days, anthesis was delayed several hours. While still in bud, the stigma was already fully extended above the plane of the anthers and so, upon anthesis, the stigma was pollen free. Anthers tended to split open longitudinally toward the center of the corolla tube ca. one hour after the petals unfurled. Pollen was rather sticky and formed clumps containing many individual pollen grains. Hand pollinations were performed from 08:00–10:00. By 13:00, most of the corollas had abscised from the base of the ovary. The abscission of the corolla resulted in the anthers being dragged past the persistent stigma atop the long style; stigma and style often remained attached to the ovary for over a week. To consider the amount of pollen deposited on the stigma in this manner, a sample of stigmas from two untreated flower groups was collected. The first group contained stigmas removed shortly before the corollas abscised and the second group contained stigmas from flowers that had already shed their corollas, referred to as “corolla on” and “corolla off” groups, respectively. Stig-

mas from both groups were mounted in fuchsin gel (Kearns and Inouye 1993), examined under a light microscope, and the number of pollen grains per stigma was counted.

The hand pollination treatments were performed on plants in the pollinator free (i.e., no pollinating insects present) Florida International University greenhouse from 7 December 1999 through 29 February 2000. The four hand pollination treatments were: no treatment (control), anthers-removed, self, and cross (Dafni 1992, Kearns and Inouye 1993). The four treatments tested for facultative autogamy, apomixis, and self-compatibility. The control procedure involved no floral manipulation. For the anthers removed treatment, a pair of tweezers was used to remove all four anthers from the flower with no additional floral manipulation. Clean, wooden toothpicks were used to collect and deposit a large quantity of self and cross pollen on the flower's stigma for the self and cross treatments, respectively. The number of pollen grains placed on the stigma greatly exceeded the number of ovules per ovary. To avoid crossing possible siblings or even same genotypes within each population, cross pollen was obtained from one of the other populations. For identification of all the treatments, a small, threaded, jeweler's tag was attached around the pedicel of each treated flower. Data on fruit set and seed set were recorded for all the hand pollinations.

Data Analysis

Logistic regression was used to investigate the influence of pollination treatments on the incidence (presence or absence) of fruit on test plants (PROC GENMOD, Littell et al. 2002). Orthogonal contrasts were used to compare fruit incidence among pollination treatments. Two way ANOVAs were used to test for differences in mean number of seeds per fruit among the four hand pollination treatments and the three sites (PROC GLM, SAS Institute 1999). To meet assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances, seed data were transformed by taking the reciprocal ($1/x$) of each value (Sokal and Rohlf 1981). Analyses were conducted using Bonferroni procedure. A t-test was performed on the data for the two flower groups, "corolla on" and "corolla off."

Data are presented as means (± 1 standard error).

RESULTS

Floral Components

Flowers have been described as subsessile glomerules found in the leaf axils (Wunderlin 1998). Our measurements revealed the five petaled lavender flowers to have a salverform corolla ca. 4 cm long; the tube 2.49 ± 0.29 cm long with a flower face diameter 4.79 ± 0.44 cm. The flowers are herkogamous, with the bilobed stigma exerted 3.8 ± 1.9 mm above the flower face. The filaments of the four individual stamens are adnate halfway down the corolla tube and the anthers occur just below the rim of the corolla tube. In general, flowers last one day; flowers open at sunrise and the corollas abscise in the early afternoon, so they are visited by diurnal insects only. Floral rewards are pollen and nectar that is secreted at the proximal end of the corolla tube surrounding the base of the ovary. The sugar concentration of the nectar measured on a weight per total weight basis was $19.6\% \pm 0.2\%$. The nectar volume was 1.09 ± 0.06 μ l. There were no significant differences among flowers from the three sites in either percent sugar concentration or volume of nectar ($p > 0.05$). The insect pollinators of *R. succulenta* include: butterflies, skippers, bombyliid flies, wasps, honeybees, and solitary bees (J. Geiger, pers. obs.). The number of pollen grains per flower was $4,255 \pm 343$. The number of ovules per ovary was 10.77 ± 0.03 and there were most often an equal number of ovules in each of the two locules of the ovary. Carpels mature into glabrous capsules containing up to 13 seeds within one to three weeks after pollination (J. Geiger, pers. obs.). The fruit is explosively dehiscent, and the seeds are dispersed several meters by the aid of hook shaped structures within the capsules.

Breeding System

The incidence of fruit set per plant did not differ among sites ($\chi^2 = 2.08$ df = 2, $p = 0.353$) but was influenced by floral treatments ($\chi^2 = 169.63$ df = 3, $p < 0.0001$). The self and cross treatments resulted in proportionally similar levels of fruit set, but were significantly higher when compared to the control and anthers-removed treatments (Figure 1). Sta-

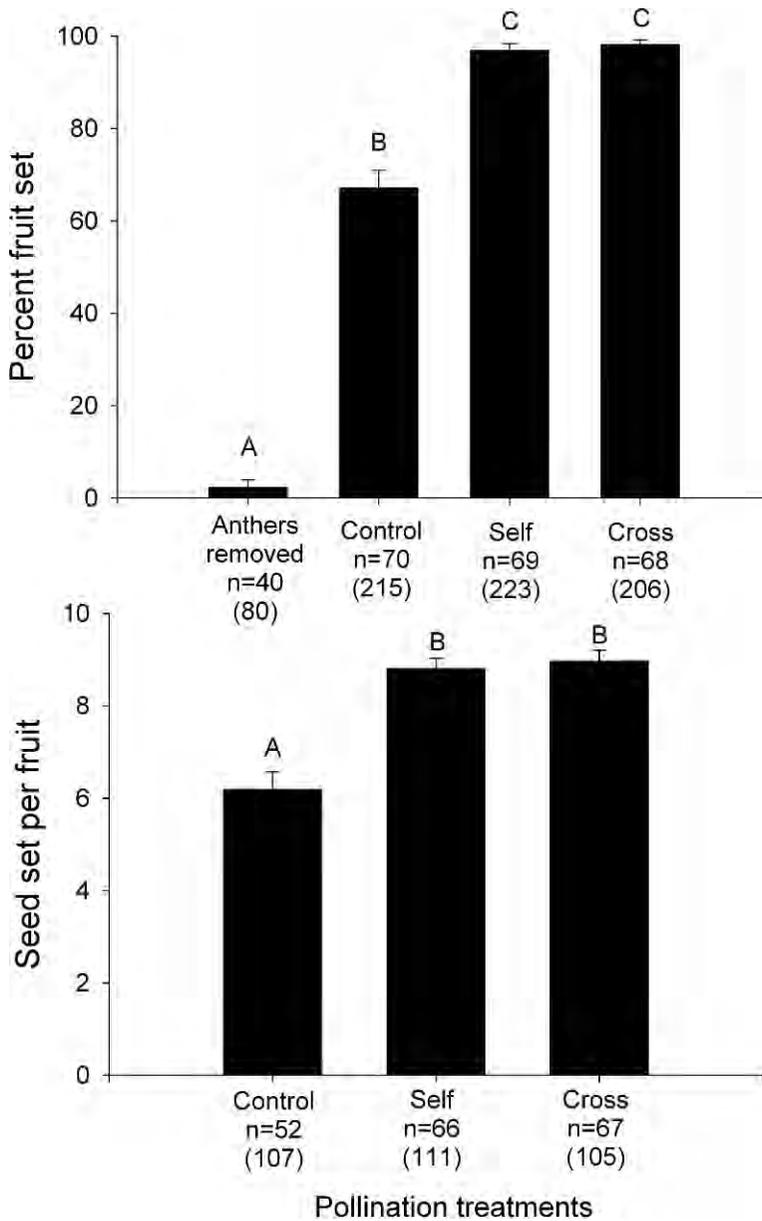


Figure 1. The influence of pollination treatments on percentage of flowers producing fruits (top) and number of seeds per fruit (bottom) following four controlled pollination treatments. Treatments with different uppercase letters are significantly different at $p < 0.05$ using the Bonferroni procedure. Error bars are standard errors of the mean; n = the total number of plants and (total number of flowers) used for each pollination treatment.

tistical testing failed to find a significant interaction between floral treatment and site on fruit set.

The anthers-removed treatment was excluded from the ANOVA testing for differences in seed set per fruit because only two of the 80 flowers with excised anthers produced fruit.

Pollination treatments influenced the mean seed set per fruit ($F = 11.34$ $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$). The mean number of seeds per fruit produced from the self and cross treatments was similar although both treatments were significantly greater than the control treatment (Figure 1). Site influenced the number of seeds per fruit

($F = 3.17$ $df = 2$, $p = 0.044$). Seed numbers ranged from 8.6 ± 0.2 at site 1 to 7.8 ± 0.3 at site 3, with site 2 intermediate (8.0 ± 0.3 seeds per fruit). The disparity in seed set between no manipulation (control) and cross treatment was slightly greater at site 2 as compared to 1 and 3, which may explain the significant site by treatment interaction ($F = 2.56$ $df = 4$, $p = 0.040$).

The mean number of pollen grains was significantly greater on flowers without corollas (26.8 ± 3.6) vs. those with corollas (0.42 ± 0.35 ; $t = 7.48$, $p < 0.001$).

DISCUSSION All *Ruellia succulenta* plants observed were monostylous hermaphrodites, with no evidence of the distyly reported by Long and Uttal (1962) in their study of *Ruellia caroliniensis* (J.F. Gmel.) Steud., a close relative of *R. succulenta*. In addition, all plants had only chasmogamous flowers, with no cleistogamy as Long and Uttal (1962) described for *R. caroliniensis*. *R. succulenta* is self-compatible by the criteria of Bawa (1974) and highly self-compatible by those of Dafni (1992). The percent fruit set following self pollination was 97%, perhaps not surprising for a monostylous, hermaphroditic herb, as they tend to show a high degree of self compatibility (Bullock 1985). There was no significant difference in fruit set between the self and cross treatments, while both were significantly different from the control treatment. The percent fruit set of the anthers-removed treatment, even at just 2.1%, may be too high. Excluded in the analysis were a few fruit derived from the anthers-removed treatment that were performed very early during the breeding system experiment. It is impossible to determine if this fruit set was the product of inexperience in removing the anthers, which may have resulted in pollen deposition on the stigma, or actual cases of apomixis. We consider the former is the more likely explanation as beyond the first week of hand pollination there were no more instances of individuals in the anthers-removed treatment setting fruit. The percent fruit set following the control treatment, with no floral manipulation, was 67%. As these tests were performed in a pollinator free greenhouse, the results show that *R. succulenta* is facultatively autogamous, able to set fruit in the absence of pollinators. The method of pollination seems

to be the deposition of self pollen as the corolla abscises and drags the adnate anthers past the stigma, i.e., delayed self pollination (Dole 1990).

Comparisons of seed set following the pollination treatments show differences between self and control and cross and control. There was no difference between self and cross; these two treatments had near identical means for number of seeds per fruit, 8.8 and 8.9, respectively. These findings further support the fruit set results that *Ruellia succulenta* is fully self-compatible. Additionally, these data provide evidence for the lack of inbreeding depression at these initial life history stages (i.e., fruit set and seed set) for the populations sampled.

Fruits from the control treatment had on average ca. 30% less seeds than from the self and cross treatments. This reduced seed set may be due to one facet of pollination intensity, namely, the relationship between the number of pollen grains deposited on stigmas and seed set. Realized seeds set to number of pollen grains deposited may be much lower than a 1:1 relationship, and several studies have documented such instances of reduced seed set due to low pollination intensity in the field (Snow 1982, McDade 1983). While this study did not explicitly explore the link between pollination intensity and seed set, the data from pollen grain number on the two flower groups does point to pollination intensity limiting seed set. For the self and cross treatments, the entire stigmatic surface was covered with pollen, most likely by hundreds of pollen grains. Data from the two flower groups show an average of less than one pollen grain per stigma for the "corolla on" group and an average of 27 pollen grains per stigma for the "corolla off" group. It appears that enough pollen is deposited on the stigma by the abscission of the corolla to effect fruit set with seed, but seed set following this delayed, autogamous self-pollination is not equivalent to seed set following the self and cross hand pollination treatments. These findings support the idea that low pollination intensity from delayed self-pollination results in reduced seed set for this species.

CONCLUSION The *Ruellia succulenta* populations studied are fully self-compatible and

show no signs of inbreeding depression in the earliest life history stages. Plants exhibited a high capacity for autofertility, and the mechanism appears to be the direct contact of the adnate anthers with the persistent stigma as the corolla abscises. This reproductive assurance mechanism may be especially important as the pine rockland habitat in Everglades National Park is known to be depauperate of insect pollinators at certain times e.g., when pinelands become overgrown due to fire exclusion (Koptur 2006), and after hurricanes (Pascarella 1998, Koptur et al. 2002). Further research could be conducted to determine the relationship between pollination intensity and seed set. Additionally, field assessments are needed to establish whether primarily selfing, primarily outcrossing, or a mixed mating system occurs for these populations in nature.

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Quantity over quality: light intensity, but not red/far-red ratio, affects extrafloral nectar production in *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii*

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Keywords

Extrafloral nectar, Fabaceae, plant defenses, resource allocation, *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii*.

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Abstract

Extrafloral nectar (EFN) mediates food-for-protection mutualisms between plants and insects and provides plants with a form of indirect defense against herbivory. Understanding sources of variation in EFN production is important because such variations affect the number and identity of insect visitors and the effectiveness of plant defense. Light represents a potentially crucial tool for regulating resource allocation to defense, as it not only contributes energy but may help plants to anticipate future conditions. Low red/far-red (R/FR) light ratios can act as a signal of the proximity of competing plants. Exposure to such light ratios has been shown to promote competitive behaviors that coincide with reduced resource allocation to direct chemical defenses. Little is known, however, about how such informational light signals might affect indirect defenses such as EFN, and the interactions that they mediate. Through controlled glass-house experiments, we investigated the effects of light intensity, and R/FR light ratios, on EFN production in *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii*. Plants in light-limited conditions produced significantly less EFN, and leaf damage elicited increased EFN production regardless of light conditions. Ratios of R/FR light, however, did not appear to affect EFN production in either damaged or undamaged plants. Understanding the effects of light on indirect defenses is of particular importance for plants in the threatened pine rockland habitats of south Florida, where light conditions are changing in predictable ways following extensive fragmentation and subsequent mismanagement. Around 27% of species in these habitats produce EFN and may rely on insect communities for defense.

