

The Honorable

As a supporter of the National Wildlife Refuge System, Florida Parks and a constituent that cares deeply about protecting America's wildlife and cultural resources for future generations, I urge you to support the Egmont Key Hurricane and Storm Protection Plan and help us prevent Egmont Key from being lost forever.

Egmont Key has lost approximately 50% of its size due to erosion since its original recorded survey. The next large storm could cut the size of the island in half, thus accelerating the loss even further. Years of unchecked erosion have decimated Passage Key, once a 63-acre seabird nesting colony, to a mere sandbar just south of Egmont Key. The same fate is in store for Egmont Key if the erosion problem is not addressed soon. Already, two of the five historic batteries of Fort Dade (on Egmont Key) are completely ruined due to erosion and the available habitat for wildlife has been severely decreased. The smaller the island gets, the more cultural resources and beachfront will have to be closed to the public.

Egmont Key, managed jointly as a National Wildlife Refuge and a Florida State Park, offers more than 200,000 tourists and local visitors many recreational activities each year. The public can see the remains of Fort Dade, active from 1898 through World War II (listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978) and learn about the rich history of Egmont Key. Or they can take a nature hike and observe many State and Federally listed species in their natural habitats. Currently Egmont Key is home to over 37,000 nesting seabirds, has the highest density of State listed gopher tortoises in Florida and is a vital nesting area (20-70 nests per year) for endangered loggerhead sea turtles. Egmont Key is great for fishing, snorkeling, swimming, beach recreation, wildlife photography and boating.

In 2008, the Army Corps of Engineers produced a feasibility study of a 50-year Hurricane and Storm Protection Plan to protect the island from erosion. The initial phase of the Protection Plan will cost approximately 8 million dollars. The price will increase to more than 18 million dollars if funds are not obtained by 2013. I urge you to support the Egmont Key Hurricane and Storm Protection Plan and fully fund the requested 8 million dollars, preventing Egmont Key from being lost forever due to erosion and our inaction.

With respect, I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,