

## Lawsuit Targets Phosphate Mining Expansion

By STEVE NEWBORN • DEC 23, 2016



Four environmental groups have filed a lawsuit to stop a plan to mine 50,000 acres of phosphate in three counties. They say the federal government hasn't looked at the overall impact of mining in the region.

[The lawsuit](#) was filed by The Center for Biological Diversity, ManaSota-88, People for Protecting Peace River, and Suncoast Waterkeeper. They're suing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over a recent decision to allow 50,000 acres in Manatee, Hardee and DeSoto counties to be strip-mined for phosphate.

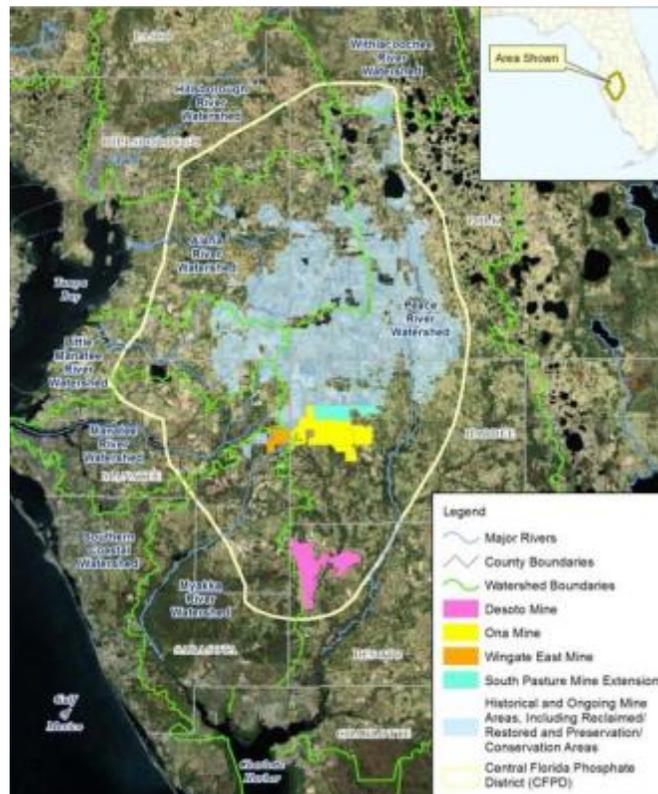
The suit alleges mining would violate the Endangered Species Act, potentially harming federally-threatened wood storks, Audubon's crested caracaras, and eastern indigo snakes.

It also says the mines would threaten water quality in the Peace River region.

"We're taking a stand against the continued reckless expansion of phosphate mining," Justin Bloom, executive director of Suncoast Waterkeeper, told the [Sarasota Herald-Tribune](#). "The industry has gamed the system time and again to make incredible profits by raping the land, mishandling hazardous waste and leaving behind a toxic moonscape and polluted aquifer."

The federal agencies approved the expansion by the [Mosaic Co.](#) Company officials say the federal permit followed what they call the most comprehensive phosphate mine permitting process in the history of the industry.

"We have full confidence in the strength of the South Pasture Extension permits," the statement read. "The permits for the mine extension are legally sound and provide all the protections necessary to comply with all local, state and federal laws, including the Endangered Species Act. We are confident in the comprehensive environmental review of all of our proposed projects."



*This map of mining in the Peace River Valley was part of the background for the lawsuit*