Introduction

Extrafloral nectaries (EFNs) are nectar-secreting glands located outside of flowers and have been observed on a huge diversity of species, spanning over 93 families and 332 genera (Koptur 1992a,b; Marazzi et al. 2013). These nectaries may serve diverse ecological functions (Baker et al. 1978; Becerra and Venable 1989; Wagner and Kay 2002; Heil 2011), but primarily they are known to provide indirect defense against herbivores by attracting predatory insects, predominantly ants (Bentley 1977; Koptur 1992a,b; Rosumek et al. 2009; Heil 2015). Despite their unquestionable importance, relatively little is known about the factors that regulate EFN production. Uncovering these factors can help us understand how plants

regulate their investment in defense, and how they manage and maintain interactions with beneficial insects.

Light conditions are likely to be particularly influential in controlling the expression of plant defensive traits, as light not only represents a crucial aspect of resource availability, but may also serve as an indicator of insect activity (Karban et al. 1999), or future competition (Izaguirre et al. 2006). Plants are well known to sense changes in spectral signals (e.g., Weller et al. 1997; Adams et al. 2001). Far-red light, for example, is a component of the solar spectrum (710–850 nm) that is heavily reflected by plant tissues (Izaguirre et al. 2006). Increases in far-red radiation, relative to the red portion of sunlight (620–750 nm), can be detected through the photoreceptor, phytochrome B (Ballare et al. 1990; Ballare 2014). A low red/far-red (R/FR) light ratio is

known to indicate the close proximity of competitors for many plants (Ballare 1999, 2014).

Plants exposed to low R/FR light conditions often express a suite of competition-focused traits collectively known as the shade-avoidance syndrome (Ballare 1999, 2014; Pierik et al. 2013). Responses associated with the shade-avoidance syndrome include increased stem elongation, reduced lateral branching, and a reduction in resource allocation to defensive traits (Izaguirre et al. 2006). The expression of several direct plant defenses such as phenolic compounds (Moreno et al. 2009), and latex (Rasmann et al. 2009; Agrawal et al. 2012), is known to be reduced in low R/FR light.

Far less is known about the effects of light conditions on the expression of indirect plant defenses such as EFN. Light intensity is known to affect trade-offs between indirect defenses in *Mallotus japonicus* (Yamawo and Hada 2010); however, only the effects of light intensity, and not light quality, were observed and so we know little about how these plants may respond to informational light signals. In lima beans (*Phaseolus lunatus*), the induction of EFN production with jasmonic acid (JA) has been shown to be dependent on light intensity, and on the ratio of R/FR wavelengths (Radhika et al. 2010). Izaguirre et al. (2013) also observed EFN production in passion fruit (*Passiflora edulis*) in carefully manipulated light conditions. Plants (and plant parts) exposed to low R/FR light conditions exhibited reduced EFN production, compared to those exposed to higher R/FR light ratios, particularly in response to simulated herbivory.

Pine rockland habitats contain a high proportion of EFN-bearing plants (27%) (Koptur 1992a,b), but the dynamics of EFN production in these species have rarely been studied (but see Rutter and Rausher 2004; Jones and Koptur 2015). *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii* (hereafter referred to as *Senna chapmanii*) is an herbaceous legume native to the pine rocklands of south Florida and the Caribbean. We have already shown that *S. chapmanii* plants produce more EFN in response to leaf damage (Jones and Koptur 2015). We have also observed that plants in shady conditions are less well defended by ants than those in direct sunlight (I. M. Jones, S. Koptur, J. Tardanico, H. Gallegos and P. Trainer, unpubl. data).

In this study, we investigated the effects of light intensity and R/FR light ratio on EFN production in *S. chapmanii*. Both artificially defoliated and undamaged plants were tested. We expected EFN production would be increased in response to leaf damage and high light intensity, but reduced in response to low R/FR light ratios. Understanding the factors that control EFN production is important, because such variations affect the number and identity of insect visitors, and the effectiveness of plant defense (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Extrafloral nectary on the leaf rachis of *Senna mexicana* var. *chapmanii*. Photograph by Ian Jones.

Methods

To control *S. chapmanii* light environments, film cylinders (50 cm in circumference and 60 cm in height) were constructed using three calibrated light filtration films. Film 1 (treatment film) was a metal sputter-coated film designed to mimic shading by other plants by reducing photosynthetically active radiation (PAR) by approximately 80%, and reducing the ratio of R/FR light. Film 2 (control film), a dye-impregnated film, was designed to reduce PAR by approximately 80%, but without impacting R:FR light ratio. Films 1 and 2 were supplied by the 3M Corporation (St. Paul, MN, 55144, USA) and have been used previously to test the effects of irradiance and spectral quality on forest tree seedling development (Lee et al. 1996). Film 3 was a clear acetate film which allowed approximately 90% PAR transmission and had no impact on R:FR light ratio. Film 3 was supplied by BLICK art materials (Galesburg, IL, 61402, USA), and controlled for the effects of the cylinders themselves. Twenty-four film cylinders (8 of each type) were placed on a glasshouse bench. The open bottom of each cylinder was placed around the plant pot, and the top end was sealed closed using clear tape. Cylinders composed of the three film types were placed alternately in three rows running east to west (Fig. 2).

To determine the actual light environments within the film cylinders, the intensity and spectral distribution of light within the glasshouse were measured using a radiospectrometer (Unispec-DC, PP SYSTEMS, Amesbury, MA, USA). These measurements were then compared with measurements taken inside the film cylinders 1, 2, and 3. Percentage transmittance of light through each film type, at a range of wavelengths (300–1000 nm), was then calculated. Three of each filter type were tested (Fig. 3).

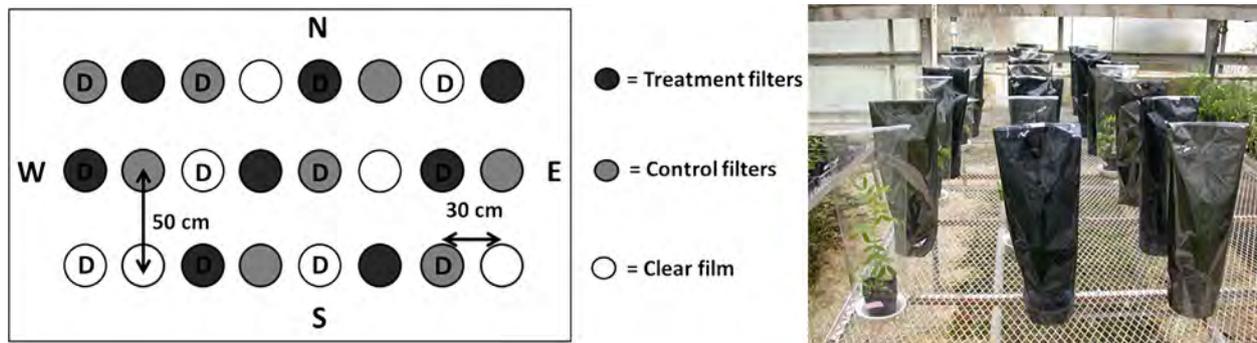


Figure 2. Light filter cylinder arrangement. The letter D indicates plants subjected to leaf damage.

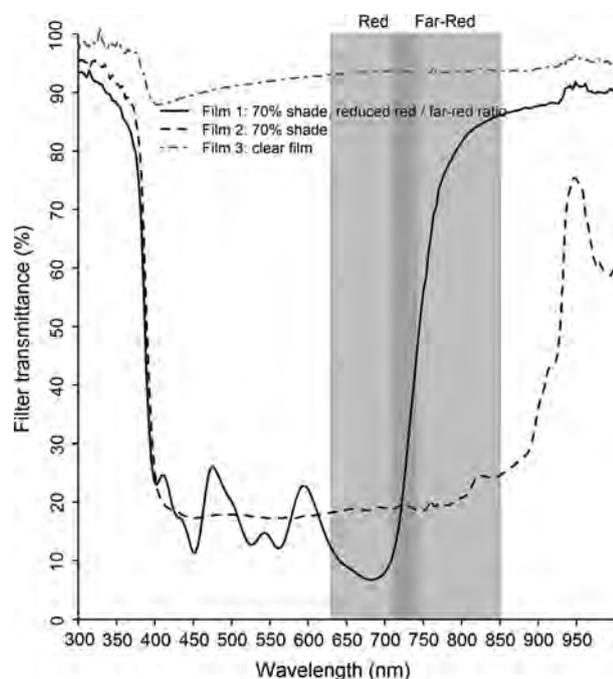


Figure 3. Mean percentage of light of different wavelengths (300–1000 nm) transmitted through the three filter types. Light gray bands indicate red and far-red light wavelengths, while the dark gray band indicates crossover between the two. The sharp rise in percentage light transmission in film 1, starting at around 710 nm, indicates the desired increase in R:FR light ratio within film 1 cylinders.

Senna chapmanii was grown from seeds in the glasshouse on the Modesto Maidique campus at Florida International University. After 3 weeks, seedlings were transplanted into 0.6-L pots, and 1.5 g of slow release fertilizer (Nutricote NPK; Florikan, Sarasota, FL, USA) was added to each plant. Plants were maintained in the glasshouse until they had at least 10 mature leaves. Experiments were conducted from June to August 2014.

Twenty-four plants were placed randomly in the cylinders (Fig. 2). After 48 h inside the cylinders, 12

plants (4 from each cylinder type) were subjected to 50% leaf damage. Leaf damage was inflicted by removing 50% of each leaflet using scissors. The same damage treatments were used in a previous study (Jones and Koptur 2015) and induced a highly significant increase in EFN production in *S. chapmanii*. The remaining 12 plants were left undamaged. The experiment therefore had two independent variables, light quality and leaf damage.

Extrafloral nectar production, by each plant, was measured 12 and 24 h after leaf damage as the increase in EFN production by *S. chapmanii* in response to leaf damage has been shown to be greatest during this period (Jones and Koptur 2015). Leaf damage was inflicted at 7 am, so nectar measurements took place at 7 pm on the day of leaf damage, and at 7 am the following morning. Taking measurements in the morning, and at night, allowed us to calculate a mean EFN production for each plant, controlling for natural diurnal variations in EFN production. Nectar volume was measured using 1, 2, and 10 μ L micropipettes, and its concentration determined using a handheld refractometer. Total sugar production by each plant was then calculated as described by Jones and Koptur (2015). The experiment was repeated 6 times, using a total of 144 plants.

We report EFN production as the mean mass of sugar (mg) produced by each plant, as this provides the best representation of defensive investment. Previous studies have often reported only nectar volume or concentration, both of which are affected by environmental factors such as temperature and humidity. Where we refer to EFN production in the discussion, we refer to mean sugar production.

Statistical analysis

Kruskal–Wallis H-tests were used to compare EFN production between the three light treatments in damaged and undamaged plants. Post hoc comparisons between pairs of light treatments were then conducted separately

using Mann–Whitney *U*-tests. Holm’s sequential Bonferroni adjustments were applied to control for type 1 errors. Damaged and undamaged plants within each light treatment were compared using Mann–Whitney *U*-tests.

Results

Radiospectrometer readings confirmed that light conditions inside the cylinders were as expected (Fig. 3). Film 1 admitted between 10% and 30% of light in photosynthetically active wavelengths, but transmittance rose to almost 90% in the far-red wavelength band. Film 1 therefore adequately mimicked shading by other plants, as compared to film 2, which admitted around 20% of light in photosynthetically active wavelengths, with transmittance rising only slightly in the far-red band. Film 3, the clear film, admitted around 90% of light across all wavelengths (Fig. 3).

In all three light treatments, damaged plants produced more EFN than undamaged plants (Film 1: $z = -2.492$, $df = 46$, $P = 0.013$; Film 2: $z = -2.474$, $df = 46$, $P = 0.013$; Film 3: $z = -2.062$, $df = 46$, $P = 0.039$). Light treatments significantly affected EFN production in both damaged ($\chi^2 = 18.355$, $df = 2$, $P < 0.001$) and undamaged plants ($\chi^2 = 23.014$, $df = 2$, $P < 0.001$) (Fig. 4).

Among damaged plants, those in clear tubes (film 3) produced significantly more EFN than those in 70% shade with reduced R/FR light ratio ($z = -3.843$, $df = 46$, $P < 0.001$), and those in 70% shade ($z = -3.350$, $df = 46$, $P = 0.001$). There was no difference in sugar production between plants in 70% shade with reduced R/FR light ratio, and those in 70% shade ($z = -1.012$, $df = 46$, $P = 0.311$) (Fig. 4).

Among undamaged plants, those in clear tubes (film 3) produced significantly more EFN than those in 70% shade

with reduced R/FR light ratio ($z = -4.245$, $df = 46$, $P < 0.001$), and those in 70% shade ($z = -3.343$, $df = 46$, $P = 0.001$). There was no difference in sugar production between plants in 70% shade with reduced R/FR light ratio, and those in 70% shade ($z = -1.343$, $df = 46$, $P = 0.179$) (Fig. 4).

Discussion

Extrafloral nectar is an extremely widespread, often inducible trait that mediates food-for-protection interactions between plants and ants. Although the ecological role of EFN is well established (Bentley 1977; Koptur 1992a,b; Rosumek et al. 2009), far less is known about how changes in environmental conditions, even over small scales, may affect its production and, therefore, the outcomes of the interactions it mediates.

Plants in all three light treatments produced more EFN in response to leaf damage. Inducible EFN nectar production has been reported in many species (Stephenson 1982; Koptur 1989; Agrawal and Rutter 1998; Engel et al. 2001; Heil et al. 2001; Mondor and Addicott 2003; Choh and Takabayashi 2006; Lach et al. 2009; Heil 2015). Indeed, increased EFN production in response to leaf damage has been observed previously in *S. chapmanii* (Jones and Koptur 2015). We observe for the first time, however, that this induced response is maintained in light-limited conditions, albeit at a lower level. It should be noted that, in the present study, we observed the effects of mechanical leaf damage and not true herbivory. Plants have been observed to respond to the oral secretions of specific herbivores (Kessler et al. 2010), and responses to damage have been shown to vary based on herbivore feeding guild (Schmidt et al. 2009; Sotelo et al. 2014). Future work therefore should focus on the effects of damage inflicted by key herbivores.

