

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

January 27, 2014

Secretary Sally Jewell  
United States Department of the Interior  
Office of the Secretary  
1849 C Street NW, Room 6156  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell,


We are writing to request that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) move quickly—with support from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the White House—to complete its ruling on large non-native constrictor snakes by issuing a final regulation listing the reticulated python, the DeSchauensee’s anaconda, the green anaconda, the Beni anaconda and the boa constrictor as injurious species under the Lacey Act.

These snakes pose an unacceptable and preventable risk to the safety of the American people and threaten some of our nation’s most treasured natural habitats. Since 1990, twelve people have died from encounters with “pet” constrictor snakes, including a two-year-old Florida girl and a three-year-old Illinois boy who were both strangled in their cribs. Countless individuals have been injured or sickened by these injurious species. Additionally, these highly adaptable, invasive snakes have severely damaged precious native ecosystems, as we have seen with the Burmese python’s decimation of mammal populations in the Florida Everglades, and the boa constrictor’s displacement of native reptiles in Puerto Rico. We cannot afford to risk the introduction of additional invasive species that will be expensive and difficult to eradicate.


In 2009, scientists with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) published a comprehensive report concluding that nine species of dangerous exotic constrictor snakes present a “high” or “medium” risk of becoming invasive as a result of their ability to escape from cages, or because of owners releasing these “pets” once they grow to be too large for a cage. On January 23, 2012, FWS issued a rule listing four of the nine species—Burmese pythons, yellow anacondas, and northern and southern African pythons, which represent about 30 percent of the trade—as injurious under the Lacey Act. Unfortunately, two years have passed and FWS has failed to take action on the remaining 70 percent of the trade in large constrictor snakes. Unless these species are added to the list of injurious species, the trade will continue to threaten the environment as well as public safety.

Finally, the largely unregulated reptile industry poses a significant burden to taxpayers. The FWS, in partnership with many organizations including the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and the South Florida Water Management District, has spent more than \$6 million since 2005 attempting to combat the growing problem of Burmese pythons and other large invasive constrictor snakes in Florida. Yet, these predators continue to consume endangered and threatened species, kill family pets in residential neighborhoods, and have decimated almost 99 percent of the Everglades' small and medium sized native mammals. The ability of an individual to own or sell a dangerous and exotic animal must be balanced against the interests of all Americans in preserving public safety.

Thank you for attention to this urgent matter and we look forward to your prompt response.

  
Peter DeFazio  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Natural Resources

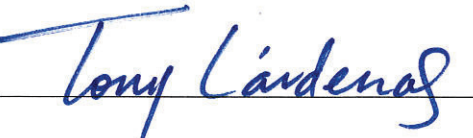
  
Mario Díaz-Balart  
Member of Congress

  
Lois Frankel

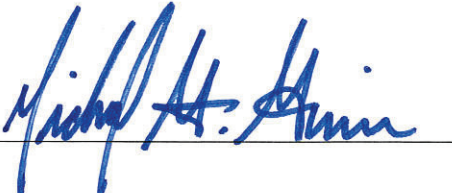
  
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