



EVERGLADES COALITION

October 22, 2024

Mayor Maria Sachs, Palm Beach County Commission
301 N. Olive Ave, Suite 1201
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

RE: Support of Conservation Easements on Natural Areas

Dear Mayor Sachs and Members of the Palm Beach County Commission,

We write on behalf of the Everglades Coalition, an alliance of nearly 60 conservation organizations dedicated to the protection and restoration of America's Everglades, to express our strong support for the proposal to permanently protect Palm Beach County's Natural Areas through the granting of conservation easements to trusted land conservancy organizations. This forward-thinking initiative will ensure that the County's investment in acquiring and preserving conservation land is safeguarded, as intended, for future generations.

Palm Beach County has invested over \$500 million in acquiring and preserving 31,800 acres of environmentally sensitive land through its Natural Areas program. These Natural Areas are an integral part of the greater Everglades ecosystem, providing critical habitat for wildlife and endangered species, improving water and air quality, providing flood control, providing recreational opportunities, as well as improving the mental and physical health of many County residents and visitors. Granting conservation easements that perpetually restrict development and the types of uses allowed on County owned Natural Areas to a conservation land trust will ensure these lands remain intact and preserved for future generations.

Recent proposals to develop state parks have demonstrated that few conservation areas are truly protected from the ongoing threat of development. The County's intent in acquiring Natural Areas was to secure their preservation, not just today but forever. Granting conservation easements to a third party land conservancy organization would provide the additional, lasting protection needed to ensure these lands remain preserved for future generations.

We urge you to take this vital step to secure the future of Palm Beach County's Natural Areas. Thank you for your leadership in protecting our natural resources.

Sincerely,

Mark Perry, Co-Chair

Kelly Cox, Co-Chair

The Everglades Coalition is a 501(c)3 alliance of local, state, and national conservation organizations dedicated to the full protection and restoration of America's Everglades.

evergladescoalition.org