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Organization: Escambia Amateur Astronomers Association

Title: President

Comments: Statement on behalf of the Escambia Amateur Astronomers Association, located in Pensacola, Florida

We are opposed to oil and gas leases in the Conecuh National Forest. Our primary objection is that it would severely impact one of the few areas of easily accessible dark skies left in the southeast U.S. In the 30+ years we've engaged in astronomy in the Pensacola area, night skies have gradually brightened due to rampant development and unrestricted lighting. The 'go to' dark sky spot for members of our astronomy association was in Munson, Florida. Years ago the compressor station operated by Kinder Morgan / Energy Transfer Partners was a low level glow on the northern horizon. It is no longer 'low level'. Our concern is that lighting in any area of oil/gas development will further encroach on the decreasing area of dark skies centered on Boggy Hollow.

If night sky friendly lighting was incorporated in development this would not be an issue, it CAN be done and it's not at all hard, nor does it cost a penny more than flooding the night sky with unnecessary light. In fact, directing and concentrating lighting only where and when it is needed saves considerable energy. We have little faith that any oil or gas exploration / leasing company would consider night sky friendly lighting, therefore we remain opposed to leasing any more areas in Conecuh National Forest.