



The Senate of  
The State of Texas  
Austin 78711

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DEAN OF THE SENATE

June 5, 2002

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

**RE: Purchase of mineral rights and the proposed Lemon/Lemon Seed wells**

Dear Mr. Whitworth:

This is to urge you to seek a buyout of the privately held mineral rights pertaining to the Padre Island National Seashore. As you know, the Bush Administration last Wednesday announced a \$120 million buyout of private 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.

I understand that you are currently reviewing a new permit application for more exploration and production of gas underneath the park and adjoining coastal waters. This would seem to be an appropriate time to include and prioritize the option of a buyout in the revised Environmental Assessment for the proposed Lemon/Lemon Seed wells. Specifically, I believe it is warranted and prudent for you to examine the results of a buyout as the preferred environmental alternative for the Lemon/Lemon Seed Environmental Assessment.

Buying out the mineral rights and leases is not only possible, it may be the only way for the National Parks Service 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 the current drilling operation are a source of undue vibration.

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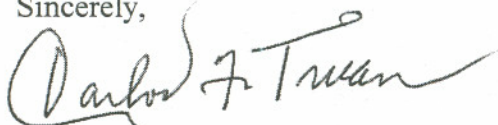
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On a related matter, I encourage you to actively gather visitor comments and to survey attitudes regarding the truck traffic and the drilling operations. I understand that the park has not yet surveyed visitors to determine the impact of the drilling on their experience at the park. As you know, roughly 800,000 visitors a year travel to the National Seashore to enjoy the beauty and wild solitude. However, truck traffic from the first well has already resulted in at least 3 letters to the editor in the Corpus Christi Caller Times, and I understand that a large number of citizens communicated their concerns about the drilling during the public comment period on the Lemon/Lemon Seed wells. It might be useful for the purpose of decision-making to institute a system at the visitor center to gather data on the impact of the Dunn-Murdock operations on visitor experience.

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

Sincerely,



Carlos F. Truan  
Dean of the Texas Senate

CFT/vrh