



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

November 17, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. President,

I write today to urge you to direct the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to complete its review of a federal rule that will protect the environment and prevent new invasions of dangerous constrictor snakes.

Several years ago, when it found that sightings of non-native Burmese pythons in the Everglades were becoming common, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) asked the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to list the Burmese python as injurious under the federal Lacey Act. This listing would trigger a Federal ban on the importation and interstate trade of these snakes. While it worked to review the request, USFWS conducted a study and also found other giant constrictor snakes pose similar risks. In fact, some of these other species have been found in the wild in Florida, including the Yellow anaconda and African Rock python.

The Fish and Wildlife Service accepted public comment in developing its assessment of the risk of giant constrictor snakes, developed a draft rule and again solicited public input, and ultimately based its rule on science. The rule was sent to the OMB nearly nine months ago. In total, the rulemaking process has taken almost five years and in that time, over 100,000 more giant constrictor snakes have entered the U.S. And until these animals are listed as injurious, they will continue to flow into the country unabated. Further delay is unacceptable and the consequences could be lethal.

These dangerous snakes have killed people including an innocent child, devoured endangered species and most recently a Burmese python consumed a 76-pound adult deer. As I have said for years, it is only a matter of time before a python in the Everglades eats an endangered Florida panther.

The listing should be finalized without further delay to prevent the next invasion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.