



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Protection

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Jeanette Nuñez
Lt. Governor

Alexis A. Lambert
Secretary

Dec. 3, 2024

Mary F. Savage-Dunham
Director, Planning & Zoning Department
City of Port St. Lucie
121 SW Port St. Lucie Blvd.
Port St. Lucie, Florida 34984

Dear Ms. Savage-Dunham:

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns regarding the requested variance before the city of Port St. Lucie Planning and Zoning Board. By way of the planning and zoning board meeting on Sept. 5, 2024, the Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Recreation and Parks (Division) became aware of the intended plans of the landowner to construct and operate a private campground on the subject property (proposed development). This proposal raises a number of environmental and operational concerns directly affecting the park.

As you are aware, the subject property is an inholding located within Savannas Preserve State Park. The land that makes up the park, which surrounds this parcel, was acquired in 1988 and is jointly owned by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund and the South Florida Water Management District.

The proposed development of the subject property poses a net negative impact on the surrounding ecosystem in the park. The subject parcel is located within the scrubby flatwoods natural community, which is state and globally ranked as imperiled. In addition, the Division has documented gopher tortoises, bald eagle, and other listed species located in the surrounding park property. The state of Florida has made significant investments to preserve and restore the ecosystem in this area. The Division would not support any activity that would adversely impact the area's environment.

Classified as a preserve, the park currently supports low-intensity recreation for day-use visitors, and overnight accommodations are not contemplated in the current unit management plan for the park. Moreover, the change in use to a private campground on an inholding within a state park that was previously undeveloped would require additional staffing for potential security and resource protection risks to park property that the Division cannot support.

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The Division appreciates the opportunity to express these concerns, and respectfully requests that a variance not be granted to allow for the proposed development in this environmentally sensitive area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chuck Hatcher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right above the signature.

Chuck Hatcher
Director, Florida Park Service