The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

Invasive Burmese pythons are devastating the Everglades ecosystem. We are seeking guidance from the U.S. Department of the Interior on a process to allow the taking of this species in Everglades National Park.

With a $2 trillion economic impact, maintaining a healthy Everglades is critically important to a strong Florida economy. As the only subtropical ecosystem in the continental U.S., the Everglades is home to dozens of endangered and threatened species, as well as a diverse array of native wildlife. Burmese pythons prey upon wildlife across South Florida, killing off rabbits, birds, bobcats, and other wildlife essential to the Everglades ecosystem.

Currently, in 22 different Florida Wildlife Management Areas, Public Small Game Hunting Areas, and Wildlife and Environment Areas, pythons may be taken by any means, except with traps or firearms. Additionally, two programs have been established by the State of Florida, on non-federal lands of the Everglades, to combat the issue:

- The **Python Removal Program**, established by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, offers a Python Removal Permit to qualified individuals to remove and transport live Burmese pythons from three Wildlife Management Areas in the Everglades.
- The **Python Elimination Program**, established by the South Florida Water Management District, offers monetary incentives to a limited number of participants to remove pythons in the Everglades. Since commencing in March of 2017, the program has eliminated over 830 pythons.

Despite the success of these two state-run programs, the taking of pythons in Everglades National Park is still prohibited. If maintaining the Everglades ecosystem is a priority, then swift action must be taken to legalize similar python hunting programs in Everglades National Park. Impediments to establishing programs like those already enacted by the State of Florida must be addressed and overcome. With this in mind, we request your response to the following questions:

- What are the impediments to legalizing python hunting in Everglades National Park?
Are there shortfalls in South Florida Water Management District’s Python Elimination Program and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s Python Removal Program that must be addressed so hunters in these programs would also be able to hunt in Everglades National Park?

Can the legalization of python hunting in Everglades National Park be done administratively through the U.S. Department of the Interior, or is a legislative solution necessary to make the taking of pythons a reality within the park?

The invasive Burmese python population in South Florida is an existential threat to a balanced and healthy Everglades ecosystem. Accordingly, we look forward to your responses to the questions above and we urge the U.S. Department of the Interior to modify existing policies to make sure that our national park ecosystems thrive.

Please contact Joe Bartlett (Representative Rooney) at (202)225-2536 or Terry Camp (Committee on Natural Resources) at (202)226-7736 with any questions about this request. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Rob Bishop
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources

Francis Rooney
Member of Congress