

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

December 9, 2015

The Honorable Barack H. Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

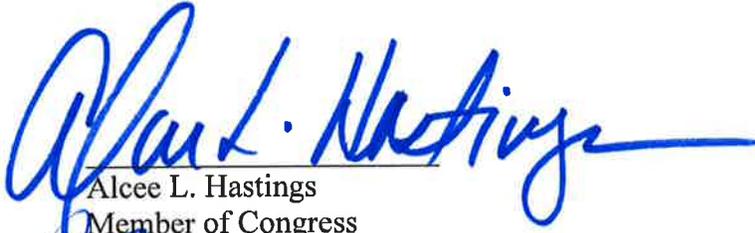
The Florida panther is one of the most endangered species in the world as less than 180 of them survive today. As you know, the two greatest threats to the Florida panther are the loss of habitat and automobile-related deaths, both of which are caused by increased development in environmentally sensitive areas. The best available science suggests that current lands in conservation do not provide enough suitable habitat area to support even the limited number of existing panthers. Further, on November 28<sup>th</sup>, two more panthers were killed by cars.

As members of the Florida delegation, we are writing to request your support in establishing a critical habitat designation for the endangered Florida panther. The Florida panther was listed as an endangered species in 1973, but critical habitat has never been established, even though the *Endangered Species Act* includes a requirement for the designation of critical habitat for endangered species. In other words, the Florida panther is protected by the federal *Endangered Species Act*, unfortunately its home is not.

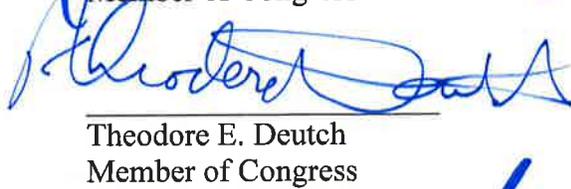
It is of great importance to designate a critical habitat not only because it would preserve and encourage the growth of the current population of Florida panthers, but also because it would help to protect other valuable environmental resources, such as wetlands, aquifer-recharge areas, drinking water supplies and the habitat of other endangered species. At the top of the food chain, Florida panthers help keep feral hog numbers in check and deer, raccoon and other prey populations balanced and healthy. Moreover, a designation of critical habitat does not mean that no further development is allowed in an area, it simply requires additional review when projects requiring federal permits would impact habitats considered essential to preventing the Florida panther from going extinct.

We urge you to ensure the continued existence of the Florida panther and the preservation of Southwest Florida's natural resources and unique character by supporting the designation of critical habitat for the endangered Florida panther. Thank you for your time and consideration. The decision to take action now will provide a historic opportunity for protecting the Earth's most endangered "umbrella species" – the Florida panther.

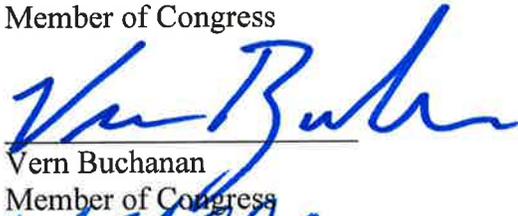
Sincerely,

  
Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

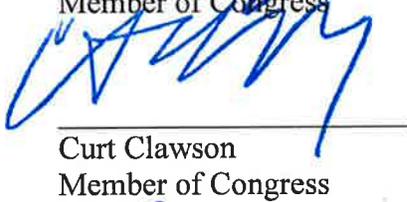
  
Patrick E. Murphy  
Member of Congress

  
Theodore E. Deutch  
Member of Congress

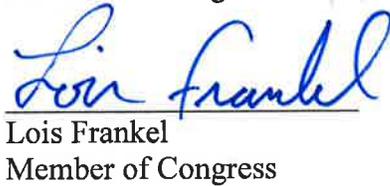
  
Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

  
Vern Buchanan  
Member of Congress

  
Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress

  
Curt Clawson  
Member of Congress

  
Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

  
Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress

Cc:  
The Honorable Sally Jewell, Secretary of Interior