



United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Parks
40001 State Road 9336
Homestead, Florida 33034

In Reply Refer to:

D18

January 17, 2014

Dear Friend of Everglades National Park:

Enclosed for your review and comment is a copy of the Acquisition of Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) Land in the East Everglades Expansion Area (EEEA) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS). The Draft EIS addresses options for National Park Service (NPS) acquisition of FPL land in the EEEA to facilitate hydrologic and ecologic restoration of Everglades National Park. We also invite you to attend a public meeting to be held as follows:

Date: February 19, 2014 **Time:** 5:30 to 8:30 pm

Location: Florida International University-Stadium Club

11310 Southwest 17th Street, Miami Florida, 33199

The Stadium Club is located within the FIU Football Stadium between gates 2 and 3.

This public meeting will provide an opportunity for you to learn about the purpose and need for federal action, proposed alternatives, issues, and the decision-making process. It will include a presentation and displays about the proposed action and the EIS process and provide for comments to be recorded in a public hearing format. NPS and project staff will be there to answer questions and listen to comments.

NPS acquisition of the FPL property, or a flowage easement on the property, is needed to support the mission of the park and is vital to long-term protection of the park for ecosystem restoration purposes. The FPL property (a 320 acre, 7.4 mile corridor in the EEEA) is needed to support the goals of restoring the Northeast Shark River Slough and to fulfill the purposes of the Modified Water Deliveries project and the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. Public Law (PL) 101-229 (December 13, 1989) articulates that the Everglades is both nationally and internationally significant and sets forth specific goals and objectives for acquisition of properties in this area. Acquisition of FPL's property through an exchange of lands with NPS is also authorized by Public Law 111-11 (March 2009).

In June 2011, we conducted public scoping to obtain your input on the alternatives to be considered and issues to be addressed in the Draft EIS. After carefully considering more than 39,000 comments from the public, we evaluated a number of acquisition alternatives. The Draft EIS addresses the potential impacts from the acquisition of FPL land in the park, as well as the indirect impacts that could result from the subsequent construction and operation of transmission lines that could be built by FPL either inside or outside the park as a result of the land acquisition alternative selected. The alternatives are described in detail in Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS, and Chapter 4 details the impacts of implementing the alternatives.

- Under **alternative 1a**, the No-Action Alternative, the NPS would not take action to acquire FPL property within the park or a flowage easement on it. There would be no change in status of the FPL lands in the park, and this alternative assumes that FPL would not construct transmission lines. This is the alternative that all other alternatives are compared to in the EIS impact analysis.
- Under **alternative 1b**, the NPS would not take action to acquire FPL property within the park or a flowage easement on it. Although it represents the same land acquisition option as alternative 1a, this alternative assumes that FPL would construct transmission lines on its existing land in the park.

- Under **alternative 2**, the FPL corridor would be acquired directly by purchase or through the exercise of eminent domain authority by the United States. This alternative assumes that FPL would likely acquire a replacement corridor east of the existing park boundary and the transmission lines would be built outside of the park.

- Under **alternative 3 or 4**, the NPS would acquire fee title to the 320 acre FPL corridor through an exchange for park property (alternative 3) or an easement on that property (alternative 4). The exchange corridor would consist of 260 acres along 6.5 miles of the eastern boundary of the EEEA. Under alternative 3, the boundary of the park would be adjusted to remove the lands conveyed to FPL out of federal ownership. Under Alternative 4, the NPS would retain ownership of the 260 acre corridor and grant a utility easement to FPL. The construction scenario associated with these alternatives assumes that FPL would build the transmission lines in the exchange corridor and meet the terms and conditions agreed to in the exchange.

- Under **alternative 5**, the NPS would acquire a perpetual flowage easement on FPL's property within the EEEA through purchase, condemnation, or donation by FPL. FPL would retain ownership of its corridor in the park during the term of the easement and could seek permits to construct transmission lines there. The construction scenario associated with this alternative would be the same as for alternative 1b.

The Draft EIS does not identify a preferred alternative and the NPS wants to obtain public input on the alternatives under consideration to help inform this important decision. A preferred alternative will be identified and announced in the Final EIS scheduled for completion in the autumn of 2014.

We would appreciate receiving any comments you may have by March 18, 2014, the end of the public comment period. You may enter your comments directly online at the following link <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/EVER>. You may also comment via mail to: Everglades National Park FPL Project Planning Team, Attn: Morgan Elmer (DSC-P), P.O. Box 25287, Denver, CO 80225-0287; or by hand delivery to Park headquarters, at 40001 State Road 9336, Homestead, FL 33034-6733.

Thank you for your continued interest in Everglades National Park.

Sincerely,



Dan B. Kimball
Superintendent

Enclosure

Acquisition of Florida Power & Light Company Land in the East Everglades Expansion Area
Draft Environmental Impact Statement