

**Statement of Testimony on
H.R. 1922
to the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
of the House Natural Resources Committee
by Mayor Karen Golonka
Town of Jupiter, Florida
October 23, 2007**

Introduction

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you. My name is Karen Golonka and I am the Mayor of Jupiter, Florida. I am honored to be here today to testify in support of HR 1922 – a bill to designate the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse and surrounding federal land as an Outstanding Natural Area.

I speak to you from two perspectives. One, as local elected official who has served as Mayor of the Town for 17 years and Council member for twenty and understands what is of value to the people of Jupiter; the other as the spokesperson for the Jupiter Working Group which has worked in close partnership to ensure our community needs for recreational opportunities, natural and cultural heritage preservation, public education, and open space are met.

I ask for your support to preserve and enhance a unique area and icon that:

1. Is very special to the people of the Jupiter/Tequesta area; and
2. Also has national historic and environmental significance, making it worthy of being designated as an Outstanding Natural Area and placed within the BLM National Landscape Conservation System.

General Description

The site proposed for the Outstanding Natural Area Designation consists of 126 acres -- a welcome swath of green in highly urbanized Palm Beach County.

The site is bordered on two sides by the Jupiter Inlet (the mouth of Loxahatchee River as it flows into the Atlantic Ocean), and the Intracoastal Waterway. The site is in the Public Domain and administered by the Department of the Interior, although currently lots 16, 17, and 18 have been withdrawn to the Coast Guard. Lot 17 is scheduled to be returned to BLM shortly. Lot 18 contains 12 Coast Guard houses and the Jupiter Lighthouse, which is managed by the Loxahatchee Historical Society under a 30 year lease. The Town of Jupiter was granted a patent for lot 20 for use as a recreational park. Exhibit 3 depicts a close-up aerial view of the site and illustrates lot ownership.

National Significance

The breadth of history documented on this relatively small 126 acre site is impressive, containing both prehistoric and historic artifacts.

Archaeological evidence of Native American habitation dates back to 3000 B.C., with continuous habitation until about 1760, when the first Europeans arrived. Native American

mounds can be seen near the lighthouse, and history reports that Ponce de Leon sailed into the Jupiter Inlet. Later, the site was visited by the Seminole Indians, who came there to trade in the 1800's.

The site has strong ties to maritime and military history. The Jupiter Lighthouse was designed by a young Lieutenant George Meade, who would later -- as a Union General -- defeat Lee at the Battle of Gettysburg.

In more modern times, the site contained a top secret U.S. Naval Radio detection Station, which monitored U-Boats off the coast from 1940-1944. This station located most of the 67 German submarines destroyed off the coast of Florida.

Exhibit 5 provides a timeline of further historical highlights associated with the site.

Although small, the area is rich in natural resources, important at both the Federal and State level. Contained within its boundaries are 18 special status species and 4 ecosystems (see exhibit 4). Among the special status species are the Florida scrub jay, gopher tortoise, Florida manatee, little blue heron, and reddish egret. The north fork of the Loxahatchee River (just upriver from the site) is a federally designated "Wild and Scenic River".

The habitat is diverse, with mangrove swamp, hardwood hammock, sand pine scrub, and Florida oak scrub. In varying states of decline or impacted by the growth of exotics, these habitats had been in decline but are now being restored.

Work has also begun to improve public access to the natural areas. On the north half of the property a walking trail is now in place, traversing scrub and leading to the mangrove swamp. Once lot 17 is returned to BLM an intensive program of exotic removal will be undertaken, and further public access will be possible.

In my time as Mayor, I have come to know, on a very personal basis, what the citizens I represent value. While they understand the importance of progress and economic growth, they also deeply value what remains of their natural heritage – a heritage which is nationally significant. HR1922 would ensure that this heritage would remain under wise stewardship in perpetuity.

Local Significance

Every Community has its own "special place", the essence of the community that provides meaning and identity to its people. It may be an area that, in times of distress or celebration, serves as a special community gathering spot. The Jupiter Inlet and Lighthouse area has been and continues to be such a place for the people of Jupiter.

Intertwined with events of national significance, the Lighthouse witnessed the eventual permanent settlement of Jupiter directly across the river, survived the Hurricane of 1928, and provides a wonderful view of the area we call home. Eighty-two (82) years ago when the Town held its first meeting as a municipality, one of the first actions was to designate the Jupiter Lighthouse as the Town's official symbol.

