

Friends *of the* Everglades

— Founded by Marjory Stoneman Douglas in 1969 —

Sent via electronic mail to GovernorRon.DeSantis@eog.myflorida.com

June 23, 2025

Gov. Ron DeSantis
Office of Governor Ron DeSantis
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Re: “Alligator Alcatraz” migrant detention center proposal

Dear Gov. DeSantis:

Friends of the Everglades was founded in 1969 by Marjory Stoneman Douglas in response to plans to construct the so-called Everglades Jetport — a massive airport proposed for the heart of the Everglades. A 1969 report warned the project could “destroy the South Florida ecosystem and thus the Everglades National Park.” Fortunately, the project was stopped before irreversible harm was done because thousands of Floridians rose up to oppose it.

Now we face another threat to this fragile ecosystem in the form of “Alligator Alcatraz,” a proposed migrant detention center facility on the same site, now the single-runway Dade County Training and Transition Airport (TNT). Now, as in 1969, Friends of the Everglades strongly opposes the construction of a facility destined to inflict significant damage on the Everglades ecosystem, and we ask you to do the same and halt the state’s attempt to acquire and develop the site.

We are aware that the Florida Division of Emergency Management sent a letter of intent to Miami-Dade and Collier counties (citing Executive Order 23-03, as extended by Executive Order 25-103, and Agency Emergency Order 2023-001), seeking to purchase the site for \$20 million. However, there are numerous concerns about the potential impact of the acquisition and subsequent development which have not yet been addressed. The wetlands land cover on the site is extraordinarily high at 96.6% of the total area, according to a May 2025 appraisal of the property conducted for Miami-Dade County.



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Friends of the Everglades is deeply concerned that building a detention center — along with the necessary infrastructure, and the likelihood of future development — poses an unacceptable and unnecessary risk to on-site wetlands, nearby Big Cypress National Preserve and Everglades National Park. Negative environmental impacts would include wetland degradation, building construction (even if temporary), water and sewer facilities, light pollution, traffic and emergency services.

To be clear: Allowing the “Alligator Alcatraz” proposal to move forward would signify a reversal of the DeSantis Administration’s stated commitment to Everglades restoration.

Coupled with the Southland rock mine proposal for 8,600 acres in the Everglades Agricultural Area, it’s clear the Everglades face a new round of threats, which could undermine the billions of taxpayer dollars already invested in saving the “River of Grass.”

We urge you: Don’t make the same mistake Florida avoided 55 years ago. Stand with thousands of Floridians against efforts to pave the Everglades — and be part of the fight to save it, instead.

Kill the “Alligator Alcatraz” proposal.

For the Everglades,



Eve Samples
Executive Director
Friends of the Everglades

cc:
Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier
Senate President Ben Albritton
House Speaker Daniel Perez
Sen. Kathleen Passidomo

