

**Charlie Smith**

CORRESPONDENCE  
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**From:** Betty Leland  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 25, 2025 2:07 PM  
**To:** Commissioner Correspondence  
**Subject:** FW: Docket No. 20240032-SU - Application for certificate to provide wastewater

Good Afternoon:

Please place this email in Docket #20240032.

Thanks.

Betty A. Leland, Executive Assistant to  
Commissioner Art Graham  
Florida Public Service Commission  
[bleland@psc.state.fl.us](mailto:bleland@psc.state.fl.us)  
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**Sent:** Tuesday, March 25, 2025 2:05 PM  
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**Subject:** FW: Docket No. 20240032-SU - Application for certificate to provide wastewater

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**From:** [julie.imig@gmail.com](mailto:julie.imig@gmail.com) <[julie.imig@gmail.com](mailto:julie.imig@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 25, 2025 9:59 AM  
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**Cc:** 'Little Gasparilla Island Preservation Alliance' <[margie@lgipa.org](mailto:margie@lgipa.org)>; 'George Shopp' <[george@shopppnonclin.com](mailto:george@shopppnonclin.com)>  
**Subject:** Docket No. 20240032-SU - Application for certificate to provide wastewater

Hello Commissioners,

Thank you for your time and attention at the recent public hearing in Englewood. Your engagement is appreciated. Mr. Graham, you invited Road or call with further information which you will consider in your decision on EUs application.

My husband, George Shopp, and I own the property at 9866 Little Gasparilla Island (about 11 houses from the south tip). We live here full time.

I am writing to disagree with the recommendation of your staff, namely that the EU wastewater project proceed.

I reviewed the staff recommendation regarding this docket, and as someone who attended or listened to all testimony (both days), I find I cannot reconcile the staff recommendation with the testimony offered at the very well-attended hearing.

The proposal to tear out our operational septic systems in order to install new holding tanks and grinder pump, pipes, not have a back-up plan for power outages (which are common) let alone charge every customer \$50k installation and hundreds in monthly fees, is not supported by the vast majority of existing homeowners and frankly out of touch with the needs of our bridgeless, undeveloped barrier island.

**It is especially important that EUs proposal be evaluated with a full understanding of the realities of the island.**

The picture below shows the south end of Little Gasparilla Island where we live. I am especially concerned about anyone installing utility who does not understand our extremely fragile and inaccessible end of the island. As you can see, there is zero access by land to the homes on the end of the island (golf cart path ends where the first arrow is drawn across the island). Properties south of that line are accessible by water only, and the proposed system would directly impact protected dunes. (The second arrow points to our property.)



Motorized vehicles are prohibited on dunes. We recently experienced damage to our dunes which was done by individuals working for FPL who did not follow regulations prohibiting motorized vehicles on the dunes. They did not understand the nature of our island, including access and fragility, and made poor choices leading to long lived damage. (We have never experienced (in 8 years) motorized vehicles on our property. )

This picture shows what happened when FPL brought a truck onto the dunes on our property after the storm last fall (without permission). It is taken from our porch. As you can see, no road, no trail, no path, no access. Note, the tracks you see in the picture were all made on that day. The damage that happened here, uprooting sea oats which keep the dunes from eroding, digging holes with tire tracks, wheels and axles in the dunes which host gopher tortoises, etc. will take a long time (months if not years) to heal. They made so many tracks and ruts trampling sea oats – it still distresses me to see this picture. FPL has only accessed the property by foot in the past (or very occasionally a golf cart), and this unfortunate picture shows why. The storm bared a

lot of the dunes. The natural barriers (grass, bushes, wildflowers, cacti, palms, uneven topography) which made it more obvious that the dunes are not to be driven on were damaged by Helene and Milton. Without an understanding of the island ecosystem, it just looks like a cool place to drive. That is most definitely not the case. The dunes are protected and need time to come back.



I ask you to review the testimony and compare it to your staff's recommendation. While I'm sure the staff is carefully reading regulations, etc, it is important in this case to not only do paper research, but to **understand the island's undeveloped nature, and consider the practical consequences of moving forward with EU's proposal**. I found the staff to be struggling to fit a square peg in a round hole.

Here are some topics I could not reconcile with public testimony:

- Your staff state that the need for service has been established. This need for service has not been established by any testing data. The witness for EU did not have specific evidence about the water quality near Bocilla Islands, he simply stated what he observed in other areas. A witness offered data that we are within safe levels of contaminants.
- A small minority who want to develop on the island are in favor, while the vast majority (over 100 testified) they are against the project and do not want the service from EU. It is surely a big ask of homeowners to blindly fund (~\$50k per hookup) a for-profit project with no data supporting need, no desire to give up easements, and no desire for the described service. The staff recommendation favors development over preservation of one of the last remaining undeveloped barrier islands in Florida – shocking. It is interesting to note that there is a state park and wildlife preserve mid-island - current owners respect our responsibility to protect wildlife on our island and view the undisturbed privately owned dunes as an extension of the habitat protected by the state park.
- The application is not consistent with the Charlotte County's master plan. Just because the Charlotte County commissioners supported the application does not change the fact that this project does not comply with the master plan (as your staff also states). Another inconsistency, another set of actions that don't reconcile with decisions already adopted in the master plan.

- There are better solutions for sewage which are more aligned with island realities. These solutions don't risk a pipe carrying all island effluent failing under the intercoastal waterway. They also don't rely on electricity. Last Sunday's outage lasted 8 hours or more.
- Your staff states that EU meets the requirement showing experience and expertise. The EU has never owned operated or managed the process of installing any wastewater system ever. I am not aware that any outside advisors have been selected *or vetted* for this project.
- Your staff uses a technicality to exclude grinder pumps as a type of waste water processing. Grinder pumps (which do indeed change the nature of the waste) are included in the definition of a treatment facility. Therefore, EU requests to operate waste treatment without access or use rights on our property.

Thank you again for your attention, and please call to discuss any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Julie Imig

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