

SUGGESTION FOR INCLUSION IN COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PLAN

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I have reviewed the October '06 Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Environmental Impact Statement and found it to be a very informative and educational document relating to our island. To my layman's eyes, I believe you've done an excellent job in describing the state of our environment and formulating alternative plans to carry intelligent management into the future. I have only one suggestion for augmentation of your efforts given any expansion allowed by options B & C: **Detailed documentation of the activities of migratory birds passing through or nesting in the eastern end of the island, specifically the area designated as a wilderness area.**

Be Proactive in Long Term Plans

In answer to questions of "What can we do to help the environment?" it's been said that responsible citizens should "Think globally, and act locally." Responsible corporations and government agencies bear similar burdens. Nobody knows better than your organization how everything we do impacts everyone in some way. Your charge in managing your refuge areas is to determine how best to utilize and protect your resource, but you need to break out of the shell a bit and recognize the affects more holistically.

Specifically, in the light of popular world wide acknowledgement of global warming, significant public effort and politicking will impose considerable force upon businesses and government to utilize alternative energy sources. While it seems that there is a downside, an opposing constituency, and a price for every form of energy production, we know that when we "delay, delay, delay" the default result is another high polluting oil or coal power plant. While this makes the oil and coal industry partners happy, the plants and animals of the world that FWS stewards suffer tremendously.

It is hard to see in growing economies how we can reduce the demand for power. The obvious result is that we need to employ low pollution options. Wind power is one of those alternatives. The designated wilderness area is so defined mostly in acknowledgement of the fact that the area will always pose some risk to human activity, so keep it natural and restrict access to it. Agreed, it's an excellent idea. Looking at the situation from the perspective of energy production, it offers a relatively unique opportunity. The exposure to winds is excellent. The site is uninhabitable by humans. It is remote and not visible from most of the island. It has no human neighbors. The land has no competing market value. The wilderness value of the area is not necessarily in conflict with energy production when viewed regionally.

The quality of the refuge environment is both indirectly and directly affected by what goes on in our region. Air quality and water quality are compromised with traditional regional power generation. If we don't work together to solve some of these issues, we

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all lose. Accepting some responsibility for these issues by all of us is absolutely necessary, or we end up taking what we're given and then complaining about the disastrous incompetence and short sightedness of others.

Having said all of this, does it make sense to put wind generators on the end of an island whose denizens treasure its bird population? Maybe yes, maybe no! The point here is that we should study our bird life and their migration patterns to determine if cohabitation of the two concepts is feasible and, if so, how. We know that risks abound with every concept, but we also know that risks abound with the status quo. With a detailed analysis of bird activity, we can face the problems fully informed.

Any serious proposal to place wind generation on the east end will need to address a host of issues. One should not assume that: first, it's not our problem; or second, the task is impossible because it could literally require an act of Congress. Keep in mind that the momentum to reverse global warming is building, Congress is pliable, and Earmarks are ubiquitous. To respond to eventual pressure, let's be well informed. Let's assess the risks accurately and offer direction. Let's act in logical expectation of the changes to come instead of trying to react belatedly after the changes occur.

We all need to keep in mind that solutions can't always be in someone else's backyard.

One view of the future of Vieques as a demonstration of ecotourism includes the synergy derived from our tainted resources and our fundamental natural resources. Picture wind generation successfully integrated with our signature refuge. Picture Vieques supplying substantial amounts of clean power to ourselves, the main island, and Culebra. Picture the majority of our island automobiles propelled by electricity instead of gas. Fantasy? Not necessarily. It's all technically state of the art. We should be prepared. We need to do our homework. We need to study our bird resources more extensively. Who best can manage such a study? Let's put this into our plan.

Thank you for the very fine work you do. I wish you all the best in finishing up the plan.

Sincerely,

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