Media Advisory, September 5, 2023

Contact: Ana Lima, Tropical Audubon Society, (917) 921-9291, [communications@tropicalaudubon.org](mailto:communications@tropicalaudubon.org)

Kathryn Slater, Bat Conservation International, (512) 327-9721 x 463, [kslater@batcon.org](mailto:kslater@batcon.org)

Elise Bennett, Center for Biological Diversity, (727) 755-6950, [ebennett@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:ebennett@biologicaldiversity.org)

# Miami-Dade Commissioners to Vote on Future of Miami Wilds Development

# *Miami Wilds Is Bad Deal, Threatens Endangered Species*

MIAMI— Following a [lawsuit](https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/lawsuit-challenges-federal-failure-to-protect-rare-wildlife-from-south-florida-development-2023-02-08/?_gl=1*1i5vqkc*_gcl_au*MTE0MDA5Nzc3MC4xNjg2MzI4Mzky) filed by conservation groups, the Board of County Commissioners for Miami-Dade County will meet Wednesday, Sept. 6, to vote on the future of the Miami Wilds theme park, retail, hotel and parking lot development. The development threatens several endangered species and their critical habitat on and around the proposed project area.

The commission will decide whether to agree to rescind a National Park Service land-use agreement with the county that was unlawfully executed without required environmental reviews. The commission will also vote on whether to approve new terms for a lease agreement and parking concession agreement with Miami Wilds, LLC.

“The proposed development is bad for Miami-Dade County taxpayers and the environmentally sensitive lands in this area,” said Lauren Jonaitis, senior conservation director at Tropical Audubon Society. “It is truly a financial drain on the county and is proposed on land that is considered vital to endangered species and the largest and most biodiverse fragment of critically endangered pine rocklands outside of Everglades National Park. It is time for the commission to do the right thing and put an end to this ill-conceived project.”

“I’m counting on the county commissioners to use their opportunity on Sept. 6 to put the brakes on this deeply flawed project,” said Mike Daulton, executive director at Bat Conservation International. “The Miami Wilds development is environmentally destructive, bad for Miami families, and puts taxpayers on the hook to subsidize a project that is clearly not in their interest. We need the county to stand up against one of the worst projects they’ve considered in years.”

“The county must vote to rescind the National Park Service’s unlawful decision,” said Elise Bennett, Florida and Caribbean director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “The Park Service utterly ignored devastating harms to endangered species living on and around the proposed development site. Both the agency and county must carefully consider these threats and decide whether it really makes sense to greenlight a development in this incredibly unique and environmentally sensitive area.”

**What:** Miami-Dade County Commission meeting and vote to: (1) rescind a National Park Service land-use agreement unlawfully executed without required environmental reviews; and (2) approve a new lease agreement and parking concession agreement terms with Miami Wilds, LLC.

**When:** Wednesday, Sept. 6, at 9:30 a.m.

**Where:** Stephen P. Clark Government Center, 111 NW First St., Miami, Florida, 33128 in the Miami-Dade Commission Chambers on the second floor (watch virtually at <https://www.miamidade.gov/global/webcasting/home.page>).

**Who:** Miami-Dade County Commissioners, residents and representatives from Tropical Audubon Society, Bat Conservation International and Center for Biological Diversity.

**Background**

Miami-Dade County and Miami Wilds, LLC, plan to build a theme park, retail area, hotel and acres of associated parking lots in an area that hosts critical habitat for endangered [Florida bonneted bats](https://www.batcon.org/our-work/endangered-species-interventions/florida-bonneted-bat/), Rim Rock crowned snakes, [Miami tiger beetles](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/invertebrates/Miami_tiger_beetle/index.html?_gl=1*1796855*_gcl_au*MTE0MDA5Nzc3MC4xNjg2MzI4Mzky#:~:text=The%20Miami%20tiger%20beetle%20%E2%80%94%20a,Heights%20area%20of%20Miami%2C%20Florida.), [Bartram’s scrub-hairstreak](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/invertebrates/Bartrams_scrub-hairstreak_butterfly/index.html?_gl=1*67zae3*_gcl_au*MTE0MDA5Nzc3MC4xNjg2MzI4Mzky), [Florida leafwing](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/invertebrates/Florida_leafwing_butterfly/index.html?_gl=1*1796855*_gcl_au*MTE0MDA5Nzc3MC4xNjg2MzI4Mzky) butterflies and several endangered plants.

The development threatens to cause cascading effects on imperiled species and surrounding ecosystems, destroying dark, open foraging habitat for bats and hampering natural fire needed to support ecosystem health of the critically endangered [pine rocklands](https://tropicalaudubon.org/pine-rocklands), which are home to dozens of rare and endangered animals, plants and insects found nowhere else on Earth.

*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.*

*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*](https://www.batcon.org/)*.*

*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.*