



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Florida Ecological Services Field Office



February 25, 2022

Memorandum

To: Mr. Pedro Ramos, Superintendent, Everglades National Park, Homestead, Florida

From: Miles Meyer, Acting Everglades Program Supervisor, South Florida Ecological Services Office

Subject: Service Coordination on Minor Design Modifications for the Tamiami Trail: Next Steps Project

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the information provided by the National Park Service (NPS) regarding the most recent design modifications for the Tamiami Trail: Next Steps Project (TTNS). On February 11, 2022, the NPS provided a Draft Confirmation of Previous Analyses (CPA) of the TTNS Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Addressing Design Modifications to the Authorized Plan. The transmittal also indicated that since the Service's last concurrence on design modifications was submitted on March 25, 2020, permits were issued, a contractor selected, and construction work has begun. While the NPS now has a 100 percent design, for the entire project, some modifications were deemed necessary by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) which prompted this latest round of coordination.

This document transmits the Service's concurrence on the NPS CPA as they relate to the proposed design modifications of the final phase of the TTNS Project and its effects on threatened and endangered species and their designated critical habitat within the project area, in accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act) (87 Stat. 884; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). The project site is located within Everglades National Park (ENP) on the south side of Tamiami Trail (US 41) in the 10-mile stretch between the S-333 spillway on the west and S-356 pumping station to the east in Section 10, Township 54 South, Range 37 East, Miami-Dade County, Florida.

The Service and NPS have engaged in on-going informal consultation since the original Final Environmental Impact Statement (NPS 2010) and Final Biological Opinion (2010; Service Consultation Code 41420-2010-F-0370) were submitted. Additional coordination has included an amended Biological Opinion (2014) and several exchanges of correspondence regarding small project design modifications, on January 25, 2017, December 4, 2018, and most recently on March 25, 2020. As stated in previous correspondence, this project has benefitted from a continual review process due to its frequent but minor design changes, funding sources, and permit requirements on its way to completion. The Service thanks the NPS for its continued coordination throughout the planning and completion of this critical restoration project.

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The latest design modifications, as outlined in the Draft CPA document, include further coordination with the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians regarding roadway design near their Osceola Camp, alterations to stormwater swale design, and utility improvements that would benefit residents and businesses along the Tamiami Trail. Osceola Camp members were concerned that the expansion of the roadway would eliminate their informal parking area in front of the camp and require school buses to enter the camp to pick up children. In response, the design has been altered to remove the left turn lane, use barrier walls to hold the roadway near the current alignment, add a second driveway to allow school buses to enter and exit, and improve the informal parking lot by raising it with gravel. As a result of continued coordination with the FDOT, there have also been modest improvements to the design of the stormwater swales, the south side of the swales will now be at a 1:3 slope and there will be less outfall increasing the residence time of stormwater in the swales and decreasing the overflow into ENP. Finally, Florida Power and Light will install underground powerlines in the footprint of the project during construction. The construction of these lines would increase the resiliency of the power grid while decreasing the impacts to tribal residents and concessions by installing the lines at the same time FDOT is rebuilding the roadway.

With the design changes, the TTNS would now permanently impact 56.83 acres of wetlands, and temporarily impact 0.43 acres of wetlands. This includes the 18.83 acres of wetlands impacted in Phase 1 and the 38 acres of wetlands estimated to be impacted as a worst-case final design refinement for Phase 2. This permanent impact is approximately 7.63 acres larger than the 49.2 acres of permanent impacts estimated for the Original Plan (Alt. 6e) in the 2010 FEIS, and 3 acres larger than the 2020 CPA. The stormwater treatment system is the largest increase in wetland impacts. This system was added and evaluated after the 2010 FEIS. The stormwater system is a regulatory requirement and would reduce pollutants from the road entering the northern boundary of ENP.

The impacts of the project to seventeen threatened and endangered (T&E) species, including eleven that have been listed or were not evaluated in the 2010 FEIS, were evaluated by NPS. Of these species, only the wood stork (*Mycteria americana*) and the Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*) had *Likely to Adversely Affect* determinations as evaluated and discussed in previous assessments. The proposed design modifications would increase wetland impacts by only 5.2% (3 acres) over that evaluated in the 2020 CPA, and losses of T&E species habitat will likely be insignificant, which resulted in no change to the effect determinations for the species.

The NPS has concluded that all previous species affects determinations will remain the same and that the slight increase in permanent wetland impacts resulting from the current design modifications remain consistent with the original analysis found in the 2010 FEIS. The Service agrees with this assessment and reiterates its concurrence with all species determinations as stated in the original Biological Opinion, amended Biological Opinion, and all previous concurrence letters regarding the TTNS Project (Table 1).

Thank you for your cooperation in the effort to protect fish and wildlife resources. If you have any questions regarding the Project, please contact Kevin Palmer via email at Kevin_Palmer@fws.gov or directly at 772-469-4280.

Cc: electronic only
ENP, Homestead, Florida (Tylan Dean)

Table 1. Threatened, Endangered, and Proposed Species considered during Section 7 Consultation on the Tamiami Trail Next Steps Phase 2 project final design.

Species	Scientific Name	Listing Status	Section 7 Determination
Cape Sable seaside sparrow	<i>Ammodramus mariitimus mirabilis</i>	Endangered, designated critical habitat	MANLAA
Wood stork	<i>Mycteria americana</i>	Threatened	Likely to adversely affect
Everglade snail kite	<i>Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus</i>	Endangered, designated critical habitat	MANLAA
Eastern black rail	<i>Laterallus jamaicensis ssp. jamaicensis</i>	Threatened	MANLAA
Florida leafwing butterfly	<i>Anaea troglodyte florldalis</i>	Endangered, designated critical habitat	No effect
Bartram's scrub hairstreak	<i>Strymon acis bartrami</i>	Endangered, designated critical habitat	No effect
Florida bonneted bat	<i>Eumops floridanus</i>	Endangered, Proposed critical habitat	MANLAA
Florida panther	<i>Puma concolor coryi</i>	Endangered	Likely to adversely affect
West Indian manatee	<i>Tricheus manatus</i>	Threatened, designated critical habitat	No effect
Blodgett's silverbush	<i>Argythemni blodgettii</i>	Threatened	No effect
Pineland sandmat	<i>Chamaesyce deltoidei ssp. pinetorum</i>	Threatened	No effect
Cape Sable thoroughwort	<i>Chromolaena frustrata</i>	Endangered	No effect
Florida prairieclover	<i>Dalea carthagenensis var. floridana</i>	Endangered	No effect
Florida pineland crabgrass	<i>Digitaria pauciflora</i>	Threatened	No effect

Everglades bully	<i>Sideroxylon reclinatum ssp. austrofloridense</i>	Threatened	MANLAA
Florida bristle- fern	<i>Trichomanes punctatum ssp. floridanum</i>	Endangered, proposed critical habitat	No effect
Eastern indigo snake	<i>Drymarchon cooperi</i>	Threatened	MANLAA