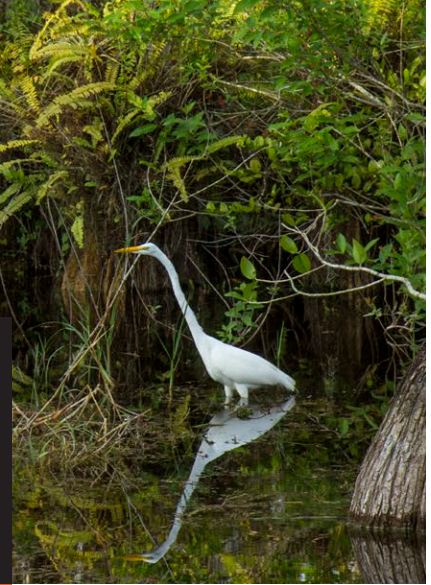




# BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE



Credit: © Vince M. Camilo | Tandem

**H**abitat destruction occurring inside this national preserve due to oil and gas exploration could be the single most damaging energy development threat within any park

unit's boundaries. Further, it is taking place in a crucial habitat for the last 230 surviving Florida panthers.<sup>1</sup>

The Greater Everglades Ecosystem encompasses millions of acres of south and central Florida. At its heart is Everglades National Park, a 1.5 million acre world of mangroves, wet prairies and idyllic blue waters.

The Greater Everglades also incorporates two other park sites: Big Cypress National Preserve to the north, an area larger than 700,000 acres, and Biscayne National Park to the east, which is the largest marine park in the National Park System. This ecosystem provides multiple rare habitats, including the unique combination of salt and freshwater that is a haven for migratory birds, alligators, endangered crocodiles, dolphins, orchids, endangered Florida panthers, coral reefs, manatees and hundreds of other species.

Legislation that created the Big Cypress National Preserve included language that allows for limited oil exploration and development. The

National Park Service has broad authority to reject oil and gas activities in order to preserve, conserve and protect the natural, scenic, hydrologic, floral and faunal, and recreational values of the preserve.

Yet, in Big Cypress, damaging new oil and gas exploration continues. The majority of oil and gas beneath the preserve is owned by the Collier family, who have leased some of their mineral rights to the Burnett Oil company, which has been conducting seismic testing operations within 110 square miles since 2017. This process involves driving heavy 33-ton "vibroseis" vehicles and other equipment throughout wetlands in the preserve to hunt for oil, which has damaged one of the last refuges remaining for the critically endangered Florida panther. This is only the first of four proposed phases of exploration, which could ultimately encompass around 360 square miles, or one-third, of the preserve—an area larger than many national parks, including Shenandoah, Crater Lake, Biscayne and Zion.

Of the 40+ National Park Service park

## RESOURCES THREATENED

WILDLIFE AND HABITATS  
CRITICAL TO ITS SURVIVAL

NATURAL RESOURCES,  
INCLUDING WETLANDS  
AND ANCIENT TREES

OUTDOOR RECREATION  
ECONOMY

## BY THE NUMBERS

**230** The estimated number of Florida panthers still in existence

**230,000 acres**  
The area within Big Cypress National Preserve where current seismic testing could expand

**33 tons**  
The weight of some of the "vibroseis" vehicles sent through sensitive wetlands to hunt for oil, cutting lines more than 15 feet wide and 2 feet deep in places

**>500**  
The estimated age of cypress trees that were cut down or driven over inside the preserve to make way for seismic testing equipment

units with at least some privately held mineral rights, there is no single project that comes close to the scope and scale of what is being proposed for the Big Cypress National Preserve. This oil exploration is the single most damaging energy development project happening inside national park unit boundaries anywhere in the country.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Feb. 22, 2017, <https://www.fws.gov/southeast/news/2017/02/florida-panther-population-estimate-updated/>

