

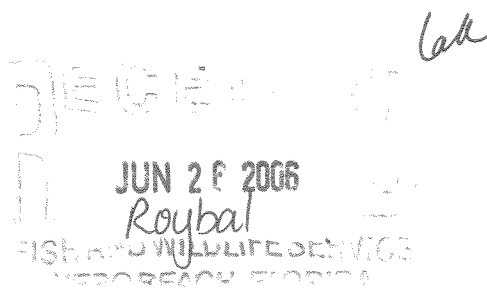


SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

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June 23, 2006

Mr. H. Dale Hall, Director
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, N.W.
Mailstop 3238 MIB
Washington, DC 20240



Dear Mr. Hall:

Subject: Burmese python listed as injurious species under the Lacey Act

As Governing Board Chair of the South Florida Water Management District (District), I am writing to urge the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list the Burmese python (*Python molurus bivittatus*) as an injurious species under the Lacey Act (42 U.S.C. §18).

The Burmese python is an exotic constrictor species commonly traded in the international pet industry. It is now clear that breeding python populations are established in natural areas of southern Florida and their numbers appear to be on the rise. For example, the number of pythons that were either removed or found dead in and around Everglades National Park increased from 23 in 2003 to 95 in 2005 (*Source: Skip Snow, National Park Service*).

As you are aware, the federal government and State of Florida have embarked on an unprecedented effort to restore the Florida Everglades. Invasive species like the Burmese python threaten to undermine these efforts by negatively impacting the wildlife and recreational values of this important ecosystem. District-funded stomach content analyses of removed pythons confirm a varied diet of native fauna, including listed wading birds (e.g., limpkin), top predator species such as the Florida alligator and bobcat, and numerous rodent species.

State and federal natural resource managers are now engaged in python control efforts and supportive research in an attempt to eradicate this invasive species from the Everglades region. Interagency collaborations dealing with invasive species have facilitated many successes that could not have been achieved by individual agencies alone. However, these good efforts are likely to be unsuccessful if new introductions are allowed to continue through importation via the international exotic pet industry. According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service importation records, 5,968 Burmese pythons were imported through the Port of Miami in the last three years alone.

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The negative impacts of continued introductions of the Burmese python into the United States are significant. Listing the Burmese python as an injurious species under the Lacey Act would prohibit the importation of new animals into the country and prohibit interstate transportation. Listing the Burmese python would not represent an undue burden since permits could be issued for scientific, medical, or educational purposes. Thank you for your consideration on this request.

Sincerely,



Kevin McCarty
Governing Board Chair
South Florida Water Management District

LKM/cw

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