

**Statement of
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Bureau of Land Management
Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Public Lands & Forests
S. 1143, Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area Act
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Thank you for inviting me to testify on S. 1143, the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area Act. The Act would designate the 126 acres, including Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse and the surrounding area, as an Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) within the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). The Department supports S. 1143.

Background

The 126-acre site proposed for designation as the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area is an oasis of green in highly urbanized Palm Beach County, Florida and straddles the borders of the Village of Tequesta and the Town of Jupiter. The lighthouse, which stands 156 feet above the surrounding coastline, is the oldest existing structure in Palm Beach County, dating from 1860. The lighthouse continues as an active United States Coast Guard aid to maritime navigation. The Loxahatchee River Historical Society manages portions of the site through a license and conducts popular tours of the lighthouse. On the remaining southern portion of the tract, the Town of Jupiter manages intensive recreation on an 18-acre public park.

Aside from the natural significance of this site, the dynamic partnerships of the Jupiter Working Group and collaborative relationships make this site quite unique. The management of the 126 acres rests with six separate entities, BLM, U.S. Coast Guard, Palm Beach County, Town of Jupiter, Village of Tequesta, and Loxahatchee River Historical Society. These entities currently work cooperatively through BLM's Jupiter Inlet Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP) and the Jupiter Inlet Working Group (working group) to manage the area as a harmonized unit. For example, Palm Beach County's Department of Environmental Resources Management has partnered directly with BLM on habitat improvements, providing matching funds and labor for virtually all habitat-related projects. One activity was the restoration of significant scrub and wetland communities within the area. Emphasis was placed on habitat improvements for the 18 special status species found within the area, including the removal of thousands of exotic trees and shrubs along with replanting of native vegetation. This work has significantly improved the habitat for scrub jays, gopher tortoises and federally endangered plant species. The working group combined resources to build an award-winning tidal lagoon and wetland connected to the Indian River Lagoon, which is one of the most diverse estuaries in the country. Among the many tools used to improve the habitat are successful prescribed burns, which reduced fuel loads on this urban tract.

The community involvement at Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse goes beyond the governmental agencies. For example, the Loxahatchee River Historical Society actively manages the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse and grounds, and provides interpretive tours to tens of thousands of visitors each

year. They have procured grants and worked with the Town of Jupiter to complete nearly one million dollars in restoration of the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse, as well as complete the renovation of a WWII vintage building that now houses the museum. Additionally, the Jupiter High School Environmental Resources and Field Studies Academy has donated thousands of hours of hands-on restoration work within the proposed ONA.

S. 1143

S. 1143 seeks to build on the many successful partnerships already in place by designating the 126-acre site as the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area within the BLM's NLCS. The bill follows in the footsteps of the Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area along the Oregon coast established by Congress in 1980. In order to safeguard the buildings and public lands surrounding the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse, the bill provides protections for the area while encouraging and enabling active community support and involvement.

The Department would like the opportunity to work with Senator Nelson and the committee on some technical amendments including a correct map reference and other minor issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S. 1143. I will be happy to answer any questions.