

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

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U.S. HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN
AND INSULAR AFFAIRS LEGISLATIVE HEARING

H.R. 504: Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act

QUESTIONS

“1. Your written statement mentions that the Osceola Camp is a residential area and is subject to a special use permit.

a. Please explain to us how that affects how the tribe and village residents are able to do long-term planning for the village?

b. Please expand from your testimony on any other details of how H.R. 504, the Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act, will change that dynamic to benefit the tribe.

2. Is there any other information that you would like to provide to the Committee regarding cost and/or cost estimates for elevating the Osceola Camp above the new flood plain height that you have received from conversations between the tribe and the National Park Service?”

RESPONSES

1(a) The Special Use Permit limits the capacity of the Tribe and village residents to accomplish effective planning within the Osceola Camp. It is difficult to obtain funding and permits to administer a property that is not directly held by the Tribe, and the permitted status discourages long-term planning and investments. While the Tribe has its own environmental resource and permit review teams, they lack jurisdiction to oversee this permitted space. Emergency response services, like police and fire, are similarly impacted by the lack of jurisdiction, and do not have clear authority with which to respond to incidents occurring within the village. These circumstances are made all the more challenging, because Everglades National Park preserves exclusive federal jurisdiction, and so city, county, and state officials and agents also lack jurisdiction to accomplish permitting, development, or emergency response actions within the boundaries of the village. While the Everglades National Park has been a partner in the management of this property, the National Park Service does not have capacities developed responsive to the needs of residential communities, as the same are generally outside the bounds of the normal operations of the Service.

1(b) By including the permitted area within the Miccosukee Reserved Area, the Tribe and village residents will be greatly benefitted. Residents will have the ability to vote for and elect officials responsive to their needs, which is not the case in a permitted use space within a Park Unit. Tribal officials will have appropriate permitting, development, and management capacity to install, update, and maintain, as necessary, utilities and lines for potable water and sewage. Emergency response personnel in the Miccosukee Public Safety Department and Miccosukee Police Department will be empowered to enforce Tribal law within the boundaries of the village, and protect the residents from falling prey to criminality which may not otherwise be the focus of Everglades National Park policing efforts. While the Park, rightly, is cautious to involve its officials in the day to day governance of the Tribal village, the Tribal government is ideally situated to be the representative and responsive government body for the needs of the village.

2. The most up to date written cost estimate that we have received from Everglades National Park and their contractors projects \$14,759,129 in expenses. However, oral communications with Service officials indicate that they believe they may be able to achieve cost savings through further coordination with State agencies. We will keep the subcommittee apprised of any updates to the cost estimate provided, which reflects the best understanding of the Service's contractors in November 2024.