In 1991, during the Gulf War, citizens tied a yellow ribbon around the balcony at the top of the lighthouse as a show of support for the men and women in the Persian Gulf.

Many Veterans Day celebrations have taken place in alongside the water and Station J. This is where the community came together to honor the victims and heroes of September 11 in 2001.

The community's sense of pride in the lighthouse, natural area and river is immense. In an area where most people have been born elsewhere, the lighthouse and natural area have enabled citizens to come together, mold a community identity and become stakeholders in their community and government.

HR 1922, by requiring commitments to a management plan, provides further reassurance to my constituents that this valuable natural area will be well cared for. Having seen the natural habitat of Florida dissipate at an alarming rate as we experience the exploding population pressures of south Florida, Jupiter residents are passionate about preservation. People who have moved to Jupiter do so because they love the area and its natural beauty. In our town surveys, the concern with overdevelopment and disappearing natural areas ranks #1.

In 2004, Jupiter residents again showed their commitment to conservation by voting overwhelmingly to tax themselves for a \$17 million dollar bond issue to be used for the preservation of environmentally sensitive land and open space. In an area of high real estate prices, the Town has successfully leveraged this money along with County and State funding to acquire valuable environmental assets. Currently, the Town and County are developing management and public access plans for the open space properties.

The Town's commitment to public access of our natural resources is also occurring on the south side of the Loxahatchee River and southern portions of the Intracoastal Waterway as the Town constructs its multi-million dollar Riverwalk through partnerships with land-owners, and funding from various sources including the Town. The impetus for this project was a concern that once the waterfront land was developed there would be virtually no visual or physical access to this treasured resource along the 2 mile stretch. Ultimately, the Town intends to provide water taxi connections from the Riverwalk to the Jupiter Inlet Natural area, creating further accessibility and visibility for the Natural Area. The proposed Jupiter Inlet Outstanding Natural Area will be a key component as the Town continues to stress Heritage and Eco-tourism.

Partners in Stewardship

The Jupiter Working Group consists of the Bureau of Land Management, the U. S. Coast Guard, Palm Beach County, the Town of Jupiter, the Village of Tequesta, the Loxahatchee River Historical Society, and the Jupiter High School Environmental Research and Field Studies Academy. As a spokesperson for the group, I can vouch that they are all active partners collaborating every day to solve issues ranging from the protection of natural and cultural resources from hurricanes, to reducing wildfire threats from the wild land/urban interface, to restoring precious habitats.

The ability to have a viable partnership is essential to the long-term stewardship of this area. The members of the "Jupiter Working Group" have already clearly demonstrated this over the past decade.

In 1969 the Town of Jupiter leased 17.8 acres from the Coast Guard, and later BLM, to use as recreational fields, which also included the Station J building. Over the years the building has been home to various community-based groups including the Coast Guard Auxiliary, Marine Sciences Education, and now the Loxahatchee Historical Society Museum. As an indication of

the Town's excellent stewardship over the years, and investment of its own funding to maintain the 17.8 acres, in October 2004, the Town received a patent for the land from the Department of the Interior. The Town was honored to have Interior Secretary Gale Norton present the Patent at the park.

Jupiter High School has established an Environmental Research and Field Studies Academy, and its students have been regular and active participants in various activities at the site such as clearing exotics, planting mangroves, and participating in National Public Lands Day. The site has served as a living laboratory for them, and their work has been honored by BLM.

Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resource Management and BLM have partnered (with funding and labor), to restore some of the scrub and wetland communities on the site. Thousands of exotics were removed and replaced with native vegetation and a new wetland was created.

Throughout this time, the partners of the Jupiter Working Group have invested significant dollars to enhance the assets of the site, leveraging them whenever possible and jointly working on the projects. In 2000 a full restoration of the Lighthouse was completed through an \$858,000 ISTEAA grant, which was applied for by the Historical Society and managed by the Town. This past year, a \$1.2 million restoration was completed on the Station J Building, jointly planned between the Historical Society and the Town, and funded by the Town of Jupiter. In recognition of this outstanding partnership the group received BLM's prestigious 4 C's award for its collaborative efforts on behalf of conservation.

