



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

June 30, 2016

The Honorable Sally Jewell
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

I have received Deputy Assistant Secretary Hyun's letter of June 24, 2016, written on your behalf responsive to my letter to you of April 15, 2016. This exchange of letters deals with the impending destruction of what is left of Florida's Everglades.

As the contracted occupant of the large portion of the Everglades operated as the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service solemnly promised 14 years ago that it would use its "best efforts" to acquire dedicated funds to control the invasive exotic plant infestation in the Refuge. Scientists and policy makers agreed at that time that control of invasive exotic plant species was critically important to restoration of the Everglades ecosystem. Today, our Governing Board urgently believes this to be true.

The Service has not only failed to control the invasive exotic plant infestation, but also ignores its contractual obligations. Our Governing Board is left to wonder how your agency can justify "best efforts" that stop short of actually asking Congress for the money to solve the invasive species problem. For the past several years, staff for both the Service and the District have agreed that it will cost \$5 million per year for the next five years to bring the Refuge into compliance with the contractual performance criteria. But, your agency has not even asked Congress for these modest sums.

To be clear, all parties have agreed for quite some time that the solution to the problem of invasive exotic plant infestation in the Everglades is to commit adequate funds for consistent treatment. This is not a problem of technical feasibility. Enclosed is a graphic illustrating the disparity between exotics control on District-managed and Service-managed lands in the Everglades. The Governing Board has achieved control of invasive exotic plants on District properties because of the taxpayer monies it commits to this effort annually.

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The Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge is unlike refuges owned by the United States where the Service may be entitled to seek funding as it sees fit. Here, the Governing Board expects that your agency will at a minimum do the honorable thing, meet its contractual obligations and request the \$5 million in annual congressional funding necessary to properly care for the Everglades currently occupied by the Service. After you have undertaken such efforts during this budget cycle, and if it is still necessary, the District will be pleased to discuss with you any reasonable renegotiation of our contract that you now so prematurely request.

Sincerely,



Peter Antonacci
Executive Director

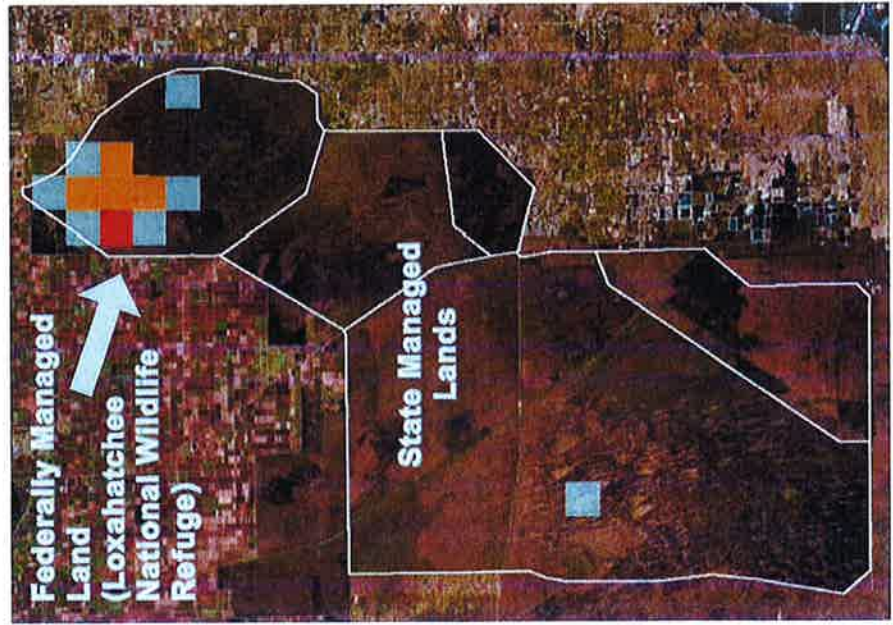
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Enclosure

Old World Climbing Fern 1995 - 2015

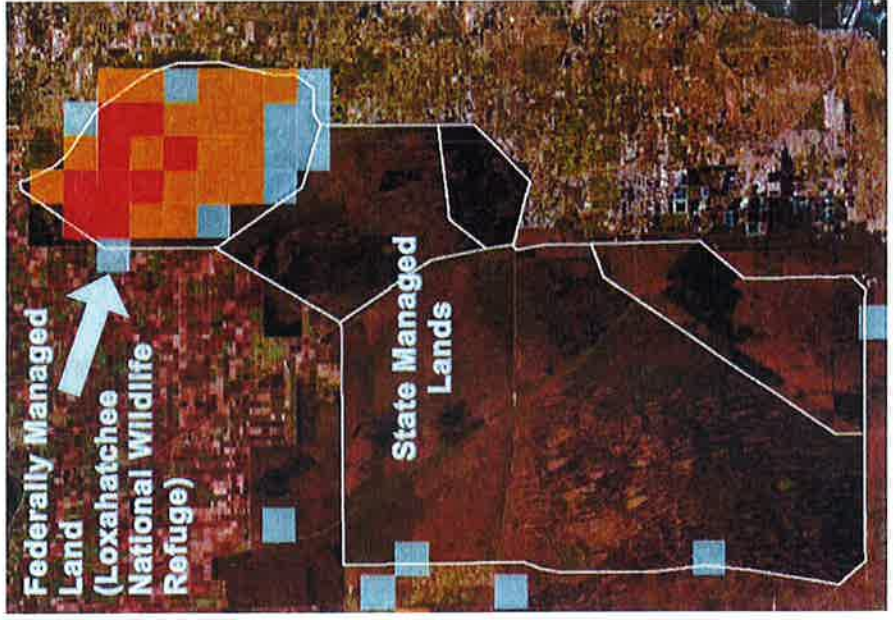


Old World Climbing Fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*) expansion in the Northern Everglades over 20 years.

1995



2015



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bc: Dan Ashe, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Karen Hyun, Ph.D., U.S. Department of the Interior
Rolf Olson, Project Leader, Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife
Refuge
David Viker, Regional Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System