

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: naja girard [mailto:najaglrard@monroecounty-fl.gov]
To: "Director@blm.gov" <Director@blm.gov>
Cc: kim wilmington <wilmington-kim@monroecounty-fl.gov>;
"Grimsley-Susan@monroecounty-fl.gov" <Grimsley-Susan@monroecounty-fl.gov>;
"najaglrard@yahoo.com" <najaglrard@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 9, 2011 10:13 AM
Subject: Inquiry: Public Land - Offshore Island (Monroe County, FL)

Dear Mr. Abbey,

Several months ago I learned of a Federal (Navy) claim of ownership to a parcel of land in Monroe County, Florida - (an offshore island) called Wisteria Island, dating back to 1951. I believe the island is located in Section 36 Township 67 Range 24, (Monroe County, FL in the vicinity of Key

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West). I sent an inquiry to the US Navy as to the current status of their federal claim of ownership to the island. The US Navy spent the next several months conducting research and issued the attached "News Release" on August 3, 2011.

My interest (and that of our entire community) in this particular piece of land stems from the request by a local developer (who claims to own the island based on a deed showing a sale from a private entity, dated 1967) to obtain development rights for the island from our local County government.

The Navy's official statement has brought me to your agency, as the Navy claims that the Navy's reservation of the island for Naval purposes (dating back to a US Presidential Executive Order (4060) issued on August 11, 1924) was relinquished by the Navy via Public Lands Order No. 6214 of March 11, 1982, and that the land "reverted back to the Bureau of Land Management" at that time.

History and Characteristics of the Island:

The island was created by repeated US Navy dredging of the main ship channel. The island was, reportedly, placed in that particular location, atop of an existing shoal, so as to form a "barrier island" for the protection (from hurricanes) of adjacent federal military facilities. The island was initially created by the Federal Government well over 100 years ago and has since become a natural forest area of about 21 acres.

It is situated just 300 yards east of the boundary of the Key West National Wildlife Refuge (KWNWR) which is managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The island is a sanctuary for the birds of the Refuge, many of which are listed for special protection and provides important resting, foraging, and nesting areas to dozens of avian species. The island has over 76 diverse species of native plant, several of which are specially protected by environmental laws, including wetlands and mangrove areas. It supplies critical food sources for the Threatened White-crowned pigeons who nest in the KWNWR. Tom Wilmer of the USFWS, in January 2011, published a report (ten years in the making) on the status of the nesting White-crowned pigeons of the KWNWR and the Great White Heron Refuge (GWHR), demonstrating the importance of and scarcity of food sources for the Threatened White-crowned pigeon of the KWNWR. This particular island provides critical food supplies to this Threatened species, and studies

have shown a very high probability that these same birds are using the Island as a rookery during their annual nesting season.

Additionally, the local community has used the Island as a recreation area dating back to its beginnings and is (overwhelmingly) in favor of the Island being preserved as a natural area. In fact, there is a Facebook page with approximately 3,000 members devoted to "Keeping Wisteria Island Natural".

Needless to say - our community finds the news that the Bureau of Land Management now controls the Island to be very welcome news indeed, and we are anxiously waiting to hear from your agency about this issue.

The Assistant County Attorney has stated that without an official claim from the Bureau of Land Management, the County will continue to process the private entity's application for development rights.

Would you please confirm for me, my fellow Florida Keys residents, and for Monroe County officials that the Bureau of Land Management considers this piece of property (Wisteria Island) as property belonging to the Federal Government?

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I would also request that (if the federal claim is confirmed by your agency) on behalf of myself and the public at large, the Bureau of Land Management step in at this time and protect the rights of the people of the United States in this property, by informing Monroe County officials of the Federal Government's claim and objecting to private development of the federally owned offshore Island, Wisteria Island.

Sincerely,

Naja Girard

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PS 8/13/11: Additionally, the Island is a haven for at least 19 distinct butterfly species (observed by expert, Roger L. Hammer during a site visit in July 2010). Two of those species have recently been designated as federally threatened - the Cassius Blue and the Cerranus Blue. There is some speculation that the critically endangered Miami Blue butterfly may reside on the Island which has an area containing the Miami Blue host plant Grey Nicker (Nickerbean).

[attachment "Wisteria Island NAVY_RELEASE_8-3-11-1-1.pdf" deleted by Janet H Lin/WO/BLM/DOI] [attachment "Wisteria_Navy_Claim_September_1951.pdf" deleted by Janet H Lin/WO/BLM/DOI]