Conclusion

This legislation will add no new management requirements or buffers. We will continue to leverage dollars amongst the partners to maximize our return. I ask for your support of H.R. 1922 to codify the partnerships and efforts of the last decade as we move forward and continue to maintain and enhance this asset.

HR1922 would ensure that the regional icon of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse and the land it sits upon -- the icon that symbolizes the rich history of the Treasure Coast -- will be under wise stewardship in perpetuity.

It simply is the right thing to do for our community and the right thing to do for the land. Please send this bill and its companion bill in the Senate to the floor so we are assured that our collaborative efforts in natural, cultural and historic resources will be continued.

Thank-you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 1922. This concludes my testimony and I would be glad to answer any questions.

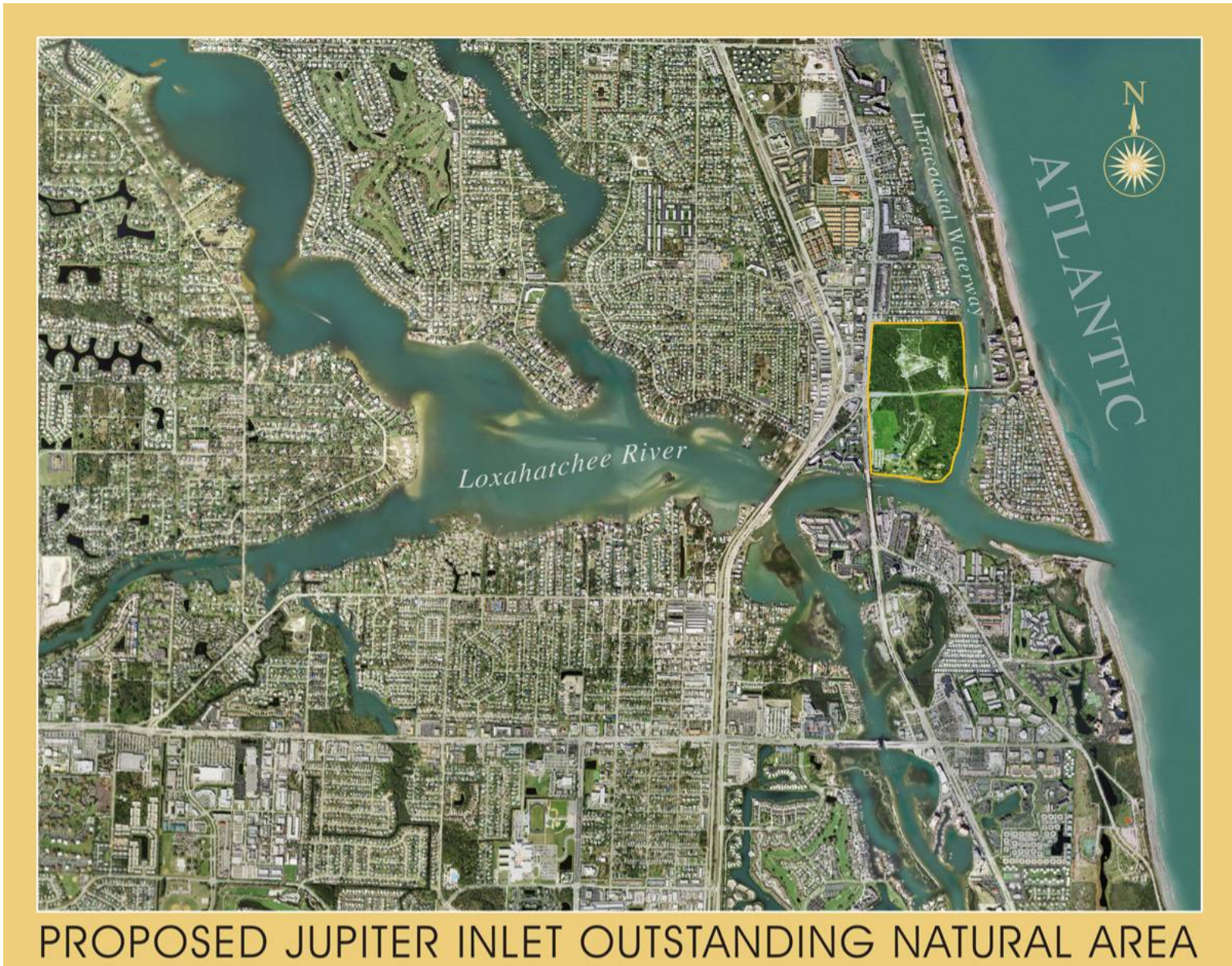
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Exhibit 1



