



COPY

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Fax Cover Sheet

TO: Jock Whimworth - Padre Island National Seashore
FAX NUMBER: 361-949-8023
FROM: Juan Hinojosa
DATE: 6-13-02
OF PAGES (INCLUDING COVER): 3

COMMENTS: Original will follow via mail.

Thank You.



- Chairman of Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence
- Member of Committee on Judicial Affairs

Texas House of Representatives

Juan J. Hinojosa

District 40: (part) McAllen, Elsa, Edcouch, Edinburg & San Carlos

June 13, 2002

Superintendent Jock Whitworth
Padre Island National Seashore
P.O. Box 181300
Corpus Christi, TX 78480-1300

Dear Mr. Whitworth:

As I'm sure you are aware, the Bush Administration announced last Wednesday a \$120 million buyout of privately held oil and gas rights below Florida's Big Cypress National Preserve. I believe that Padre Island National Seashore, which is a haven for many endangered species and is a magnet for tourism in South Texas, deserves that kind of protection as well.

As you and your staff proceed with the review of a new permit application for more exploration and production of gas underneath the park and adjoining coastal waters, it is my hope that you will include and prioritize the option of a buyout in the revised Environmental Assessment, and I believe it is warranted and prudent for you to examine the results of a buyout as the most preferable environmental alternative to future exploration and drilling.

Buying out the mineral rights and leases is not only possible, it may be the only way for NPS to comply with its duty to protect and aid in the recovery of endangered species that make the seashore home. For example, the official "Sea Turtle Recovery Plan" for the Kemp's Ridley turtle prepared by the National Marine Fisheries Service states that undue vibration of turtle eggs should be avoided because vibrations increase the likelihood of embryonic damage or mortality. The heavy 18-wheelers rumbling up and down the beach each day to service present drilling operations could certainly be a source of undue vibration.

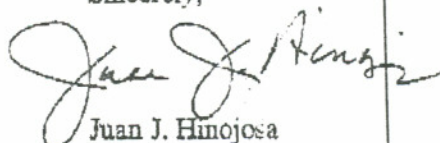
On a related matter, I would like to encourage you to proactively gather visitor comments and survey attitudes regarding the truck traffic and the drilling operations. I understand that at this time, the park has not surveyed visitors to determine the impact of the drilling on their visitor experience, and has not solicited comments in any other way. As you know, roughly 800,000 visitors a year travel to the park to enjoy the beauty and wild solitude of the park. Truck traffic from the first well has already resulted in complaints--there have been at least 3 complaints

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published as letters to the editor in the Corpus Christi Caller Times, and over 1200 letters, emails, faxes and other communications objecting to the drilling were sent to your office during the public comment period of proposed wells. Indeed, there seems to be very strong public sentiment on this matter, but it appears that the park has made little effort to systematically gauge the depth and breadth of this sentiment. As you know, you are required by the National Park Service Organic Act and the General Authorities Act to protect the visitor experience and associated values. It concerns me that you cannot adequately do this, nor determine what impact present operations have had on the visitor experience, unless you take steps to systematically gather and analyze quantitative and qualitative information from park visitors regarding the present operations and future operations that you appear poised to approve.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to these matters. These issues are of considerable concern to many of my constituents, and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Juan J. Hinojosa
State Representative