



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

January 29, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Clinton and Secretary Salazar:

I write in strong support of the United States using its voice and vote at the UNESCO World Heritage Committee meeting to be held in Spain this June, to return Everglades National Park of the United States to World Heritage list of sites in danger.

In 2006, a political appointee serving as U.S. representative to the United Nations' World Heritage Committee made a unilateral action that resulted in the removal of the Everglades from the list of historically and culturally significant endangered sites around the world. In light of the existing consensus among scientists that the Everglades is still very much endangered and restoration efforts remain decades from completion, it's clear the park should never have been removed.

As Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on International Organizations, I held a hearing in which U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Gerald Anderson stated that, in light of concerns raised over the delisting of the Everglades, the Department of State's Bureau of International Organizations Affairs had adopted new procedures for reviewing proposals that would add or remove future U.S. sites from the list.

Everglades National Park continues to be threatened by toxic levels of mercury, a decline of endangered species, such as the roseate spoonbill, and a dramatic die-off of sea grass in Florida Bay. According to the U.S. Parks Service, "all indicators [demonstrate] that something is seriously wrong in the ecosystem of South Florida." In addition, the World Heritage Committee has recognized that the low-lying Everglades are at significant risk from sea level rise due to climate change.

At the Thirtieth World Heritage Committee session in 2006, the Committee approved nine benchmarks to guide consideration of the Everglades. Only one of those benchmarks currently is complete, and progress towards achieving two others has not begun yet.

On a related note, it's been eight years since the landmark Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan became law and not one project has been built with federal funds. I'm hopeful the Senate will include funds for the Army Corps so we can move dirt on critical environmental restoration projects such as the Everglades.

Given that the decision to remove the Everglades was made using flawed procedures, ignored the recommendations of many in the scientific community, and did not reflect funding challenges facing its restoration, I would ask that the Departments of State and Interior seek restoration of the Everglades on the World Heritage list of sites in danger.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.