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To: PAIS_public_comments@nps.gov
cc:
Subject: Drilling on Padre Island National Seashore - comments from the
Ornithology Group of the Outdoor Nature Club, Houston, Texas

December 10, 2004

TO: Superintendent/O&G EA/all others in charge of decision making on this
matter
FROM: Kathy Farr, Chairperson
The Ornithology Group of the Outdoor Nature Club, Houston, Texas
SUBJECT: Drilling on Padre Island National Seashore

On September 28, 1962, President Kennedy signed into law the creation of an 80-mile long protected seashore that is today the longest undeveloped barrier beach in the world. That beach is the Padre Island National Seashore, and it was established for the protection of rare, endangered, and threatened wildlife, and for the public for recreational uses. In pursuing the creation of this national seashore, Senator Ralph Yarborough opted to leave the mineral rights of these lands in private hands as a compromise to getting this natural treasure saved in a timely fashion. He did not make this compromise in order to leave open the ability for private oil and gas companies to come along years later and destroy this protected habitat through their drilling activities.

As a representative of the 250 members of the Ornithology Group, and with the mandate of that membership to include our voice of descent with respect to the drilling activities authorized by the government agencies in charge of our Padre Island National Seashore, I herein state our group's strong protest to any further degradation of this Texas treasure by any means.

We are dismayed that those agencies assigned as protectors of our National Seashore would turn out to be the instrument of its destruction by caving into the pressures of companies interested only in their pocketbooks. That you are willing to be instrumental in the destruction of critical habitat for 17 threatened and endangered wildlife species, including the piping plover and five of the world's seven sea turtles is appalling. Since the mineral rights for this area are privately owned, no royalty monies will go to the state of Texas. This means you are allowing private oil and gas companies to destroy our National Seashore with no gain what so ever coming to the state of Texas. All this destruction for what is reported by many reliable sources as a pitifully small amount of natural gas: that used in the United States in a single day.

It is appalling that our Padre Island National Seashore will be converted to an oil and gas superhighway. It is regrettable that the \$39 million income from 800,000 annual visitors who use of this treasure are not sufficient to protect it from unnecessary destruction. This is especially true when access to these reserves with minimal impact on this fragile habitat is possible.

The Ornithology Group endorses the Sierra Club proposition that the State of Texas and the Federal Government buy the mineral rights of the Padre Island National Seashore for permanent protection of this state and national treasure, just as the Bush administration did for the Big Cypress National Preserve in Florida.