Light intensity had a significant impact on EFN production, as both damaged and undamaged plants produced more EFN at high light intensities. It might seem intuitive that a reduction in the availability of photosynthetically active light would reduce the level of resources available for defense. Indeed, some so-called green nectaries may be isolated from phloem tissue and produce nectar only at a rate that can be supported by their own photosynthesis (Lüttge 2013). The resource availability hypothesis (RAH), however, suggests that low-nutrient environments may promote greater investment in defensive traits, compared to nutrient-rich environments where plants must grow quickly in order to compete (Coley et al. 1985; Endara and Coley 2011). The relationship between nutrient availability and defense is therefore complex, and assumptions that increased resources should lead to a greater investment in defense may be misplaced.

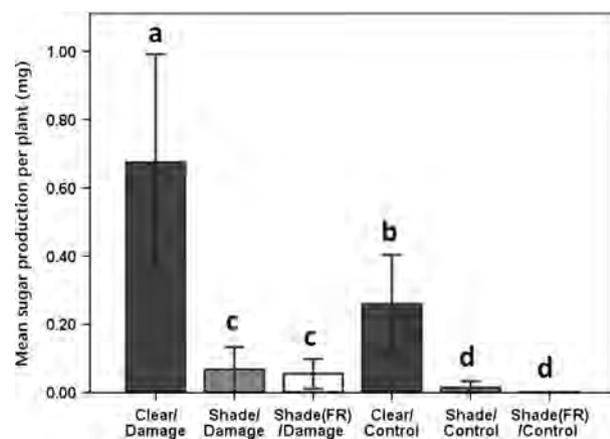


Figure 4. Mean sugar production (mg) by damaged and undamaged plants subjected to three light treatments. Error bars indicate standard error. Letters indicate significant differences.

The carbon–nutrient balance hypothesis (CNBH) suggests that when a given resource limits plant growth, other resources, found in relative excess, may be allocated toward defenses (Bryant et al. 1983). For example, in light-rich and nutrient-poor conditions, plants are expected to invest in carbon-based defenses, while in shaded but nutrient-rich conditions, plants should invest more heavily in nitrogen-based defenses (Lerdau and Coley 2002). Yamawo and Hada (2010) found that light intensity affected the trade-off between two indirect defenses in *Mallotus japonicus*. In low light conditions, both the size and the productivity of EFNs were reduced, but the production of pearl bodies was increased. These results seem to support CNBH, as pearl bodies are rich in protein and represent a significant nitrogen investment (Heil et al. 2004). Our observations that EFN production in *S. chapmanii* is reduced in low light conditions seem to reflect resource availability and contradict RAH. However, it remains possible that reduced EFN production may coincide with an increased investment in nitrogen-based defensive compounds such as alkaloids. Future studies should seek to understand these dynamics, in *S. chapmanii* and other species.

The simplest and most elegant explanation for the observed pattern of EFN production may come from Millán-Cañongo et al. (2014), who observed reduced EFN production in shaded leaves of *Ricinus communis*. Changes in EFN production were shown to be mediated by cell wall invertase, an enzyme involved in the unloading of sucrose from the phloem into the nectary. Light conditions did not appear to affect cell wall invertase activity, so it was suggested that reduced EFN production was a result of lower sucrose content available in the phloem (Millán-Cañongo et al. 2014).

Changes in R/FR light ratio had no effect on EFN production in *S. chapmanii*. Plants exposed to low R/FR light ratios produced slightly less EFN in both damaged and undamaged plants, but the differences were not significant. These results were surprising as light spectral quality has been observed to affect EFN production significantly in both lima beans (Radhika et al. 2010) and passion fruit (Izaguirre et al. 2013). It is possible that our shade treatments reduced overall light intensity to such an extent that the effects of light spectral quality were tempered. This seems unlikely, however, as Radhika et al. (2010) showed that R/FR light ratio affected JA-induced EFN production even at low light intensities. Our results suggest that *S. chapmanii* downregulates indirect defenses in response to shade, but that it does not do so in response to specific spectral signals that indicate competition.

This study contributes to an improved understanding of plant resource allocation, and the dynamics of defensive traits. Spatiotemporal patterns of EFN production are often

adapted to optimize plant defense (Tilman 1978; Heil 2015). These patterns, however, are driven by simple physiological mechanisms that respond to environmental conditions (Heil 2015). We add to a growing understanding of how changing environmental conditions affect indirect plant defenses, and the interactions that they support.

Understanding how EFN production responds to changing light conditions is of particular importance in pine rockland habitats, where roughly 27% of plants bear EFNs (Koptur 1992b). Over the last century, roughly 98% of pine rockland habitat in south Florida (with the exception of Everglades National Park) has been destroyed for agriculture and urban development (Barrios et al. 2011). Due to their close proximity to dense human populations, the remaining fragments are frequently mismanaged. In particular, the fires that are necessary to maintain healthy pine rocklands are often suppressed (Possley et al. 2008). Pine rockland habitats are characterized by an open canopy, with high levels of light reaching the species-rich herb layer. In the absence of fire, trees and shrubs quickly become overgrown, and understory plants are shaded. With this experiment, we hoped to create a clearer understanding of how changing light conditions in the pine rocklands might affect insect–plant interactions, and the fitness of plants that rely on these interactions for defense.

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Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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Preliminary Observations and Analyses of Pollination in *Coccothrinax argentata*: Do Insects Play a Role?

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1. Habit of silver palm (*Coccothrinax argentata*) in pine rocklands habitat. Note silvery underside of leaves and cream-colored inflorescence.



We examined the reproductive biology of the rare and endemic palm, *Coccothrinax argentata*, in the pine rocklands of southern Florida. In addition to conducting visitor exclusion experiments, we observed five species of insects visiting the flowers of *C. argentata* and found large quantities of *C. argentata* pollen on their bodies. These preliminary results suggest that insects collect pollen from this species and may play a role in its pollination. Understanding the breeding system and pollination biology of the silver palm will facilitate effective management strategies of this rare palm.

Palms have traditionally been associated with anemophily, or wind pollination (Henderson 1986). Delpino (1870) was one of the primary proponents of this theory, relating the “primitiveness” of anemophily to the palm family. Many botanists (Drude 1889, Kerner 1895, Rendle 1904, Cook 1927) continued the myth popularized by Delpino, despite some considerations that palms could be insect- and wind-pollinated (Coulter & Chamberlain 1915, Kugler 1955). The hypothesis of anemophily in palms also arose as a result of their inflorescence and pollen morphology – typically massive inflorescences producing small, inconspicuous flowers and large quantities of pollen. As Henderson discussed in his review, Good (1956) even went so far as to describe palms as the tropical counterparts of catkin-bearing dicotyledons. Later studies maintained that palms are primarily anemophilous in the temperate zone (Baker & Hurd 1968, Stebbins 1974), highlighting the need for field studies that empirically test this assumption. The general hypothesis of anemophily in palms has been abandoned and evidence now suggests that entomophily, or a combination of both may be more common among palms (Dransfield et al. 2008).

Coccothrinax argentata (Jacq.) L. H. Bailey, Florida silver palm (Fig. 1), is a rare palm endemic to south Florida and the Bahamas. It grows in the pine rocklands (Fig. 2), a fire-dependent habitat occurring on outcroppings of limestone, as well as in hardwood hammocks and on coastal dunes. Urban development and long-term fire suppression pose major threats to the pine rocklands, with less than 2% of the original habitat remaining outside of Everglades National Park (Snyder et al. 1990). The range of *C. argentata* extends from southern Florida (northern limit near Boca Raton) to the Florida Keys and the Bahamas (Wunderlin & Hansen 2003), although Davis et al. (2007) identified populations of southern Florida and the Florida Keys to be morphologically distinct.

Little is known of the silver palm's reproductive biology, despite the important role its fruits play in the diet of many animals. Florida's Key deer depend on the fruit as a primary food source, although the deer do not excrete intact seeds and are ineffective seed dispersers (Zona 1997). In contrast, birds, turtles (Liu et al. 2004), and small mammals are considered to be effective seed dispersers of this species. To our knowledge, no study has

2. Pine rocklands habitat. Three palm species dominate the understory: saw palmetto, *Serenoa repens* (foreground, left), silver palm, *Coccothrinax argentata* (background, center), and cabbage palm, *Sabal palmetto* (foreground, right).



been published on the pollination biology of this species, although the few studies that mention its pollination biology suggest anemophily (Zona 1997).

We conducted a preliminary study on the reproductive biology of *C. argentata*, with the aims of elucidating its breeding system and determining if it is strictly wind-pollinated. Specifically, our research addressed three primary questions: (1) Is *C. argentata* self-compatible? (2) Does *C. argentata* set fruit without floral visitation? and (3) Do insects visit inflorescences and which are effective pollinators? The research presented in this paper forms part of a multi-species study on the reproductive biology of three sympatric palms in the southern Florida pine rocklands.

Materials and Methods

Species description. *Coccothrinax argentata* (Arecaceae: Coryphoideae) is a relatively short (stature of mature mainland plants ranges from 0.5–1.8 m) and slow-growing palm. Individuals bear a small, single stem that can occasionally develop into multiple stems. Its leaves are palmate and deeply divided, with induplicate plication and unarmed petioles that do not split at the base.

Coccothrinax argentata produces small, white flowers containing 7–12 twisted stamens and one unilocular carpel, with an inconspicuous uniseriate corolla. Flowers are borne singly along the rachillae. Inflorescences are interfoliar and take about three weeks to expand, finally emerging from a single, silky, pubescent peduncular bract similar in color to the underside of the leaves. The inflorescence is subtended by a peduncular bract and is branched, with many rachillae. Flowers last less than one week, with stigmas and anthers quickly shriveling and drying up thereafter. Anthers become notably twisted after stigma receptivity has passed. Pollen is white, in contrast to the yellow pollen of *Sabal palmetto* and *Serenoa repens*. We observed a strong, sweet odor emerging from the receptive flowers. Flowers open before 08:00, and we observed the highest amount of insect activity and most notable odor between 08:00 and 10:00. Fruits of *C. argentata* are globose, smooth and purplish black at maturity, one-seeded, and measure 0.6–1.2 cm in diameter.

Study site. We conducted our fieldwork in the pine rocklands, an ecosystem endangered by habitat destruction and fragmentation. The pine rocklands in southern Florida are

dominated by the Slash pine, *Pinus elliottii* var. *densa* in the canopy, and native palm species as well as over 250 herbaceous species in the understory (Snyder et al. 1990). Our study area, Navy Wells Preserve (latitude 24.4347, longitude -80.5030), serves as the groundwater recharge area for the Florida Keys water supply (USGS 2004). This large fragment of pine rockland lies just outside of Everglades National Park and is managed by Miami-Dade County. A dirt road bisects the 101.2 ha preserve. In addition to *C. argentata*, two other native palm species are abundant at this site and are fire-adapted: *Sabal palmetto*, cabbage palm, and *Serenoa repens*, saw palmetto. We chose to conduct our fieldwork at this site because it had been recently burned and, like other pine rocklands plant species, silver palm survives and even thrives after a fire (Cooley 2004, Carrington & Mullahey 2006). All field observations and experiments were conducted between February and July, 2008.

Flowering and fruiting phenology. We observed *C. argentata* in bloom at this site from late February through April, although a few individuals bloomed in May. Fruit set occurred from May through the summer months, coinciding with the seasonal rains. Phenological data of *C. argentata* in cultivation at the Montgomery Botanical Center (MBC) in Miami, Florida, suggest similar patterns, with a flowering peak occurring from March through May, although a second flowering peak seems to occur from September through November (Larry Noblick, unpublished data). As we observed at Navy Wells, the MBC populations of *C. argentata* begin to set fruit in June, but continue through December. Although these data reflect *C. argentata* in cultivation, and not growing wild in the pine rocklands, they are still relevant because both habitats share the same climate. Furthermore, these data are useful since phenological data of this species, as well as those of *Sabal palmetto* and *Serenoa repens*, are scarce. We observed that the flowering and fruiting activity of silver palm coincided with that of the other two species, also abundant at this site.

Floral visitors and nectar collection. We conducted pollinator watches on flowering silver palm individuals located throughout the site. All pollinator watches were carried out on sunny and partly cloudy days between 09:00 and 13:00 for twenty 10-minute intervals. Insect appearance and behavior was recorded, noting how long visitors stayed on flowers and if they made contact with the

stigma. The number of visits by different insects was also recorded. Visitors were collected and identified. We also tested for the presence of floral nectar in *C. argentata* using a hand-held light refractometer (Bellingham and Stanley "Eclipse").

Pollen analysis. Visitor specimens were examined using the dissecting microscope to view pollen loads, and pollen was sampled with dissecting needles and fine brushes (cleaned between specimens). Pollen from the insects' bodies was dropped into fuchsin gel on a microscope slide for examination under the light microscope (Dafni et al. 2005). We compared the pollen with known samples in our reference collection to determine what species of pollen were on each insect's body.

Breeding system. To determine the breeding system of *C. argentata*, we performed a pollen limitation experiment using a treatment and control (Kearns & Inouye 1993). The autogamy treatment consisted of bagging peduncular bracts before inflorescences had emerged and leaving the bags on until fruit set. The control plants were not bagged and represented open pollination. Fine nylon mesh (with threads less than 0.1 mm apart), breathable bags that did not permit pollen or insects to enter were used. All plants were tagged, and the date of bagging was recorded.

Fruit initiation was apparent within one month of bagging. The number of fruits per rachilla and per inflorescence was counted, along with the number of flowers and buds. Fruit set was calculated as the proportion of flowers that set fruit per inflorescence.

Statistical analysis. We conducted an independent samples T-test to test for differences in fruit set and number of fruit among the treatment and control. Number of fruit was calculated as the number of fruit produced per inflorescence whereas fruit set was calculated as the proportion of flowers that set fruit per inflorescence. A nonparametric test (Mann-Whitney U) was used because the error variances were significantly different for number of fruit (Levene's test, $t = -7.624$, $df = 22.755$, $p < .001$) and fruit set (Levene's test, $t = -1.706$, $df = 20.030$, and $p < .104$), and transformation was unsuccessful. Normality tests (including histograms and box plots) also showed the data to be non-normally distributed. One reason for this type of distribution could be because of small sample size ($n = 41$). All

statistical analyses were performed using SPSS (Chicago, Illinois, USA).

