

June 26, 2021

Florida Trail Association is committed to the protection, preservation, and promotion of the Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST), a congressionally designated public resource. The southern terminus of the FNST is located at the Oasis Visitor Center, and the trail extends north for more than thirty miles through the Big Cypress National Preserve. This part of the FNST offers the public a premier backcountry hiking experience, the likes of which can be found nowhere else in the world.

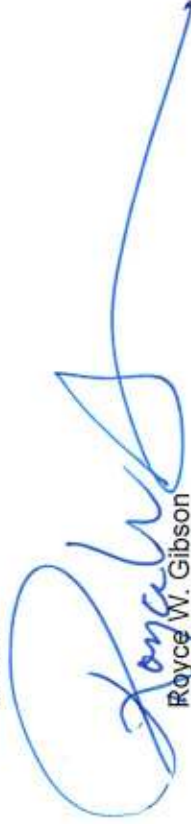
By unanimous consent of the Board of Directors, the Florida Trail Association is opposed to oil drilling in Big Cypress National Preserve as requested by the Burnett Oil Company Inc.. The oil well south of Interstate 75 and its corresponding access road will have a significant effect on visitors' experiences on the Florida National Scenic Trail.

Adverse impacts of the proposed industrial-scale drilling could include but are not limited to significant modifications of the landscape within the foreground and middle ground viewed along the trail in the form of ruts on and off the trail, destroyed vegetation, and visual impacts of vehicles. Additionally, the audible impacts of the drill pad and vehicles when added to the current impacts of I-75 and the nearby airstrips would take away from the remote wilderness opportunity Big Cypress National Preserve shares with visitors and wildlife.

Water flow will be impacted and could create challenges for the Trail leading to a possible need to reroute sections now too wet or too dry for hikers. Hikers depend on being able to filter water during the 33 miles from Oasis Visitor's Center to I-75. If an oil spill were to occur, the water they typically filter would be undrinkable. With no other source of water, the trail would have to close in this section.

It is probable that the number of survey and energy extraction operations located near the Florida National Scenic Trail will continue to grow. If left unchecked, the cumulative impacts of these projects will continue to increase over time, diminishing the natural, cultural, scenic and recreational values of the Florida National Scenic Trail.

Big Cypress National Preserve is a vital part of the Florida ecosystem and must be protected to ensure future generations can enjoy the Florida National Scenic Trail for generations to come. The Florida Trail Association will seek to preserve, protect, and promote the enjoyment of the FNST in such a way that the natural, scenic, and recreational resources of the Trail are not adversely affected. To this end, the Florida Trail Association asks that the Burnett Oil Company Inc.'s permit request to drill for oil in the preserve be denied.



Royce W. Gibson
Executive Director