

December 10, 2019

Dr. Mark Penning
Vice President of Animals Science and Environment
The Walt Disney Company
500 South Buena Vista Street
Burbank, CA 91521-9722

Dear Dr. Penning,

On behalf of the independent scientists and experts who joined together on the November 8th letter expressing deep concerns regarding Disney's current plans for Lighthouse Point, we thank you for your November 11th response.

We are writing today to accept your offer to discuss the environmental review now underway. However, we also want to express our disappointment with the lack of your acknowledgement of two of our most fundamental concerns: climate change, particularly after Hurricane Dorian, and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs.) A recent study using new models finds that the risks of sea level rise are greater than earlier predicted, with The Bahamas being the most vulnerable country in the Caribbean.

We share the commitment of the Walt Disney Company of "protecting and sustaining the environment and driving positive results for The Bahamas and Eleuthera." We and many of the signatories to the letter have decades of experience living on Eleuthera and working at Lighthouse Point. This group has studied the natural environment around all of Eleuthera extensively, and their unparalleled biological knowledge of this special place should be an integral element of a credible environmental review of such a large scale project, especially one involving major construction in a proposed Marine Protected Area.

In your letter, you state that Disney has already assembled a team of top experts to examine all of the environmental issues associated with the proposed project and that the Environmental Impact Assessment is almost complete. We were disappointed not to have been contacted by them. We are also not aware of any of their field research activities or consultations with other scientists with relevant expertise. Furthermore, there is no publicly available information about the scope of the EIA nor about the qualifications of the scientists and professionals involved -- which one would expect on such a project and from a company that takes its environmental commitments seriously.

We welcome a meeting with you and your EIA team leaders to discuss the review and how we can ensure that it is performed to the highest possible international standard. With that said, we would like to address how we can contribute our knowledge and expertise. In anticipation of this

conversation, we would appreciate if you could provide us with as much detail as possible on the scope and status of your review.

Also, because we too want the discussion about Lighthouse Point to be based on scientific facts, please specify “the wildly speculative and misinformed rhetoric being shared by those who oppose the project” which your response seems to imply that we had relied on in our letter. We are eager to review with you ways to assure that we and other concerned scientists and citizens are not misled by any misinformation (from whatever the source) in weighing decisions on the future of such an important area.

We also encourage you to talk with the organizations in the “Last Chance for Lighthouse Point” campaign, which is led by five of the foremost Bahamian environmental organizations. Together they have more than a century of combined experience protecting Bahamian natural environments. These organizations bring extensive experience and local insight into Bahamian environmental protection -- just as valuable as the inputs you have sought from other stakeholders. The organizations have repeatedly offered to work with you on a world-class EIA of the project and the consideration of cooperation with citizen groups and communities in South Eleuthera on sustainable alternatives. We cannot imagine that Disney would proceed this far in consideration of a major project in the United States without a meeting with this environmental community.

As noted above, perhaps most concerning is that your response chose to ignore climate change and Marine Protected Areas. Climate change poses serious and intensifying threats to The Bahamas, and Marine Protected Areas such as the one proposed at Lighthouse Point serve a critical role in the mitigation of its impacts. MPAs in general, and Lighthouse Point in particular, are essential to the resiliency of our oceans already under immense pressure.

In fact, since we sent the November 8th letter, we have become aware of a recent study that indicates that The Bahamas is at particular risk from sea level rise. In 2018, the Interamerican Development Bank released a study conducted by Climate Central scientists that [uses advanced models to assess the impacts of sea level rise](#). The new models predict that the costs of sea level rise will likely be significantly more severe than previously predicted. The study indicates that “The Bahamas confront by far the greatest proportional threat” in the Caribbean region. By 2050, The Bahamas can be expected to experience more frequent and severe flooding -- .5 meters above high tide -- a result of sea level rise. South Eleuthera is identified as a vulnerable area.

The Bahamas is a nation already particularly at risk from hurricanes and tropical storms. Advanced Global Climate Models predict increasing intensity and frequency of storms, specifically in the Caribbean. The devastation caused by Hurricane Dorian makes even more imperative that decisions on development projects take into account this new reality, especially in such vulnerable areas. We hope your review will include an assessment of the effects of Hurricane Dorian on your existing facilities at Castaway Island.

We assume that Disney's environmental review of the proposed project will take into account sea level rise and other climate change impacts. How will the potential for more intense hurricanes and storm surges be factored into the decision as to whether this is an appropriate site for a cruise ship port? Will the EIA consider whether or not the proposed cruise port will exacerbate climate change or decrease ocean resiliency? How does the prospect of more sea level rise affect the economics of the project and the consideration of alternative sites? All of these are critical questions that must be addressed by the EIA.

The world and Disney can no longer afford to deny or ignore the realities of a changing climate and a deteriorating ocean. Disney has an opportunity to change course here and to work with us and the Bahamian environmental community to chart a route to a more sustainable future.

Sincerely,



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cc:

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