Results

Floral visitors. Floral visitation peaked from 09:00 to 11:00, and decreased significantly by 13:00. We observed five different species visiting the inflorescences of *C. argentata* including three bees: *Apis mellifera* (Hymenoptera: Apidae), *Megachile georgica* (Hymenoptera: Megachilidae), and *Xylocopa micans* (Hymenoptera: Apidae); flies, *Plecia nearctica* (Diptera: Bibionidae); and ants, *Pseudomyrmex mexicana* (Hymenoptera: Formicidae). During the twenty ten-minute interval watches, we found *Apis mellifera*, the European honeybee, to be the most abundant visitor. Honeybees tended to stay on each inflorescence longer than the other bee species, which tended to forage more quickly and visit a larger number of inflorescences. All visitors made contact with the stigma as they crawled around the flowers and visited the flowers repeatedly, suggesting that they were not just "passing by." During our pollinator watches, we actually observed several of the visitors collecting pollen, notably *X. micans* and *A. mellifera* (Figs. 3–5). Furthermore, we could see ample quantities of pollen on their bodies as they "worked" the flowers (Fig. 6).

During previous fieldwork on wildflower species in the pine rocklands, we and other members of our lab have consistently observed (though have not yet quantified) that palms in bloom recruit visitors disproportionately, leaving nearby wildflowers unvisited. We observed the same phenomenon in our field site: insect activity was concentrated at palm inflorescences, among them, those of *C. argentata*. This pattern may reflect ample nectar with high nectar concentrations in the native palm species of this habitat, notably *Serenoa repens* and *Sabal palmetto*. Though flowers of *Coccothrinax* are fragrant, we did not detect any nectar in the inflorescence using micro-capillary tubes and refractometer. Further anatomical study is warranted.

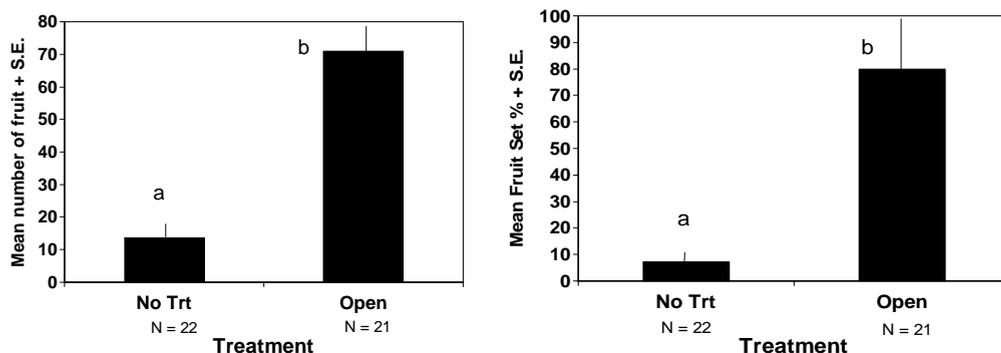
Pollen analyses. Analyses of visitors' bodies under the dissecting microscope demonstrated large quantities of pollen, especially for the hymenopteran species, whose corbiculae or "pollen baskets" allow for pollen storage and hairy bodies promote pollen adherence (McGavin 2001). Slides of pollen sub-samples from the bodies of *X. micans* and *A. mellifera* revealed almost exclusively *C. argentata* pollen grains (>50 pollen grains), except for a few



3 (upper left). Honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) collecting pollen from silver palm flowers. 4 (upper right). Pollen-filled corbiculae on legs of pollen-collecting honey bee. 5 (lower left). Carpenter bee (*Xylocopa micans*) hovering in front of silver palm flowers. 6 (lower right). Carpenter bee collecting pollen from silver palm flowers. Note pollen-covered back and legs.

pollen grains from neighboring wildflowers, presumably Asteraceae. Likewise, a sub-sample of a corbicula from *A. mellifera* consisted entirely of *C. argentata* pollen grains (>100 pollen grains).

We found pollen grains to be slightly oblong with minor edges. They are medium-sized, averaging 20–30 μm in diameter and 5–10 μm smaller than pollen of the other two palm species at the study site.



7 (left). Mean and standard deviation of number of fruit produced by *C. argentata* at Navy Wells after pollinator exclusion experiment. "No Trt." refers to the pollinator exclusion treatment and "Open" refers to the control. Treatments with different letters represent significant differences ($p < .05$) using a Mann-Whitney U test. 8 (right). Mean and standard deviation of percentage fruit set of *C. argentata* at Navy Wells after pollinator exclusion experiment. "No Trt." refers to the pollinator exclusion treatment and "Open" refers to the control. Treatments with different letters indicate significant differences ($p < .050$) using a Mann-Whitney U test.

Breeding system and fruit set. The bagged autogamy treatment produced significantly fewer fruit ($Z = -5.251$, $p < .001$) and lower fruit set ($Z = -5.468$, $p < .001$) than the control open pollination (Figs. 7 & 8). The fact that the bagged flowers set some fruit indicates that the species is self-compatible. However, since this fruit set was still significantly lower than the open pollinated plants (Fig. 9), it may be that fruit set is better with pollen from other individuals and the plants are facultatively xenogamous.

Our pollinator watches and analyses of visitors' pollen content lead us to believe that the inflorescences from which visitors were excluded probably set fruit as the result of self-pollination within the bags, perhaps moved by the wind. The bags that we used, a very fine nylon mesh, would not have allowed pollen to pass through them, but wind and other things may have jostled the flowers and moved the pollen.

Herbivory. While removing bags to count fruit, we noticed that several of the inflorescences had been damaged by herbivores and the bags were full of frass. Furthermore, during our pollinator watches, we also noticed the following herbivores on the leaves and inflorescences of *C. argentata*: the echo moth, *Seiractia echo* (Lepidoptera: Arctiidae), the banana weevil, *Pachnaeus litus* (Coleoptera: Curculionidae), and the cabbage palm caterpillar, *Litoprosopus futilis* (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae). Carrington and Mullahey (2006) observed *L. futilis* on saw palmetto and noted that it uses other Florida palm species,

including the silver palm, as a host. The caterpillars live inside the peduncular bracts, consuming the buds and immature flowers and sometimes even the entire inflorescence. The authors cited heavy damage and occasional mortality of saw palmetto inflorescences caused by *L. futilis*. Throughout our fieldwork, we also monitored significant damage to inflorescences of saw palmetto and sabal palm, presumably caused by the cabbage palm caterpillar given that we commonly observed its presence on these species. We noted that the silver palm inflorescences were damaged less by *L. futilis* than were the inflorescences of the more common palms.

Discussion

We set out to answer three primary questions: (1) Is *C. argentata* self-compatible? (2) Does *C. argentata* set fruit without floral visitation? and (3) Do insects visit inflorescences and which are effective pollinators? The results from our bagging experiment suggest that *C. argentata* is self-compatible and can set fruit without floral visitation, given that the autogamy treatment did set fruit. However, bagged inflorescences exhibited significantly lower fruit set than the control, highlighting the importance of insects and, perhaps, pollen from other individuals for pollination. We have not eliminated the possibility of agamospermy, but think it unlikely as many bagged inflorescences set no fruit at all.

The results from this study are preliminary, for we have only studied one population of silver palms for less than half a year. However, they

provide evidence that *C. argentata* is more than just wind-pollinated. Five species, representing three orders of insects, were observed visiting the flowers and collecting pollen. Furthermore, when analyzed under the dissecting microscope, visitors' bodies (notably *X. micans*, *A. mellifera* and *M. georgica*) carried large quantities of pollen. A majority of pollen grains carried by insect visitors to the flowers was pollen of *C. argentata*.

Studies on other Coryphoid genera provide evidence of entomophily. Henderson (2002) described two contrasting pollination systems for this subfamily, weevil pollination and bee, fly and wasp pollination, although exceptions exist. Dufay and Anstett (2004) found that *Chamaerops humilis* engages in a nursery pollination mutualism with the weevil, *Derelomus chamaeropsis*, whereby females are pollinated by "deceit." *Cryosophila* and *Rhapidophyllum* are also weevil-pollinated (Shuey & Wunderlin 1977, Henderson 1984). Several species of *Licuala* are pollinated by flies, wasps, and bees; Halictidae and Apidae appear to be the most efficient pollen collectors and pollinators (Barfod et al. 2003). Similarly, Zona (1987) identified bees, including *Megachile* spp., *Augochloropsis metallica*, *Xylocopa micans*, and *Apis mellifera*, as the most important pollinators of *Sabal etonia*. It is worth noting that in our fieldwork, we observed several of these genera pollinating *C. argentata* and all of these genera also pollinating *S. palmetto* (Khorsand Rosa & Koptur, unpublished data). Thus, entomophily may be more common among the Coryphoids than anemophily.

It is likely that *C. argentata* is insect- and wind pollinated, or amphiphilous (Lewis et al. 1983). The combination of biotic and abiotic pollination does occur in other genera of Areaceae including *Cocos*, *Phoenix*, *Elaeis* and *Attalea*, although wind may play a larger role in fruit set than insects (Scholdt & Mitchell 1967, Syed 1979, Lewis et al. 1983, Anderson et al. 1988, but see Dransfield et al. 2008). In a comparative study of the pollination biology of *Attalea speciosa* (as *Orbignya phalerata*) in open pasture and secondary forest, Anderson et al. (1988) found that wind supplements insect pollination, and the combination of these two syndromes permits for adaptability to a broad range of ecological conditions. In open pastures, anemophily may result in higher fruit set than entomophily. Thus, habitat may influence the proportion of transferred pollen grains and the pollination mechanism.



9. Silver palm bagged for pollinator exclusion. Note control (unbagged) infructescence full of unripe fruit, in contrast to treatment (bagged) infructescence with fewer fruit.

Even if *C. argentata* is amphiphilous, wind may not provide an effective means of pollen transport among isolated conspecifics, consequently lowering seed set (Koptur 1984). Thus, insects may play a key role in maintaining genetic diversity of *C. argentata*. Although native bees may act as important pollinators of rare plants, non-native bees, such as *A. mellifera*, may still contribute significantly to the reproductive success of *C. argentata* in isolated fragments. Honeybees can colonize isolated and small fragments because the entire colony can fly tens of kilometers (Gould & Gould 1988).

In the absence or reduction of native bees in fragmented habitats such as the pine rocklands, honey bees may also act as key pollinators because they are able to pollinate flowers that do not fit the "insect pollination syndrome" better than other insects. Although the flower morphology of this species (like that of many other palm species) does not fit the insect-pollination syndrome, honey bees may visit flowers to satisfy their resource needs

and even adapt to the small flowers if competition with other pollinators is low. Thus, flower morphology can be misleading, and pollination syndromes may not accurately reflect the ecological circumstances of the specific location in which the species grows.

Finally, anemophily has been traditionally associated with large quantities of small, dry, smooth pollen grains that are spread individually or in small groups (Dafni 1992). The pollen morphology of *C. argentata* from our analyses leads us to question this long-standing assumption. Our results corroborate the wind-pollination hypothesis given the smooth, dry surface of pollen grains and the large quantities of pollen dispersed as individual units. However, pollen grains are medium sized and are transported on insects' bodies. Other palm genera such as *Cocos* have relatively large pollen grains (Lewis et al. 1983), and are now considered to be pollinated by wind and insects (Dransfield et al. 2008). According to Henderson (1986), several studies provide evidence that in addition to wind, insects and nectarivorous bats collect pollen from *C. nucifera* (Start & Marshall 1976, Cock 1985). Thus, like flower morphology, pollen morphology does not necessarily indicate the pollination vector.

The silver palm was originally assumed to depend on abiotic pollination, and although wind may play a part in its breeding system, our study demonstrates that insects, including bees, can adapt to the flower morphology for resource exploitation. This study, though preliminary, exemplifies how we can challenge traditional assumptions about pollination mechanisms by coupling data collection and analysis with field observations.

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PLANTS WITH EXTRAFLORAL NECTARIES AND ANTS IN EVERGLADES HABITATS

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ABSTRACT

The terrestrial vegetation of the inland areas of the Everglades is of three main types, occurring on oolite limestone substrate of progressively higher elevation: sawgrass prairie, or glade; pineland; and hardwood hammock. Nectar-drinking ant abundance was assessed using transects of honey baits, and is highest in pineland, and lowest in glade habitat. Recruitment of ants to baits is also highest in pineland. Out of 891 species of

vascular plants in Everglades National Park, 78 spp. (9%) in 29 families have extrafloral nectaries. The proportion of species with extrafloral nectaries was highest in pineland, as was the proportion of individuals with extrafloral nectaries. The pinelands, with the greatest nectar-drinking ant abundance, have the most plants with extrafloral nectaries. Eight ant species have been collected at honey baits, and four species are regular visitors to extrafloral nectaries of plants. Nectary-visiting ants are potential protectors of plants against herbivores.

RESUMEN

Los Everglades estan integrados por tres tipos principales de vegetación terrestre, los cuales ocurren en roca caliza del oolito con una elevación progresiva: pradera, bosque de pinos y bosque maderable. Se evaluó la abundancia de las hormigas que se alimentan de nectar, usando cebos con miel de abejas y fué mas alta en el bosque de pinos y mas baja en la pradera. La captura de otras hormigas en cebos fué también mas alta en el bosque de pinos. De las 891 especies de plantas vasculares que existen en el parque nacional de los Everglades, 78 especies (8%) en 29 familias tienen nectar extrafloral. La proporción de especies con nectar extrafloral fue mayor en bosque de pinos (27%), que en bosque maderable (22%) y que en la pradera (12%), pero la proporción de individuos con nectar extrafloral fue mayor (34%) en bosque de pinos que en bosque maderable (23%) o en la pradera (2%). Los bosques de pino, con la mayor abundancia de hormigas consumidoras de nectar, tienen el mayor numero de plantas con nectar extrafloral. Ocho especies de hormigas se han colectado en los cebos con miel de abejas y cuatro especies son visitantes frecuentes de los nectares extraflorales. Las hormigas visitantes de los nectares extraflorales protegen potencialmente la planta contra el ataque de herbivoros.

