

LUIS V. GUTIERREZ

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**Congress of the United States**  
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BORDER SECURITY, AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

April 6, 2011

Edwin Muñiz  
Field Supervisor  
Caribbean Ecological Services  
Boqueron Field Office  
Fish & Wildlife Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 491  
Boqueron, PR 00622

Dear Mr. Muñiz:

I am writing to personally commend you and your colleagues in the Boqueron Field Office at the Fish & Wildlife Service for your thorough review of the Vía Verde natural gas pipeline project in Puerto Rico. As one of the largest construction projects on the Island in decades, it is vitally important that the regulatory agencies charged with protecting the wellbeing of the Puerto Rican people and the Island's environmental resources conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the project. In this respect, the staff members of the Boqueron Field Office have demonstrated their uncompromising commitment to the public good.

On at least two occasions, your office sent letters to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers highlighting the potential harm to animal and plant species that could result if the Vía Verde natural gas pipeline were constructed as planned by the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA). Because of your concerns and those expressed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, on December 22, 2010 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers decided to hold the Vía Verde project in abeyance until all legal obligations have been met and the issues raised have been adequately addressed.

Unfortunately, on April 1, 2011 the Caribbean office of the EPA, which had previously found major deficiencies in PREPA's permit application, determined that PREPA had satisfied a majority of the EPA's concerns and lifted its recommendation to suspend the project. However, the EPA has yet to clarify how it arrived at its decision, what new information was provided by PREPA, or whether it allowed opposition groups an equal opportunity to express their disapproval of the pipeline.

The EPA's tacit approval notwithstanding, I believe serious problems remain that could prove devastating to Puerto Rico if the pipeline is constructed. I hope that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will agree that the best way to protect Puerto Rican animal and plant species is to continue to insist that potential hazards be adequately addressed in a transparent process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Luis V. Gutierrez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "L" and "G".

Luis V. Gutierrez  
Member of Congress