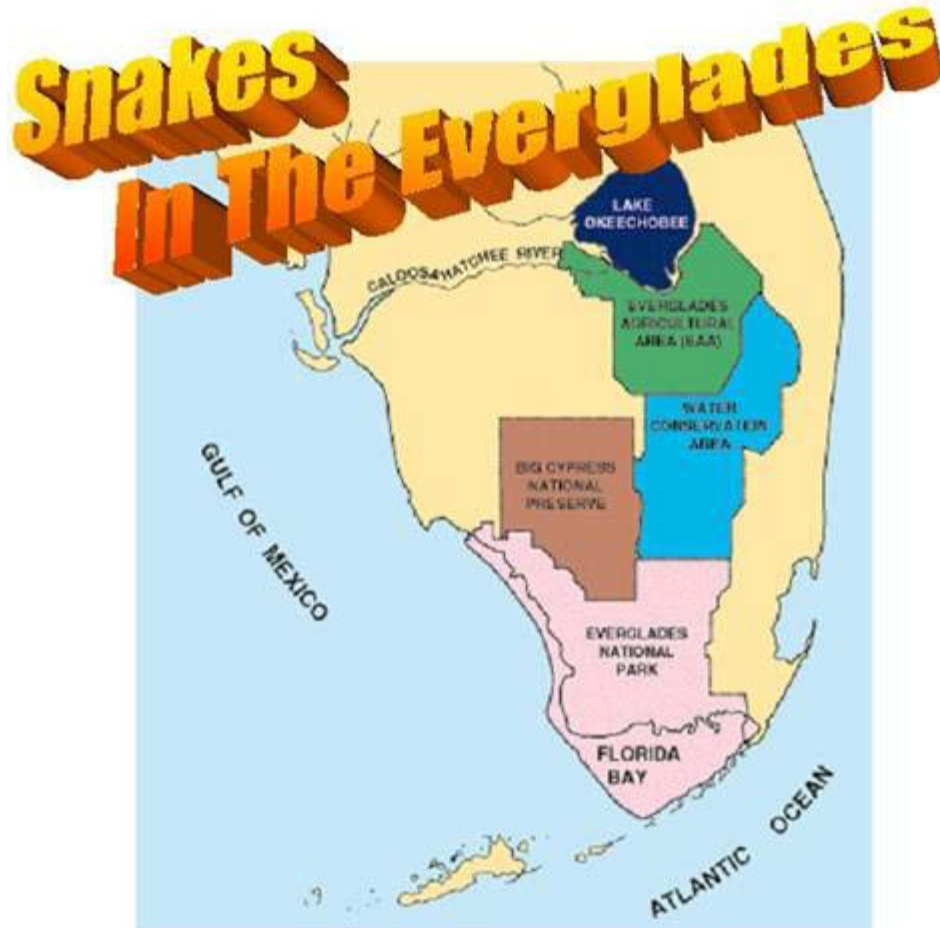


March 23, 2010

## Sit Back. Relax. Enjoy the Fright.

Democrats Hold Hearing on Administration's Plan to Constrict...



**WASHINGTON D.C., --** Today, the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife will hold a joint oversight hearing with the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands to examine non-native constrictor snakes as invasive species in the Florida Everglades. The hearing follows Department of Interior (DOI) Secretary Ken Salazar's announcement to list nine non-native snakes (non-venomous constrictors) on the Lacey Act's "injurious reptiles" list.

"Injurious" designation under the Lacey Act would make it unlawful to import, export, transport, sell, buy or possess any of the nine constrictor snakes listed by the DOI. An outright ban on these nine constrictor snakes would result in significant economic damage to the pet industry, and those who support the sale and transportation of snakes and snake supplies. The Administration's proposed policies are targeted at lawful pet owners and

their private property and do NOTHING to address the stated concern over snakes currently existing in the wild in South Florida.

## **Get the Facts**

- There are approximately 3,800 pet retail stores across the country that average \$3.5-5.25 million in annual snake sales.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimated the initial economic loss of snake supply revenue to be \$3.6 to \$10.7 million—that figure is believed to be greatly understated.
- In total, losses due to an “injurious” listing for Boa constrictors alone are expected to hit private pet dealers, pet supply stores and companies such Delta, FedEx, and UPS for a combined \$1.6-\$1.8 billion (Source: U.S. Association of Reptile Keepers.)
- The scope of this “injurious” listing is unprecedented and would cause severe economic pain for thousands of Americans by destroying livelihoods and possibly exacerbating the problem of constrictor snakes in South Florida as snake owners and breeders could then release their newly illegal snakes into the wild.
- Secretary Salazar based his decision on a 302-page report by the U.S. Geological Survey, which has been called into question by various scientists in a letter to the U.S. Senate’s Environment and Public Works Committee. The scientists called the report a “gross overestimate of potential habitat for these snake species” and noted the Everglades were the “the only known breeding population” for pythons as FWS notes “large constrictors are likely to be limited to the warmest areas of the US.”
- Proponents of the Lacey Act designation argue that these snakes were released into the wild by their pet owners. However, Hurricane Andrew, which devastated South Florida in 1992, completely destroyed a warehouse of exotic reptiles that potentially contained hundreds of Burmese pythons. This is thought to be a contributing factor to the prevalence of constrictor snakes in the Everglades.
- Sportsmen are good stewards of our public lands and their expertise and knowledge of the land should be used to help diminish the increasing snake population. Unfortunately, hunters are currently only allowed to hunt snakes with their hands or a machete, making the sport incredibly inefficient and unpopular.

# # #

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