Extrafloral nectaries are plant secretory structures of diverse morphology and anatomy (Elias 1983). They are located outside of flowers, and therefore do not usually involve pollination. They are visited by a wide variety of animals for energy and nutrition, and the associated effects on the plants range from beneficial (e.g., patrolling of plant surfaces and disturbance of herbivores; enhanced predation and parasitism of plant feeders) to harmful (e.g., attraction of herbivorous insect adults who oviposit on the plant), depending on the ecological context (Bentley 1977, Beattie 1984, Buckley 1982, Koptur 1992).

Extrafloral nectaries can be found on plants in both the tropics and temperate zones, although they are more common in tropical areas. Biologists have surveyed various habitats in diverse geographic locations and have determined the proportion of plants that bear extrafloral nectaries (Table 1); some have sought to correlate abundance of plants bearing extrafloral nectaries with the abundance or activity of ants at different sites (Bentley 1976, Keeler 1979a, Koptur 1985, Koptur 1989, Koptur et al 1977), and in general, have found fewer nectary-bearing individuals in areas with few or no ants.

This study is a contribution to this ongoing world survey. I examine the diversity of plants with extrafloral nectaries in subtropical south Florida, and their distribution in upland habitats of Everglades National Park. The unique combination of temperate and tropical plants and animals has resulted in the designation of the Everglades as an International Biosphere Preserve. The working hypothesis is that there will be an intermediate proportion of the flora bearing extrafloral nectaries (more than temperate sites, and less than tropical sites), and an intermediate diversity of plant species with nectaries and ants that occur in the same habitats.

The upland terrestrial vegetation of the Everglades is of three main types: wet prairie, pineland, and hardwood hammock. The seasonally inundated sawgrass prairie, or glades is the lowest elevation habitat, has a substrate of marl over limestone rock,

TABLE 1. COVER OF PLANTS WITH EXTRAFLORAL NECTARIES IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS.

% mean cover	Location	Vegetation types/% cover	Reference
2-34%	Everglades, Florida, USA	sawgrass prairie 2% rockledge pinelands 34% hardwood hammock 23%	Koptur 1989 (data updated)
0%	N. California, USA	native grassland 0% riparian forest 0% deciduous forest 0% chapparal 0%	Keeler 1980a
0-14.2%	Nebraska, USA	deciduous forest 1.8% riparian forest 1.3% tallgrass prairie 0% sandhills prairie 8.3%	Keeler 1980b
0-27.8%	S. California, USA	desert bush scrub 0.1-6.6% desert wash 23.9-27.8% sand dunes 0-1.4% yucca-agave 3.7%	Pemberton 1988
7.5-55%	Korea	deciduous forest	Pemberton 1990
0-28%	Jamaica	forested second growth (0 m) 28% same-at 1310 m 0%	Keeler 1979a
7.6-20.3%	SE Brazil	cerrado (woody spp. only)	Oliveira & Leitão-Filho 1987
21.6-31.2%	SW Brazil	cerrado (woody spp.)	"", Oliveira & Oliveira-Filho 1991
17.6-53.3%	Amazonian Brazil	terra firme forest 19.1% successional forest 42.6% buritirana 29.7% shrub canga 50%	Morellato & Oliveira 1992
10-80%	Costa Rica	dryforest hillside 40-80% riparian forest 10-40%	Bentley 1976
0-22%	Costa Rica	rain forest (0 m) 1-8% cloud forest (1500 m) 3-22% oak forest (3000 m) 0-3%	Koptur et al. 1977

and is comprised mostly of herbaceous perennials and annuals, with scattered shrubs (Fig. 1). The pineland is a subclimax community maintained by fire, on limestone rock a few inches higher in elevation, consisting of an overstory of Dade county slash pine (*Pinus elliottii* Engelm. var. *densa* Little & Dorman) and an understory of herbs, vines, and shrubs (Fig. 2). Fire cleans out the developing hardwood understory every five or so years, permitting the pines to remain the dominant feature. Without fire, the hardwoods grow larger and eventually a hardwood forest, or hammock, is formed (Fig. 3). These habitats are intertwined into a mosaic due to small differences in topography, fire history, and water flow.

METHODS

Field observations and experiments were conducted in Everglades National Park from 1987 - 1991 in Long Pine Key, in the vicinity of Redd Hammock. Extrafloral

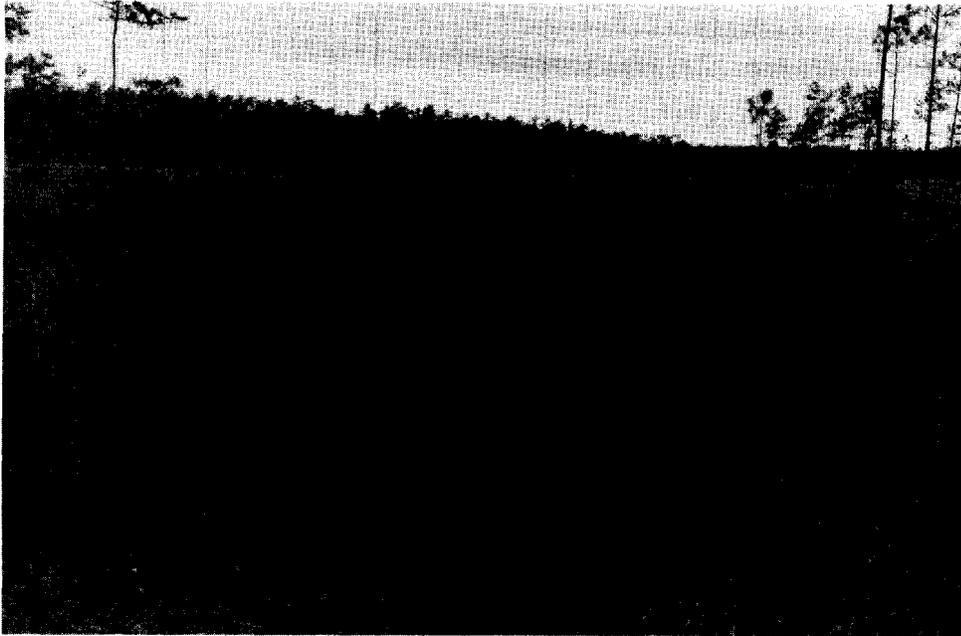


Fig. 1. Sawgrass prairie (glade) habitat in Everglades National Park.

nectaries on plants were detected by visual inspection, sometimes aided by hand-lens and dissecting microscope. The presence of ants or sooty mold gave evidence of nectar secretion (if ant-tended Homoptera were not present). Certain species did not have obvious nectaries, but close examination, prompted by reports in the literature that their families or genera possessed nectaries, often revealed tiny nectaries.

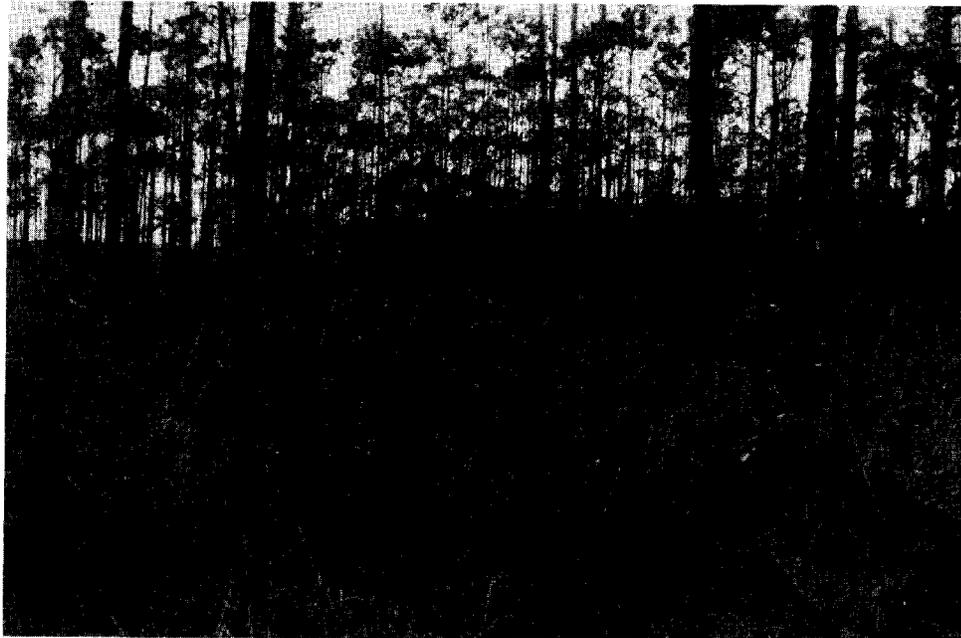


Fig. 2. Pineland habitat in Everglades National Park.

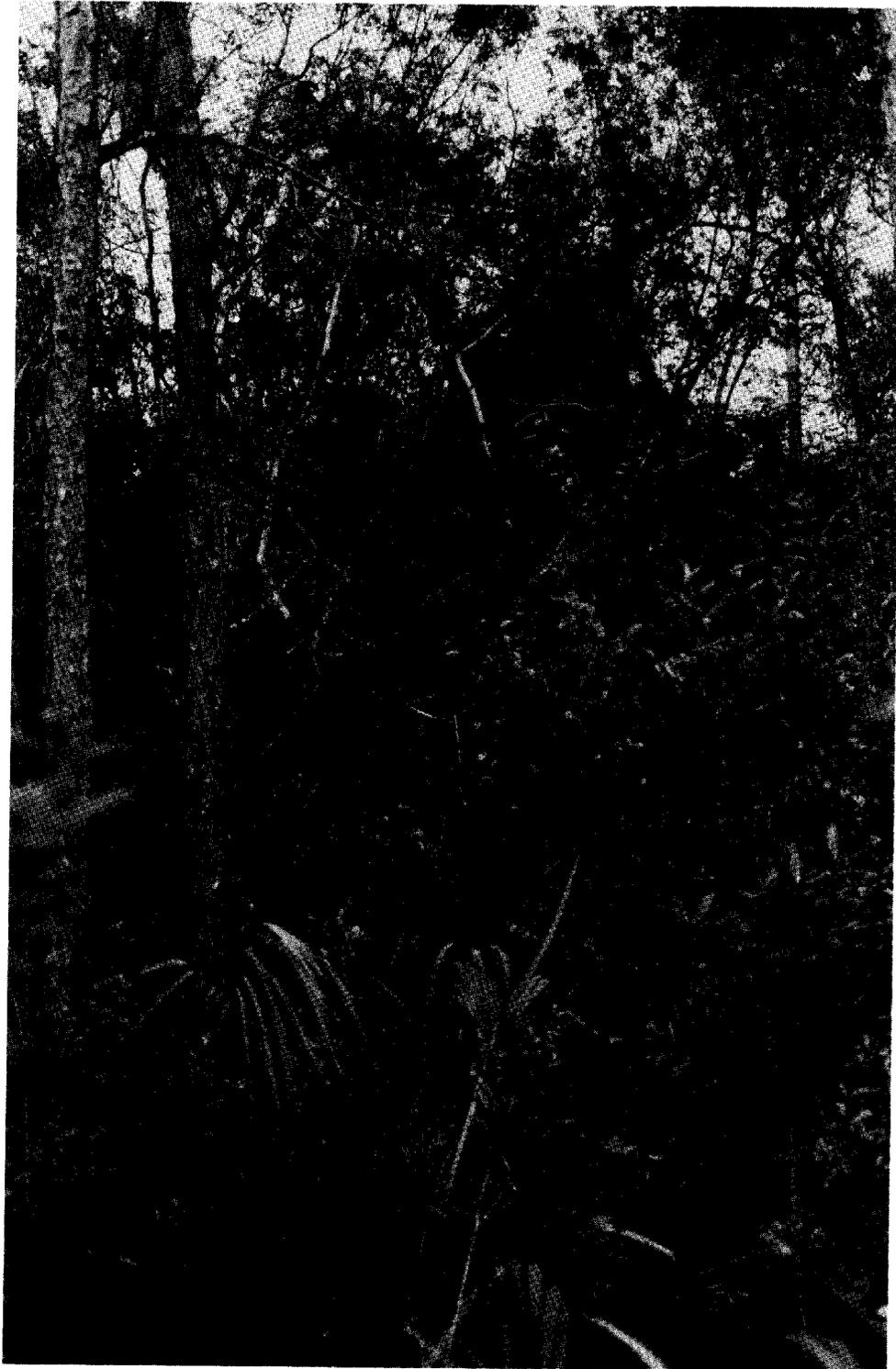


Fig. 3. Hammock habitat in Everglades National Park.

Cover of plants with extrafloral nectaries was determined using three 20 m transects in each of the three habitats. These nine transects were done during the early dry season, when the sawgrass prairie is not covered with water, and so reflect only the plants present during late November.

Ant activity was measured using lines of honey baits at four times during the dry season: November, February, March, and April. Each line consisted of 20 baits spaced at 1 m intervals, and was monitored every 5 minutes for 1 hour. The numbers and types of ants attracted to the baits were recorded at each observation. A bait was considered "discovered" if any ants at all were present at any time, and to have experienced "recruitment" if the number of ants increased to greater than five. Ant voucher specimens were determined by Dr. Mark Deyrup of Archbold Biological Station.

RESULTS

Of the 891 species of vascular plants recorded for Everglades National Park (Avery & Loope 1983), 78 species in 29 families (8.8 %) have been observed to possess extrafloral nectaries (Table 2). Common families with extrafloral nectaries include the legumes (Fabaceae), from foliar nectaries on trees such as *Lysiloma bahamensis* Benth. and

TABLE 2. TERRESTRIAL PLANT SPECIES WITH EXTRAFLORAL NECTARIES IN EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK. E* = EXOTIC SPECIES. POSITION OF NECTARIES IS INDICATED BY NUMBERS: 1 = ON LEAF, 2 = ON PETIOLE, 3 = ON STIPULES AND/OR STIPELS, 4 = ON STEMS, 5 = ON PEDICELS, PEDUNCLES, OR STEMS OF INFLORESCENCE, 6 = ON PETALS OR SEPALS, 7 = ON BRACTS, 8 = ON FRUIT, CAPSULE, OR POD, 9 = ON OVARY (POST-FLORAL), 10 = ABORTED FLOWERS OR BUD SCARS.

