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The State should decide within the next 30 days whether or not the Sunniland oil well, some 25 miles north of the Tamiami Trail, is to be classified as a commercially producing well. This decision will affect the prospects of establishment of the park. If the well is not classified as commercial, I am hopeful that the Governor will approve conveyance of a minimum area free from reservations. There will still be some exploration of the remaining lands. To cope with the oil problem as to these lands and assure badly needed protection for wildlife and other features, the proposed amendment would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to accept any lands within the project area, subject to reservations of oil, gas, and mineral rights, for administration by the Fish and Wildlife Service until these lands are freed from such reservations. At that time, the Secretary would be authorized to include them in the park. Thus, for a period of years, the National Park Service may be protecting the authorized minimum park area, free from the threat of exploration or drilling, and the Fish and Wildlife Service may be protecting other lands within the authorized maximum area, subject to the hazards involved in oil, gas, and mineral reservations.

If the Governor concludes that he cannot convey even the authorized minimum for park purposes but is willing to convey all State lands with oil, gas, and mineral reservations, I believe that the Fish and Wildlife Service may as well handle the whole project until title to the lands can be conveyed for national park purposes. I have discussed this proposal with Dr. Gabrielson and he concurs in it.

If you approve of our general approach to this problem, I shall pursue the matter further with Representative J. Hardin Peterson and Governor Holland.

(sgd) Newton B. Drury
Director.

Enclosure 896.

Approved: Feb. 14, 1944.

(sgd) Harold L. Ickes,
Secretary of the Interior.

cc: Regional Director, Region One ()
Supt., Castillo de San Marcos (with copy of amended bill.
Mr. Demaray. ()