View of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse facing northeast at sunrise from the Loxahatchee River

Exhibit 2



Aerial map of Jupiter/Tequesta and Jupiter Inlet area

Exhibit 3



Aerial view of the Proposed Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area and land ownership

Exhibit 4

Special Status Species
Proposed Jupiter Inlet Outstanding Natural Area

Federally-listed species	State-listed species	Habitat
Florida scrub jay	Florida scrub jay	Florida Oak Scrub
Four-petal pawpaw	Four-petal pawpaw	SandPine scrub
Gopher tortoise	Gopher tortoise	Harwood hammock
Perforate lichen	Perforate lichen	Mangrove swamp
Florida manatee	Florida manatee	
Florida mouse	Florida mouse	
	Nodding pinweed	
	Curtis milkweed	
	Giant wild pine	
	Banded airplant	
	Pot-bellied airplant	
	Little blue heron	
	Reddish egret	
	Tricolored heron	

Exhibit 5



Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Area Historical Highlights

- 3000 B.C. Archaeological evidence of continuous Native American habitation from 3000 B.C. until 1763 A.D.
- 1513 A.D. Ponce de Leon sails into Jupiter Inlet, erects a cross and names the river Rio de la Cruz.
- 1696 A.D. Jonathan Dickinson shipwrecks on Jupiter Island and is taken captive by Native Americans. His published 1699 Journal is still in print.
- 1763 A.D. Archaeological evidence of the first English settlement at the Lighthouse.
- 1854 A.D. President Franklin Pierce orders the Ft. Jupiter Lighthouse Reservation. Lt. George Meade, later Union General at the Battle of Gettysburg, designs the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse.
- 1855 -59 A.D. Construction delayed by the Seminole Indian War and the outbreak of yellow fever.
- 1860 A.D. Captain Yorke constructs a 108 foot tower and adjacent oil house and the lighthouse is lit for the first time.
- 1861 A.D. Jupiter Lighthouse goes dark after Confederates seize part of the lighting mechanism.
- 1866 A.D. Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse is repaired and relit.
- 1892 A.D. First U.S. international cable is laid between Jupiter Inlet and the Bahamas.
- 1895 A.D. One of the first U.S. Weather Bureau and Signal Stations is established on the lighthouse grounds.
- 1905 A.D. The innovative U.S. Naval Wireless Station is installed on the property.
- 1926 A.D. The U.S. Navy acquires 8.4 acres of the Jupiter Lighthouse Reservation from the U.S. Commerce Department and by 1936 begins operating a Radio Compass Station as an aid to navigation.
- 1928 A.D. The Lighthouse is electrified and later damaged by the Hurricane of 1928.



Exhibit 5 (continued)

Historical Highlights Continued

- 1938 A.D. U.S. Navy establishes an Intelligence Listening Post at the Naval Radio Station.
- 1939 A.D. The Lighthouse becomes the responsibility of the **United States Coast Guard**.
- 1940 A.D. Guarded by the **U.S. Marine Corps**, the top secret U.S. Naval Radio Detection Finding Station, known as "**Station J**," begins to monitor and track German U-boats off the East coast of the United States.
- 1943 A.D. The men of Station J help turn the tide of World War II by locating most of the **67 German Submarines destroyed** off the coast of Florida.
- 1973 A.D. The Lighthouse and surrounding archaeological site is placed on the **National Register of Historic Places**.
- 1987 A.D. The Lighthouse beacon is fully automated.
- 1994 A.D. Loxahatchee River Historical Society becomes manager of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse through a 30-year lease with the U.S. Coast Guard and opens the Lighthouse Visitor Center to the public.
- 2000 A.D. Full restoration of the **Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse** is completed through a \$858,000 Federal grant to the Loxahatchee River Historical Society in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard and Town of Jupiter.
- 2005 A.D. **Jupiter Inlet Working Group** receives the Bureau of Land Management Director's prestigious *Four C's Award*.
- 2006 A.D. WWII "Station J" Building receives a \$1.1 million restoration by the Town of Jupiter and is leased to the Historical Society. The Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse & Museum opens to the public 6 days a week.
- 2007 A.D. Hurricane Jeanne damage repair totaling \$300, 000 is completed at the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse.
- Congressman Tim Mahoney & Senator Bill Nelson introduce the **Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area Act of 2007**.