Ferns:

PTERIDACEAE

Pteridium aquilinum (L.) Kuhn var. *caudatum* (L.) Sadebeck (1)

Monocots:

BROMELIACEAE

Tillandsia balbisiana Schult. (5)

DIOSCOREACEAE

E* *Dioscorea bulbifera* L. (1)

LILIACEAE

Smilax auriculata Walt. (1)

Smilax bona-nox L. (1)

Smilax havanensis Jacq. (1)

Smilax laurifolia L. (1)

ORCHIDACEAE

Encyclia boothiana (Lindl.) Dressler var. *erythronioides* (Small) Luer (5)

E. cochleata (L.) Dressler var. *triandra* (Ames) Dressler (5)

E. tampensis (Lindl.) Small (5)

Epidendrum nocturnum Jacq. (5)

E. rigidum Jacq. (5)

Oncidium ensatum Lindl. (*O. floridanum*) (4,5)

O. altissimum (Jacq.) Sw. (*O. luridum*) (4,5)

Vanilla barbellata Reichb. f. (5)

V. phaeantha Reichb. f. (5)

POACEAE

E* *Eragrostis barrelieri* Daveau (5)

Eragrostis ciliaris (L.) R. Br. (5)

E. elliottii S. Wats. (5)

TABLE 2. (CONTINUED).

Dicots:

ANNONACEAE

Annona glabra L. (8)

CAPRIFOLIACEAE

Sambucus canadensis L. (*S. simpsonii*) (1)

CHRYSOBALANACEAE

Chrysobalanus icaco L. (1)

COMBRETACEAE

Conocarpus erectus L. (2)E* *Terminalia catappa* L. (2)

CONVOLVULACEAE

Ipomoea alba L. (2)*I. hederifolia* L. (2)*I. indica* (Burm.) Merrill (*I. acuminata*) (2)*I. trichocarpa* Ell. (2)*I. triloba* L. (2)

EBENACEAE

Diospyros virginiana L. (1)

EUPHORBIACEAE

Cnidocolus stimulosus (Michx.) Engelm. & Gray (1,2)*Croton arenicola* Small (*C. glandulosus*) (1)*C. linearis* Jacq. (1)*Hippomane mancinella* L. (1)*Manihot esculenta* Crantz (1)

FABACEAE

Acacia farnesiana (L.) Willd. (1)*A. pinetorum* Hermann (1)*Albizia lebeck* (L.) Benth. (1)*Canavalia brasiliensis* Mort ex. Benth. (1)*C. rosea* (Sw.) DC. (1)*Cassia aspera* Muhl. ex Ell. (2)*C. chapmanii* Isely (2)*C. deeringiana* (Small & Penn.) Macbr. (2)E* *C. fistula* L. (2)*C. ligustrina* L. (2)*C. obtusifolia* L. (2)E* *Delonix regia* (Boj. ex Hook.) Raf. (2)*Erythrina herbacea* L. (3)E* *Leucaena leucocephala* (Lam.) de Wit (2)*Lysiloma latisiliquum* (L.) Benth. (1)*Pithecellobium guadalupense* (Pers.) Chapm. (1)*P. unguis-cati* (L.) Benth. (1)*Vigna luteola* (Jacq.) Benth. (5)

GOODENIACEAE

Scaevola plumieri (L.) Vahl (1)

MALVACEAE

Gossypium hirsutum L. (1)E* *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* L. (1)E* *Thespesia populnea* (L.) Soland. ex Correa (1)E* *Urena lobata* L. (1)

MELIACEAE

Suietenia mahogani (L.) Jacq. (1)

MORACEAE

Ficus aurea Nutt. (8)

MYRSINACEAE

Myrsine floridana A. DC. (1)

PASSIFLORACEAE

- Passiflora pallens* Poepp. ex Mast. (1)
P. sexflora Juss. (1)
P. suberosa L. (1,2)

RHAMNACEAE

- Colubrina arborescens* (Mill.) Sarg. (1)
C. cubensis (Jacq.) Brongn. var. *floridana* M.C. Johnst. (1)
C. elliptica (Sw.) Briz. & Stern (= *C. reclinata*) (1)

ROSACEAE

- Prunus myrtifolia* (L.) Urb. (1)

RUBIACEAE

- Hamelia patens* Jacq. (9)
Morinda royoc L. (9)

RUTACEAE

- Zanthoxylum fagara* (L.) Sarg. (1)

STERCULIACEAE

- Ayenia euphasiifolia* Greiseb. (1)

TILIACEAE

- E* *Triumfetta semitriloba* Jacq. (1)

TURNERACEAE

- Turnera ulmifolia* L. var. *ulmifolia* (2)

VERBENACEAE

- Avicennia germinans* (L.) L. (2)
Citharexylum fruticosum L. (1)

- E* *Clerodendrum speciosissimum* Van Geert ex C. Morr. (1)

VITACEAE

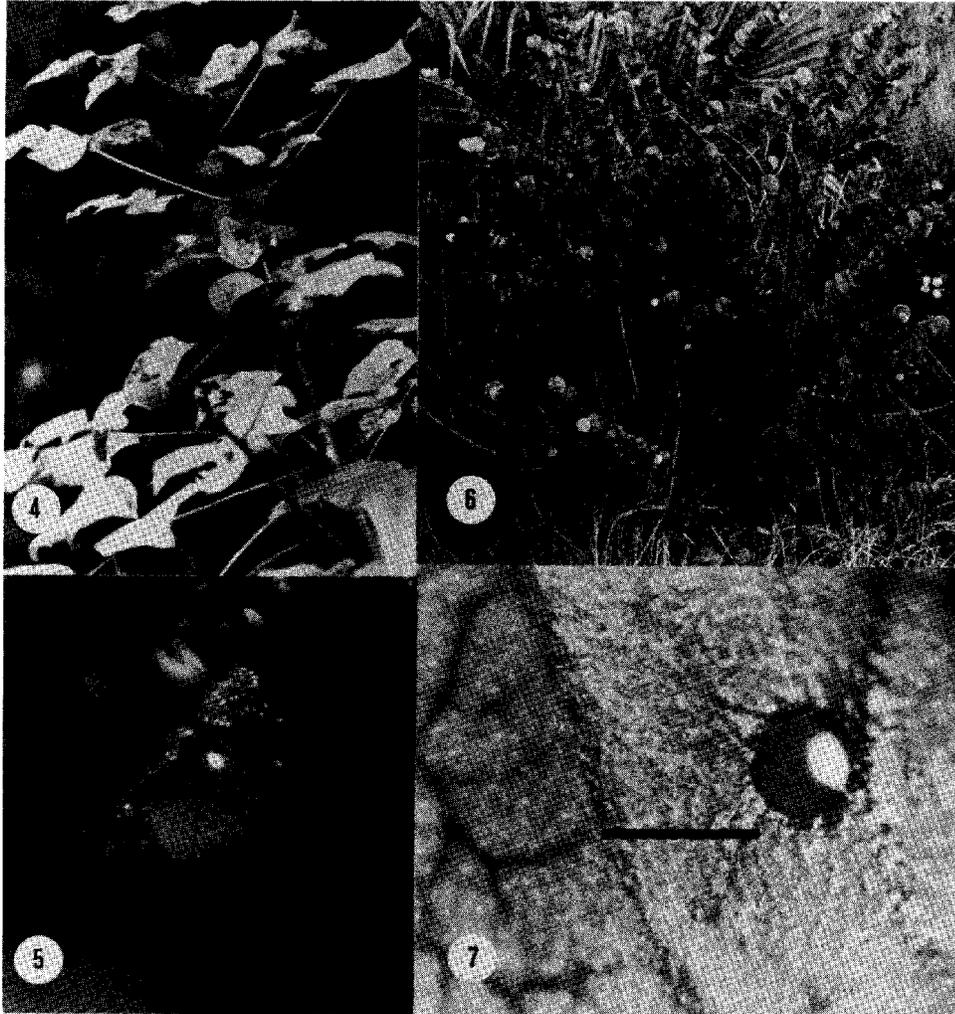
- Cissus sicyoides* L. (1)

treelets like *Erythrina herbacea* L. (Figs. 4 & 5) to herbs such as the rockledge-dwelling *Cassia deeringiana* (Small & Penn.) Macbr.; the orchids (Orchidaceae) with nectaries in the inflorescence; the mallows (Malvaceae) with foliar nectaries on the lower abaxial surface of the lamina; and the passionflowers (Passifloraceae) with elevated nectaries on leaf bases and petioles (Fig. 8). Prompted by observations by Kathy Keeler, I have observed formless nectaries on the young inflorescences of *Tillandsia balbisiana* Schult. (Bromeliaceae) (Fig. 9). And prompted by a report of nectaries in *Rapanea* (Myrsinaceae) (Oliveira & Leitão-Filho 1987), Bob Pemberton and I observed foliar nectaries in *Myrsine floridana* A.DC. for the first time (Figs. 10-12).

Transects revealed the greatest plant species diversity in the pinelands, followed by glade, and then hammocks (Table 3). The pinelands had the highest proportion of species with extrafloral nectaries (27%, vs. 22% in hammocks and 12% in glade). This difference is even more striking when we compare cover of plants with nectaries (the proportion of individuals with nectaries): 34% of the plants encountered in pinelands were species that bear nectaries; 23% in hammocks; and only 2.5% in glade.

The discovery of honey baits by ants (and presumably, ant activity and/or abundance) was greatest in pineland (a mean of 9.8 baits out of 20 discovered in one hour), intermediate in hardwood hammock (a mean of 4.2 baits discovered in one hour) and lowest in the glade (a mean of 1 bait out of 20 discovered in one hour) (Table 4). Recruitment of ants to baits is also highest in pineland (a mean of 3.6 baits recruited to, versus a mean of 2 in hammock, and none whatsoever in glade) (Table 4).

Of the 50 species (40 native, 10 exotic) of ants recorded from Everglades National Park (Alan Herndon and Mark Deyrup, personal communication), I have found 8 species visiting honey baits at my study sites (Table 5). Four of these species are regular visitors to extrafloral nectaries of various plants.

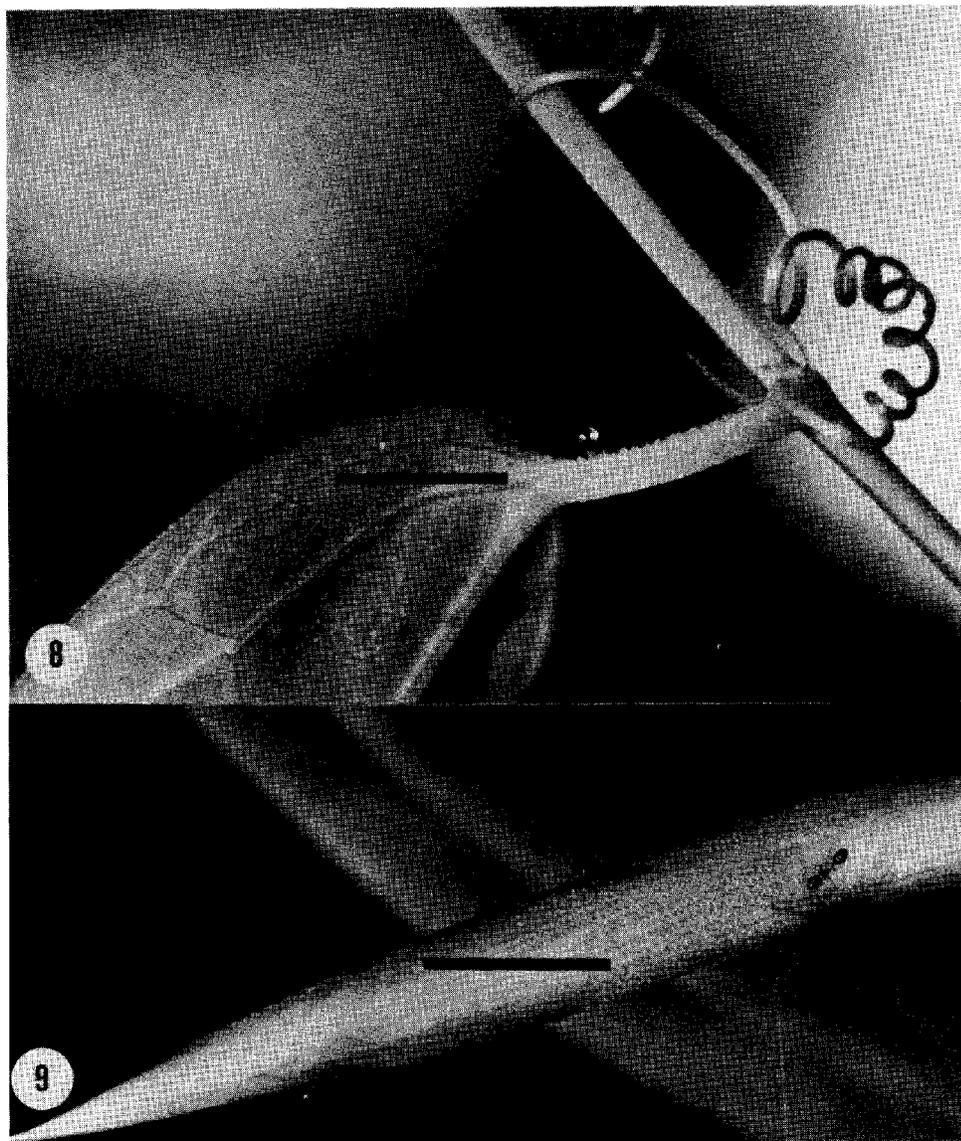


Figs. 4-7. Some Everglades plants with extrafloral nectaries. 4. Habit of coral bean, *Erythrina herbacea* (Fabaceae), a small tree that bears nectaries on the stipels of its trifoliate leaves. 5. Nectar secreted from one of a pair of stipel nectaries on young leaves of *E. herbacea*. Bar scale = 0.5 mm. 6. Habit of cocoplum, *Chrysobalanus icaco* L. (Chrysobalanaceae). 7. Flattened nectary with nectar on abaxial leaf surface near base on young leaf of *C. icaco*. Bar scale = 1 mm.

