

Memorandum



Date: June 25, 2026

To: Honorable Chairman Anthony Rodriguez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Daniella Levine Cava
Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniella Levine Cava". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Subject: Intent to Pursue Transfer of County-Controlled Lands at the Dade-Collier
Training and Transition Airport (TNT) for Everglades Restoration and Permanent
Conservation

I write to formally notify the Board of County Commissioners of the Administration's intent to evaluate and identify an appropriate process for the sale and transfer of all County-controlled lands associated with the Dade-Collier Training and Transition Airport (TNT) to the National Park Service (NPS) and other authorized Everglades restoration partners for incorporation into the Central Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

Following a comprehensive review of the facility's long-term operational viability, environmental context, and strategic value to Miami-Dade County, the Administration has determined that the TNT facility is no longer operationally or economically optimal for continued County ownership and operation. The facility's remote location, limited aviation utility, significant maintenance obligations, and increasingly constrained compatibility with surrounding conservation lands warrant consideration of a transition to a permanent conservation and restoration use.

Additionally, the facility's location within the Greater Everglades ecosystem has historically limited the range and intensity of aviation activities that can be appropriately conducted at the site. Operations have been limited to military exercises and pilot training due to potential impacts associated with aviation activity adjacent to sensitive wetlands and critical wildlife habitat. These factors have further diminished the facility's long-term strategic value as an aviation asset.

As the Board is aware, the TNT site is currently being utilized as the location of the "Alligator Alcatraz" immigration detention facility. This Administration has consistently expressed serious reservations regarding the use of County-proximate lands for large-scale immigration detention operations. The facility's location – immediately adjacent to one of the most ecologically sensitive ecosystems in the Western Hemisphere – creates substantial environmental concerns, threatens both decades of restoration efforts and significant federal and state investment, and is fundamentally inconsistent with Miami-Dade County's longstanding commitments to environmental stewardship and sustainable land management.

As part of the County's ongoing efforts to ensure strict environmental oversight, the Director of the Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM), joined by the Deputy Director, Pollution Regulation Chief, and High Risk/Compliance Manager, attempted to conduct an on-site inspection of the TNT facility yesterday. Given the site's proximity to sensitive wetlands and critical Everglades habitat, the team sought to evaluate environmental conditions and potential operational risks, but were restricted access to the site due to an ongoing security sweep. The visit, and subsequent inspections, reaffirm the ecological importance of these lands and the Administration's position that their highest and best long term use is restoration, conservation, and permanent protection within the Greater Everglades ecosystem.

The Everglades is a natural and cultural treasure of global significance. It serves as the primary source of drinking water for millions of South Floridians, supports a vast array of unique and endangered species, sustains critical economic sectors including tourism and recreation, and provides natural flood protection and climate resilience benefits to our communities. For decades, Miami-Dade County has been a committed

partner in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), and numerous regional initiatives designed to restore historic water flows, improve water quality, reconnect habitat corridors, and strengthen the ecological integrity of the Greater Everglades ecosystem.

The eventual closure and decommissioning of the Alligator Alcatraz facility would present a historic opportunity to permanently protect these lands and contribute meaningfully to one of the most ambitious environmental restoration efforts in the nation. The Administration believes that returning these lands to conservation and restoration purposes would represent a significant contribution to both regional ecological recovery and the long-term sustainability of Miami-Dade County.

Accordingly, upon decommissioning of the detention facility and resolution of any applicable operational obligations, the Administration intends to pursue the sale and transfer of the underlying County-controlled lands to the National Park Service or other appropriate Everglades restoration entities for permanent protection and integration into the Everglades restoration footprint. To accomplish this objective, the Administration will work closely with the County Attorney's Office, federal and state agencies, environmental restoration partners, and other stakeholders to identify and implement the most appropriate legal mechanism for transfer. Such mechanisms may include, but are not limited to, conservation easements, deed restrictions, intergovernmental agreements, land exchanges, or fee-simple conveyance.

The Administration's objective is clear: to ensure these lands are permanently removed from future detention, industrial, or intensive commercial development and dedicated in perpetuity to ecological restoration, habitat preservation, and environmental protection. In addition to the environmental benefits, the transfer of these lands would reduce future County liabilities associated with maintaining and managing a remote aviation facility with limited strategic utility while creating opportunities to leverage federal restoration funding and strengthen partnerships with agencies responsible for Everglades restoration and management.

Over the coming months, the Administration will conduct the necessary legal, environmental, operational, and financial analyses associated with this initiative and will return to the Board with recommendations regarding any actions requiring Board approval. The Administration will also engage with federal and state restoration agencies, Tribal governments, environmental organizations, and community stakeholders to ensure a transparent and collaborative process.

The Everglades is inseparable from Miami-Dade County's identity, economy, water supply, and future resilience. By pursuing the permanent protection and restoration of these lands, we have an opportunity to advance a legacy project that will benefit our residents and the environment for generations to come.

I look forward to working collaboratively with the Board as we evaluate this important initiative and explore opportunities to further our shared commitment to environmental stewardship and Everglades restoration.

Should you have any questions, please contact Tomas Alcala, Deputy Chief of Staff at Tomas.Alcala@miamidade.gov.

- c: Geri Bonzon-Keenan, County Attorney
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