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## **Miami-Dade Mayor's Office Recommends Canceling Miami Wilds Deal**

### ***Water Park Development Threatens Endangered Species Habitat***

MIAMI — The Miami-Dade County Mayor's office issued a memorandum today recommending that the county commissioners rescind the development lease agreement with Miami Wilds LLC for a proposed water park development in an environmentally sensitive area at Zoo Miami.

The memo also recommends the withdrawal of a commission agenda item regarding the project that is set for a vote at the Dec. 12 county commission meeting.

The memorandum from Mayor Daniella Levine Cava's office concludes that the development lease agreement with Miami Wilds LLC will likely need to be rescinded to best safeguard the county's interests and the community's needs and objectives.

"We're thrilled to support Mayor Levine Cava's recommendation to rescind the lease for Miami Wilds," said Mike Daulton, executive director at Bat Conservation International. "We trust the county commissioners will echo this sentiment by voting the project down and protecting the critically endangered Florida bonneted bat and Miami's natural assets. We'll be watching closely on December 12 and expecting the commissioners to do the right thing for the environment and Miami-Dade taxpayers."

"We're so grateful to Mayor Cava for standing up for the environment with her recommendation to the county commission to rescind the lease," said Tropical Audubon Society senior conservation director Lauren Jonaitis. "We fervently hope the commissioners follow the mayor's lead. It will be great to begin working together again to permanently protect these environmentally sensitive lands."

Today's memo comes weeks before a scheduled federal court hearing and decision on conservation groups' [claims](#) that the National Park Service violated environmental laws when it released land-use restrictions on the environmentally sensitive site.

The memo explains that if the court grants the environmentalists relief in that case, an action that the County believes the court is likely to take, the development lease

agreement will need to be rescinded and terminated. The memo also outlines the developer's alleged failure to fulfill multiple contractual obligations to the County.

The mayor recommended withdrawing the agenda item to amend the development lease agreement with Miami Wilds LLC.

"The mayor's recommendation gives me hope for Miami-Dade's precious pine rocklands and endangered creatures," said attorney Elise Bennett, Florida and Caribbean director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "It's not too late for the commission to turn a new leaf and nurture the community's natural heritage into a truly unique asset for residents and visitors alike."

"With so many rare species at stake, this is each commissioner's opportunity to show the citizens of Miami-Dade County whether they're for the environment or against it," said Dennis Olle, president of the Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association. "We're very happy to support the mayor in her recommendation to rescind the lease with Miami Wilds and will be looking to the commissioners to make the same decision."

The National Park Service's unlawful release of land-use restrictions paved the way for the proposed Miami Wilds theme park, retail and parking development in and around environmentally sensitive habitat for endangered and threatened species. The theme park and retail development threaten the endangered Florida bonneted bat, endangered Miami tiger beetle, endangered Bartram's scrub-hairstreak, several endangered plants, and the proposed endangered Rim Rock crowned snake, as well as our globally imperiled pine rocklands.

*Founded in 1982, Bat Conservation International is a global conservation organization dedicated to ending bat extinctions. Bat Conservation International works worldwide to conserve caves, restore critical habitats in danger, and ensure the survival of the world's bat species. For more information, visit [batcon.org](http://batcon.org).*

*Tropical Audubon Society is a science- and solutions-based nonprofit conservation organization driven by its grassroots community and principles of equity, diversity and inclusion. Tropical Audubon's Legacy is to protect, conserve and restore South Florida ecosystems by working closely with local governments and other stakeholders, and by fostering wise stewardship of native habitats, birds and other indigenous wildlife.*

*The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.7 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.*

*The Miami Blue Chapter serves southeastern Florida, specifically Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. We are a membership-based, not-for-profit organization working to increase the public enjoyment and conservation of butterflies. The Chapter is named*

*after one of the rarest butterflies in North America, which used to (and one day will again) call Miami home.*