DISCUSSION

The pineland has the greatest ant activity and recruitment, and therefore, the greatest potential for ant protection of plants with extrafloral nectaries. The pineland also has the greatest number of plants with extrafloral nectaries. Exclusion experiments performed on a common tree of pinelands and hammocks, the wild tamarind (*Lysiloma bahamensis*), have demonstrated that the presence of ants reduces damage to leaves (Koptur unpublished results). The role of ants and other beneficial insects visiting nectaries of other pineland species awaits elucidation.

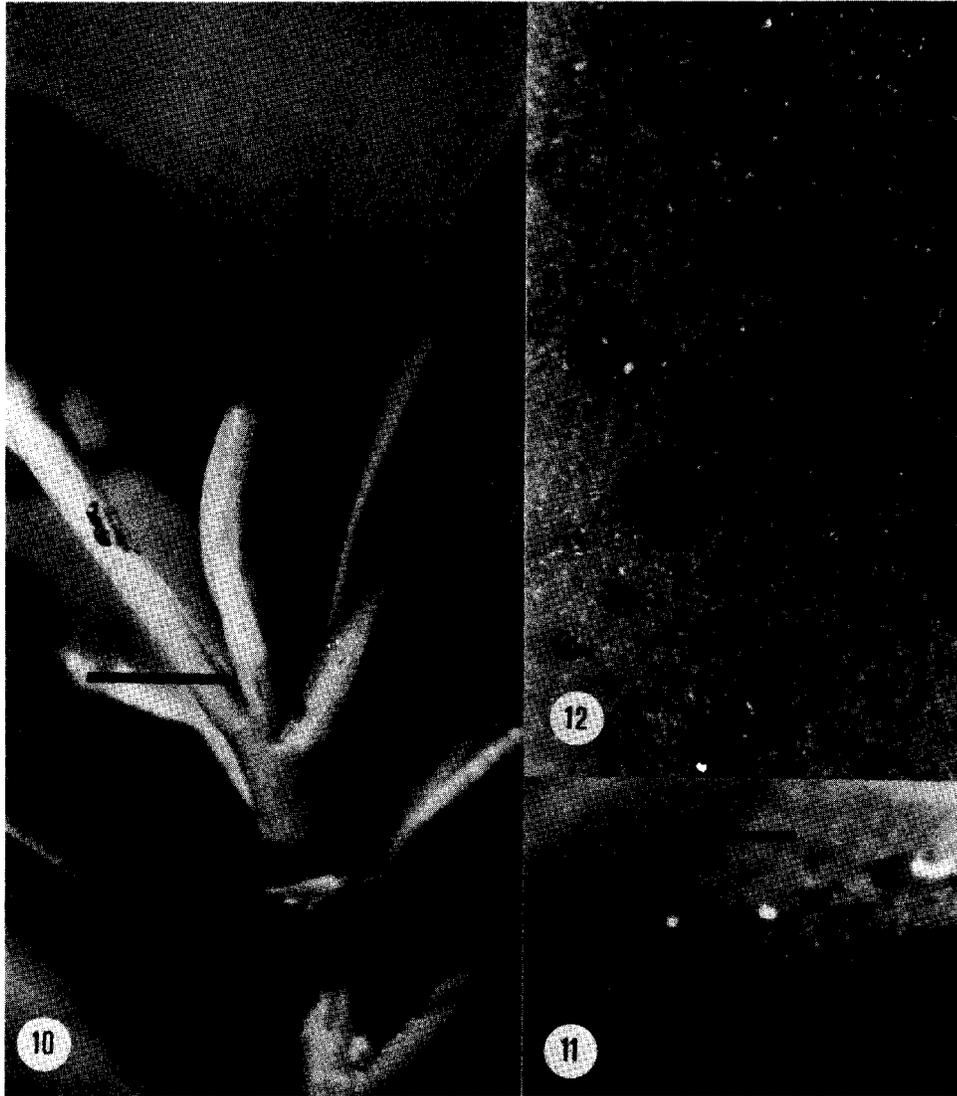
The proportion of species in a flora bearing extrafloral nectaries has been calculated for a number of habitats around the world. These values range from less than 5% in southern California (Pemberton 1988), Hawaii (Keeler 1985), Korea (Pemberton 1990)



Figs. 8-9. Some Everglades plants with extrafloral nectaries. 8. Nectar droplet on elevated nectary of *Passiflora suberosa* L. (Passifloraceae). Bar scale = 1 cm. 9. Ants visiting formless nectaries on young inflorescences of *Tillandsia balbisiana* (Bromeliaceae). Bar scale = 1 cm.

and Nebraska (Keeler 1979b) to more than 15% in various habitats of Brazil (Oliveira & Leitão-Filho 1987, Oliveira & Oliveira-Filho 1991). The proportion of the Everglades flora with extrafloral nectaries is intermediate, with a value of 9% (78 of 891 spp.). This proportion may increase slightly with more field observations.

The cover of plants with extrafloral nectaries has been documented in a variety of tropical and temperate locations (Table 4) and ranges from 0% in northern California, Nebraska, and high elevation tropical sites to more than 50% in Costa Rica and Amazonian Brazil. In general, there are more individuals with extrafloral nectaries in tropical habitats than temperate habitats. Upland habitats of south Florida have from 2% to



Figs. 10-12. Some Everglades plants with extrafloral nectaries. 10. Ant visiting formless nectaries of *Myrsine floridana* located on abaxial leaf surfaces at leaf base on either side of the midrib. Bar scale = 1 cm. 11. Underside of leaf edge of *M. floridana* with nectar droplets. Bar scale = 1 mm. 12. Leaf surface with formless nectaries of *M. floridana*. Bar scale = 0.5 mm.

34% cover of extrafloral nectary-bearing plants, intermediate between temperate and tropical extremes.

Upland habitats of south Florida are not the only ones in which ants exist, and preliminary observations have revealed that plants with extrafloral nectaries are also found in inundated freshwater and saltwater habitats. (These species are included in Table 2.) Future work will compare other habitats in south Florida to upland habitats of the Everglades, and investigate the potential ecological role of extrafloral nectaries in various native plant species.

TABLE 3. PLANTS WITH EXTRAFLORAL NECTARIES IN THREE HABITATS.

Habitat	Number of species encountered	Proportion (No.) spp. nectaries	Number of individuals encountered	Proportion indivs. with nectaries
glade	26	12% (3)	242	2.5% (6)
pineland	3	27% (9)	353	34% (121)
hammock	23	22% (5)	197	23% (46)

TABLE 4. ANT ACTIVITY AT BAITS IN THREE HABITATS IN EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK. NUMBERS IN THE TABLE ARE (D) THE NUMBERS OF BAITS OUT OF 20 THAT WERE DISCOVERED BY ANTS IN THE HOUR AND (R) THE NUMBERS OF BAITS TO WHICH RECRUITMENT TOOK PLACE.

Habitat	14 Nov 87		13 Feb 88		28 Mar 88		04 Apr 88		mean	
	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R
glade	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	1	0
pineland	8	1	3	0	11	5	17	5	9.8	3.6
hammock	3	1	7	2	2	1	5	4	4.2	2

TABLE 5. ANT SPECIES VISITING HONEY BAITS AND NECTARIES IN EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK. NECTAR SOURCES ARE B = BAITS OR N = NECTARIES. HABITAT TYPES ARE H = HAMMOCKS OR P = PINELANDS.

Species (all native)	nectar	habitat
<i>Aphaenogaster texana</i> var. <i>caroliniensis</i> Wheeler	B	H & P
<i>Crematogaster ashmeadi</i> Mayr	B	P
<i>Crematogaster</i> sp. nr. <i>ashmeadi</i> (undescribed)	B	P
<i>Cyphomyrmex rimosus</i> (Spinola)	B	P
<i>Pheidole dentata</i> (Mayr)	B & N	H & P
<i>Pseudomyrmex elongatus</i> (Mayr)	B & N	H
<i>Pseudomyrmex simplex</i> (F. Smith)	B & N	H & P
<i>Solenopsis geminata</i> (Forel)	B & N	H & P

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Barbara Gomez and Monica Parada for help with fieldwork, and the Research Center at Everglades National Park for permits, information, and interaction. This research was supported with faculty development grants from Florida International University.

