



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS BUILDING
3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000

RICK SCOTT
GOVERNOR

CARLOS LOPEZ-CANTERA
LT. GOVERNOR

HERSCHEL T. VINYARD JR.
SECRETARY

February 25, 2014

Honorable Darren Soto
State Senator
101 N Church Street
Suite 305
Kissimmee, Florida 34741

Dear Senator Soto:

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) learned yesterday about your letter regarding oil exploration in Florida's Everglades. There is and has been no energy exploration in the Everglades, nor has there been a change in DEP's oil and gas permitting policy. The Department's sole focus is protecting the environment, and our scientists are dedicated to following the science and following the law.

Florida's Everglades is a national treasure. The level of support and commitment to Everglades restoration efforts by Governor Rick Scott and this Florida Legislature are unmatched. Last year, Governor Scott's historic \$880 million Everglades water quality restoration plan was approved by the Florida Legislature. This year, Governor Scott is seeking an additional \$130 million investment to continue work on restoring the Everglades and South Florida's ecosystem as part of the "It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget." This Administration's commitment to the Everglades is unrivaled and we are anxious to continue this pace-setting work to improve our Everglades.

While there are challenges to restoration efforts in the Everglades, oil and gas exploration is not one of them. There are currently 162 oil and gas wells operating in six counties in the state of Florida; many of these areas have been producing energy for decades. None of these are in the Everglades. DEP has never even received an application for oil and gas exploration in the Everglades. In fact, there has never been a single permit issued for any oil and gas exploration in the Everglades.

DEP's oil and gas permitting process follows Chapter 377, Florida Statutes and Rules 62C-25 through 62C-30, Florida Administrative Code. All permits are issued under the strict permitting standards, encompassed in these rules and statutes. They include safety equipment requirements as well as requirements for testing and inspection of the equipment to assure compliance with rules and to protect the environment and public

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safety. In addition, DEP conducts a review based on these standards, sends copies of applications for peer review to state and federal agency experts and interested parties for review and comment in order to minimize environmental impacts and protect natural resources. This has always been the Department's process for issuing permits. There has been no shift in policy.

We thank you for your continued interest in Everglades protection.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Herschel T. Vinyard Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Herschel T. Vinyard Jr.
Secretary