



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

SEP 30 2011

Mr. Jeff Ruch
Executive Director
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
2000 P Street, NW, Suite 240
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Mr. Ruch:

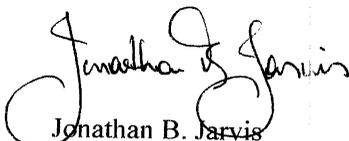
This is in response to your June 29, 2011, letter in which you appealed the decision by National Park Service (NPS) Southeast Regional Director David Vela, documented in a letter dated June 9, 2011, not to rescind a Wilderness Eligibility Assessment (WEA) prepared for the Big Cypress National Preserve Addition in 2010. In your appeal you claimed that Mr. Vela's response was inadequate, inaccurate, and incomplete, and you reiterated your demand for the relief outlined in your December 2010 complaint.

Nonetheless, I have carefully reviewed the WEA, your original complaint, Mr. Vela's response, and your appeal. Following are my conclusions:

1. The NPS began the WEA process in 2006, published initial findings in the Draft General Management Plan/Wilderness Study/Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement in 2009, and completed the process with publication of the final WEA in 2010.
2. The Wilderness Study and associated WEA were properly announced in the *Federal Register* and by newsletter in 2006, and results were communicated to the public via the *Federal Register* in November and December 2010.
3. The NPS solicited, considered, and responded to public comments in preparing and publishing the final WEA. The public was given the opportunity to comment at the beginning of the assessment process in 2006 and after release of the draft document in 2009 through submission of written comments and participation at public meetings and wilderness hearings.
4. The WEA does not violate the Wilderness Act, Data Quality Act, or NPS policy.

I therefore concur with Mr. Vela's decision not to rescind the 2010 WEA, remove it from publication, or undertake a new WEA.

Sincerely,


Jonathan B. Jarvis
Director