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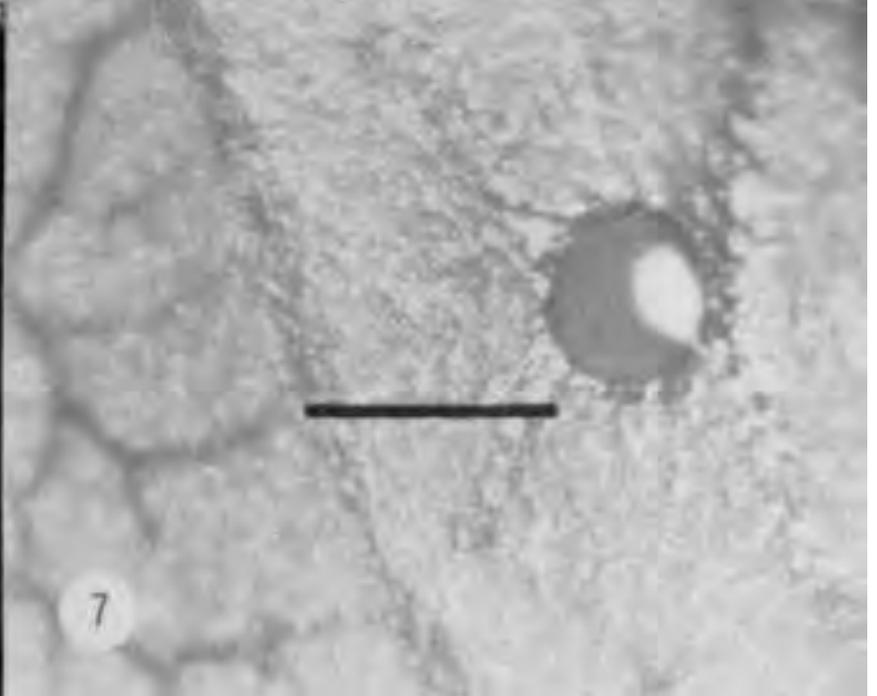
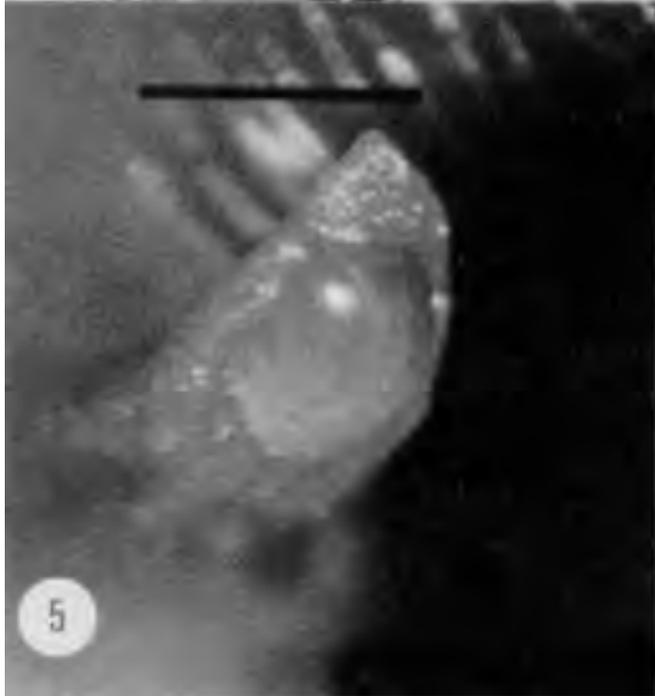
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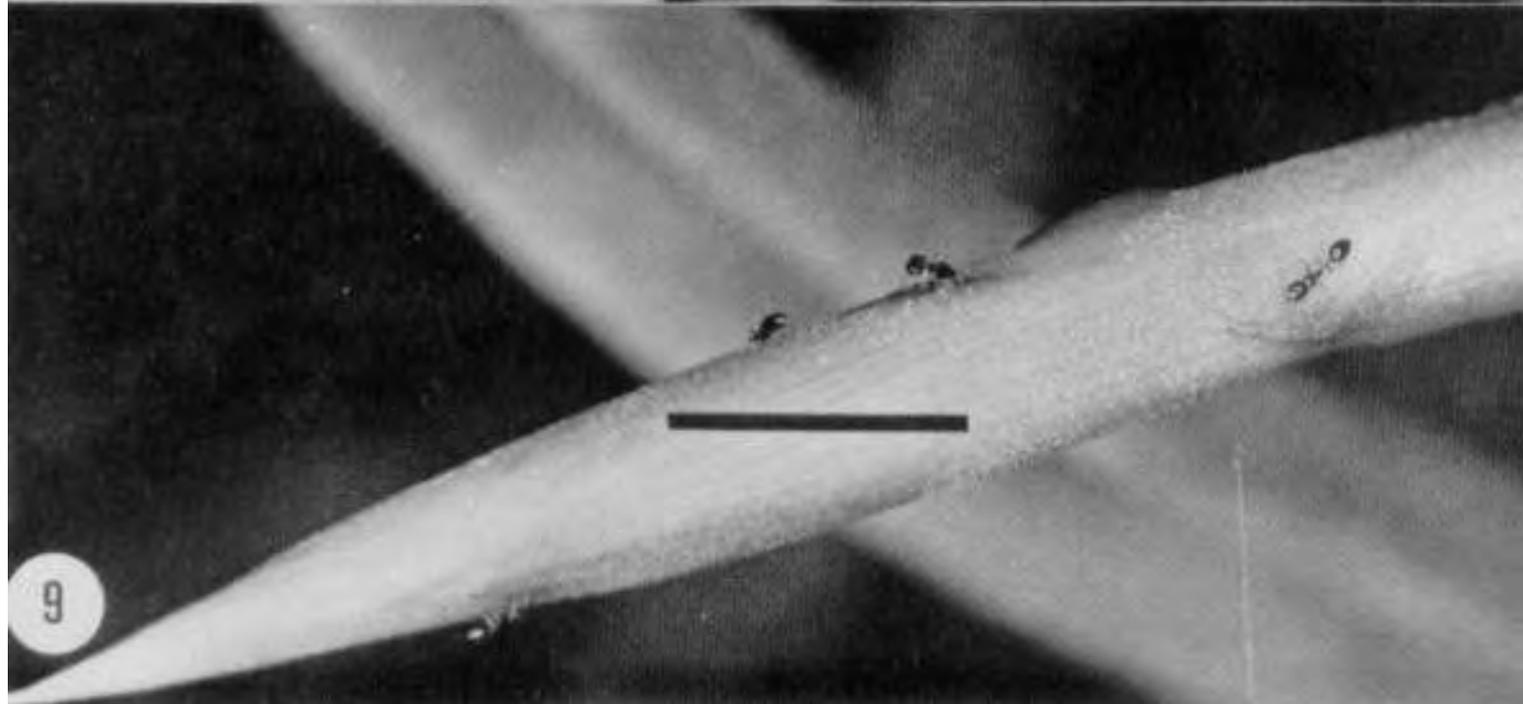
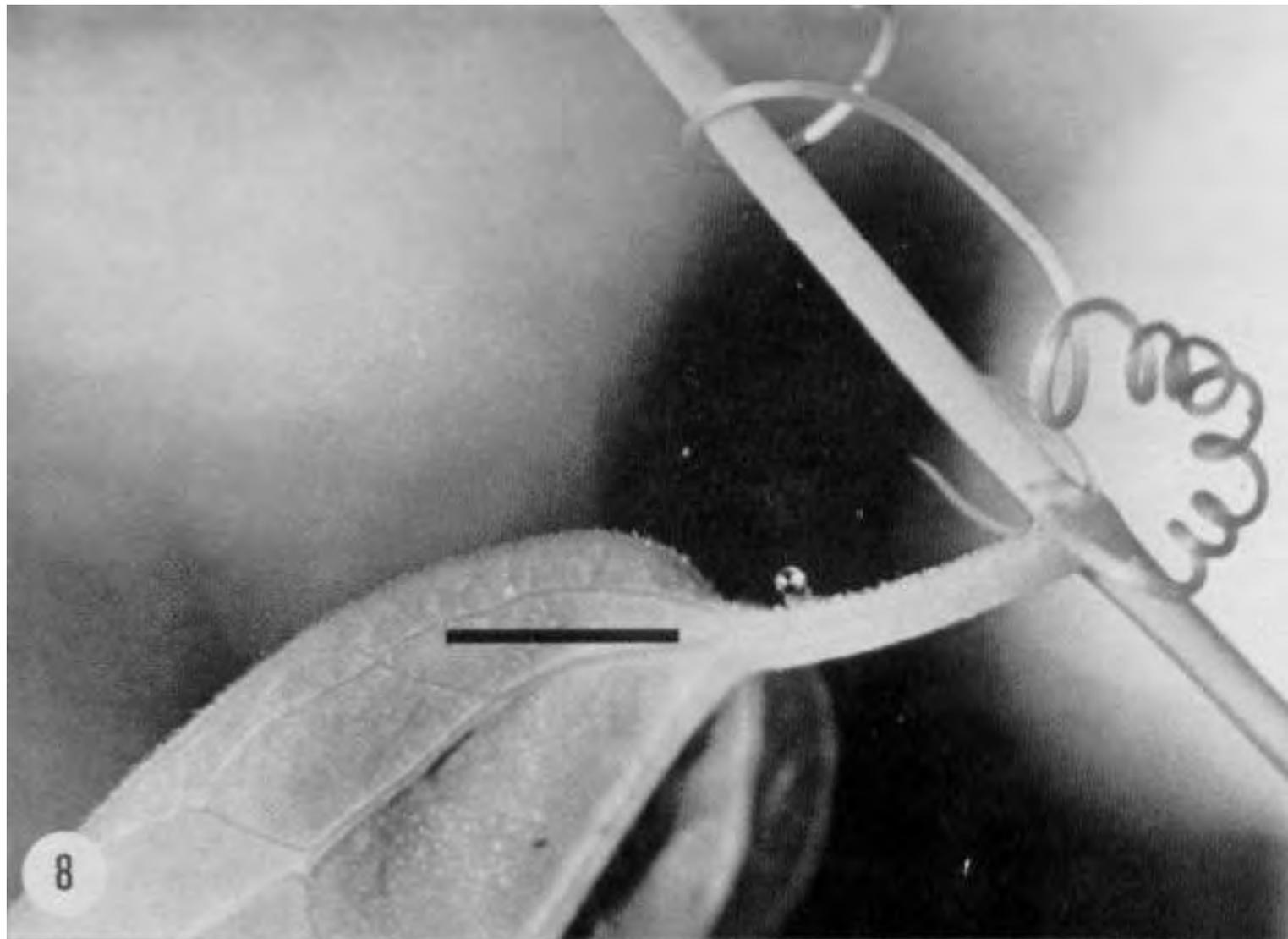
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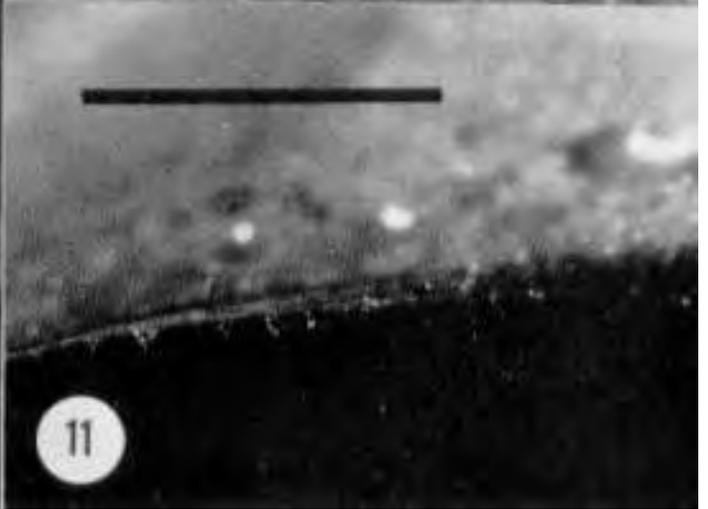
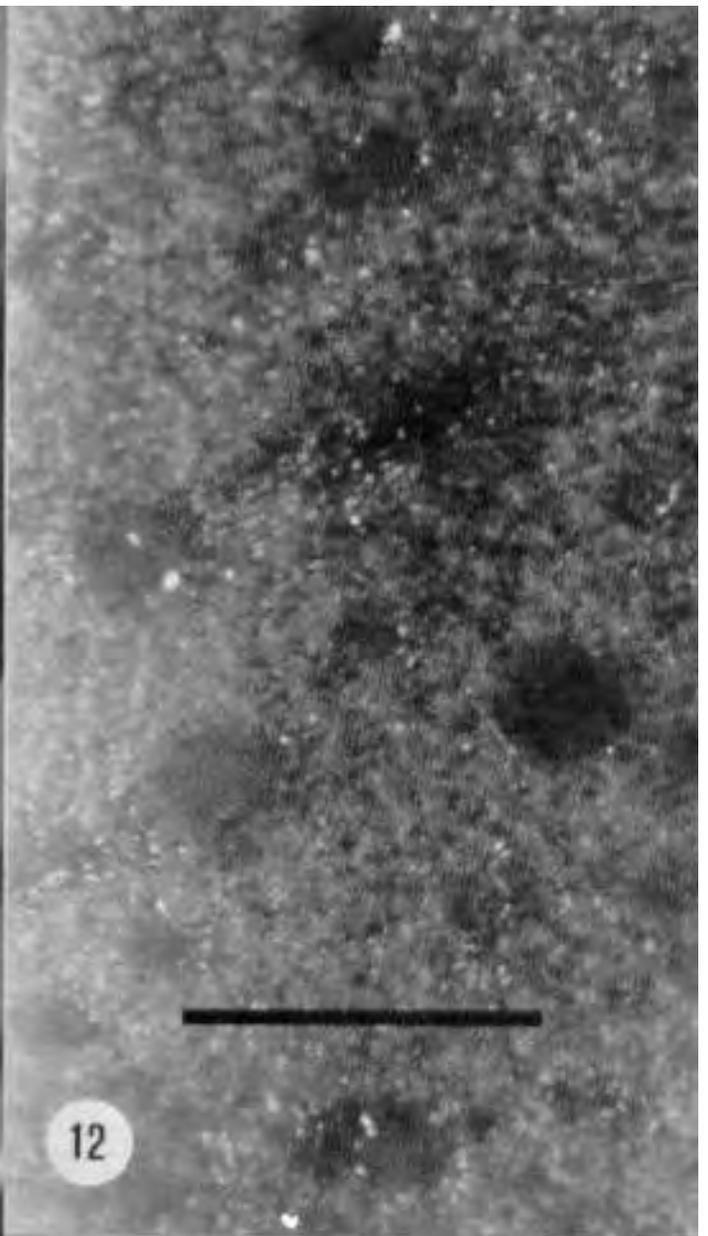
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From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 9:47:53 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

I am writing in support of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) by Coral Reef Commons. The opportunity for jobs and a common sense housing development is crucial for this area.

This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Alana Maria Almonte
The hammocks, FL

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: coral Reef Commons
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 9:49:54 AM

Mr. David Dell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta GA 3034

The development and management of the Coral Reef Preserve under the proposed HCP is the best hope for preservation of this habitat.

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This plan will provide the necessary management to conserve the endangered species present from now and far into the future.

I hope you will approve the plan.

Thank you,
Joel Almonte
Miami, FL

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and associated Environmental Assessment (EA)
Date: Friday, May 19, 2017 9:23:42 AM

Please preserve ALL of the remaining pine rocklands in Florida. We'll never get them back.

Thanks,

Erich

--

Erich Decker-Hoppen

FLORIDA FIVE PROJECT



From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: [REDACTED] sent you files via WeTransfer
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 3:19:37 PM



[REDACTED]
sent you some files

68 files, 327 MB in total · Will be deleted on 29 May, 2017

Get your files

Greetings,

I'm using this service to electronically transfer the works cited in our comment letter on the Coral Reef Commons draft HCP and EA. Please let me know if you'd like to receive them another way. I believe you have a week or so to download the documents once you receive this notice.

Thank you
Jaclyn Lopez

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: miami pine rocklands
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 11:33:31 AM

1. The developer's "science" is flawed and incomplete. Most of the endangered animals known or suspected to be on the site (the two butterflies, the beetle and the two snakes) were not properly surveyed for.
2. Their proposed mitigation is inadequate. Mitigation lands should be in ratio of at least 5:1 (protected areas : developed areas). The proposed mitigation ratio is at best 1.23 acres of preserved land for every acre of development. This is not within the "range of reason" esp. when compared to other HCPs, especially for a project contemplates the loss of a material portion of a globally-imperiled ecosystem, which is designated "Critical Habitat" for several species.
3. Burning is crucial but impossible. The proposed mitigation on what little land is being "preserved" and managed is a pine land and depends entirely on a robust and periodic fire regime, which is not feasible, especially with @2000 people (900 apts.), a Walmart , and a public school, all in immediate proximity to the areas which must be burned. As noted in the HCP, mechanical and/or chemical maintenance of pinelands is not an adequate substitute for fire.
4. "No Good Alternatives." All six of the proposed alternatives are fundamentally flawed because they do not provided sufficient mitigation for the damage to be done to this globally-imperiled habitat,
and except for Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative)
are either "straw men", or in the case of Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative) seek to get mitigation credit for property which is already under a conservation easement (the so-called "Off-site Mitigation Area").
5. "Success" is illusory. The developer's definition of "success" in mitigation is self-defined and not scientifically based: Their Habitat Value Units (HVUs) are "funny money."
6. No penalty for failure. The developer's "success criteria" for restoration and maintenance of the preserves have no realistic penalty for failure. The developer gets to destroy a globally-imperiled resource (their words) and "take" the endangered species, without any material financial risk or penalty, even if they fail to achieve their weak definition of "success."

7. Failing grade for UM. By their consultant's own admission, the Univ. of Miami has been a poor steward of the subject property, which was originally given to them by the federal govt. for educational purposes! Now UM wants "credit" for restoring a portion of the property, so they can destroy the rest (FOREVER). They should not be rewarded for bad stewardship, and they should not be trusted to protect the resource.

From: [REDACTED]
To: david_dell@fws.gov
Cc: Ashleigh_Blackford@fws.gov; crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: mistake
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 4:30:19 PM

Sent incomplete e-mail. I appologize. please send back soonest if possible. Thank you, Brian Behr

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: pine rockland near Zoo Miami
Date: Tuesday, May 16, 2017 1:42:00 PM

Dear Sir or Madam,

I work at the University of Miami and am deeply ashamed at the decision of its administrators to block the land sale to the environmentally endangered lands program and to sell it instead for development. I am STRONGLY in favor of preserving this pineland! I am a member of both the Florida Native Plant Society and the Connect to Protect program at Fairchild, with many pineland plants in my yard.

Please do whatever you can to keep this rare pineland from being turned into another WalMart! Or at least to save as much of the pineland as possible.

Thank you,
Ellen Barrett

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: crc_hcp@fws.gov
Subject: reject the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan
Date: Monday, May 22, 2017 6:11:00 PM

Dear **David Dell**, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region, Ecological Services and
Ashleigh Blackford
South Florida Ecological Services Office,

I am writing because I am opposed to the Coral Reef Commons Draft Habitat Conservation Plan.

I was born and raised in Perrine (now Palmetto Bay), FL, and even as a young girl, I could appreciate how special pine rocklands are to our South Florida ecosystem and our environment.

That specific area contains endangered animals which were not properly surveyed for and need to be protected. This area is designated as a "Critical Habitat" for several species. In addition, this area needs restoration and maintenance, including periodic burns. We all know this is not possible with the proposed projects.

The pineland is a natural treasure which cannot be recreated or substituted by anything man-made. Natural areas such as this one supports wildlife, insects, pollinators, trees, plants, grasses and the surrounding climate. It filters rain, hold water, cleans the air and welcomes nature. Developments do none of those things.

Please keep this natural area natural and do not approve the development.

Thank you,

Melissa Diaz
[REDACTED]