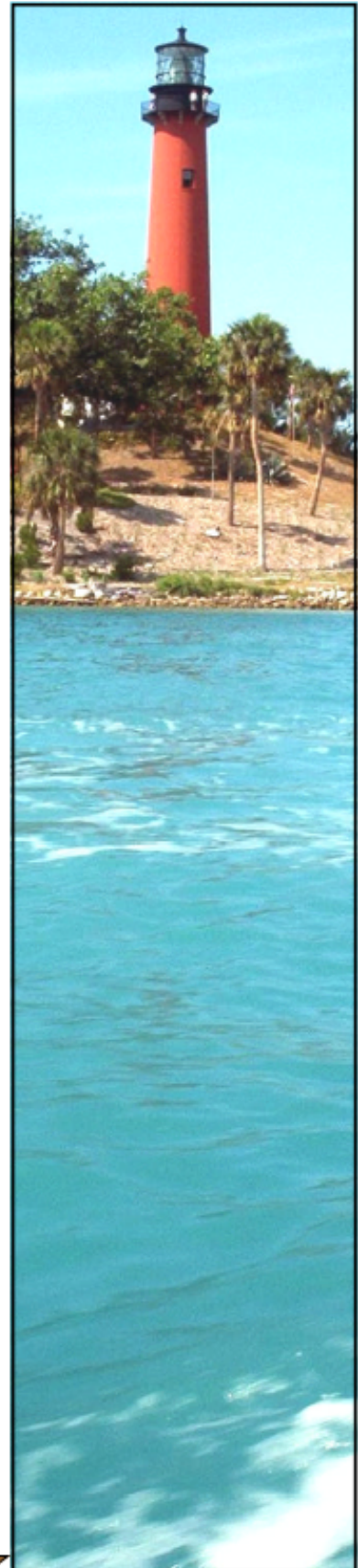


Exhibit 6



Present-day photograph of visitors approaching the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse for a tour.



View of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse from the wetland area to the northeast

Exhibit 7

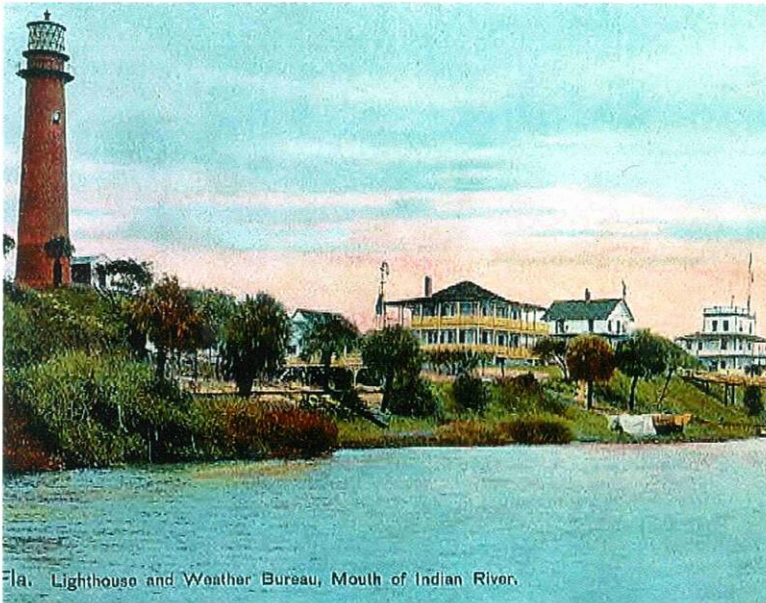


Present-day photograph of the World War II Station J building post-restoration, with a view of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse in the background.



Present-day photograph of the World War II Station J building post-restoration

Exhibit 8



Historic picture of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse and Weather Station



Historic photo of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse



Members of the Seminole Indian Tribe across the Loxahatchee River from the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse

Exhibit 9



Jupiter Inlet Working Group receives the Bureau of Land Management Director's prestigious 4C's award in 2005



Jupiter High School Environmental Research and Field Studies Academy receives National Public Lands Day Award in 2007