

Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Agreement for Acquisition of 20,000 Acres of Critical Everglades Wetlands

On January 15, 2020, in News Releases, by Staff

This purchase would be the largest wetland acquisition in a decade and will permanently save the land from oil drilling

Fort Lauderdale, Fla. – Today, Governor Ron DeSantis announced the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has reached an agreement with Kanter Real Estate LLC., that will allow for the purchase of 20,000 acres of critical wetlands in Water Conservation Area 3 (WCA 3) within the Everglades Protection Area located in Broward County. This acquisition would represent the largest wetland acquisition in a decade.

“One of my administration’s top environmental priorities has been expediting Everglades restoration,” **said Governor DeSantis.** “Today we take another step in the right direction by reaching this agreement between DEP and Kanter Real Estate that will allow for the purchase of 20,000 acres of critical wetlands. This significant purchase will permanently save these lands from oil drilling. I’m proud of our progress but also recognize this is just the beginning. I will continue to fight every day for the Everglades and Florida’s environment.”



Photo Credit: Governor’s Press Office

The Kanter property is in the heart of the Everglades in WCA 3, which is part of the Everglades Protection Area – one of the most important wetland systems in the Everglades ecosystem. With this acquisition, there would be nearly 600,000 acres of wetlands in WCA 3 that would be permanently protected in public ownership for restoration and recreation.

“This acquisition will help ensure that the largest contiguous wetland in the state remains in a more natural state for future generations,” **said DEP Secretary Noah Valenstein.** “Having these wetlands in public ownership supports expedited restoration work on the EAA Reservoir and other critical Everglades projects, provides recreational opportunities for residents and visitors and protects the wildlife habitat of more 60 endangered and threatened species.”

“Under the leadership of Governor DeSantis, 2020 is already starting out as a banner year for Everglades restoration,” **said South Florida Water Management District Governing Board Chairman Chauncey Goss.** “These wetlands are critical to the health of the Everglades and now we can guarantee that there will be no oil and gas drilling on 20,000 acres in the heart of the Everglades.”

“We applaud Governor DeSantis for his swift action in protecting these lands. This is yet another demonstration of his commitment to restoring America’s Everglades and ensuring that we achieve more

now for Florida's environment," **said The Everglades Foundation CEO Eric Eikenberg.** "We also stand in strong support of the Governor's request for sustained funding at the \$625 million level annually for the Everglades, springs, and clean water. Recurring funding is critical to expediting and completing key Everglades restoration projects like the Everglades reservoir that will send an average of 120 billion gallons of clean freshwater south to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay, reducing unwanted discharges to the East and West coasts."

"Florida is making a hefty investment in the largest ecosystem restoration project in the world to ensure that clean water is available to rehydrate America's Everglades," **said Audubon Florida Executive Director Julie Wraithmell.** "Drilling for oil in the Water Conservation Area is incompatible with our commitment to restore this fragile ecosystem. This land is part of our water supply. We applaud Governor DeSantis in his resolve to acquire this land and place it under protection in perpetuity."

"Yet another step forward," **said Captains for Clean Water Executive Director Daniel Andrews.** "Stopping oil and gas drilling in the Everglades builds on the progress Governor DeSantis is bringing to Everglades restoration and water quality in Florida. This vision demonstrates that, with leadership and direction, saving the Everglades is possible."

"This is fantastic news for the Everglades and the people who have stayed in the battle to halt the project for years. When the courthouse door closed because there was no viable appeal, Governor DeSantis didn't go on social media and grandstand," **said The Everglades Trust Executive Director Kimberly Mitchell.** "He didn't use it as a fundraising opportunity. He rolled up his sleeves and got to work figuring it out. This Governor keeps plowing through the morass that has confounded every Governor before him. We have never doubted the sincerity of his commitment. What I really want to know, though, is does the man ever sleep?!"

"Governor DeSantis should be praised for today's announcement," **said Everglades Law Center Executive Director Lisa Interlandi.** "He's taken swift action to protect one of our state's most critical natural resources from oil and gas drilling. This action will come as a huge relief to the millions of Floridians who rely on the Everglades as their source of drinking water."

"Protecting and restoring the greater Everglades region is critical to the health of Everglades National Park," **said Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Park Superintendent Pedro Ramos.** "We applaud Governor DeSantis' relentless commitment to ensure we leave the Everglades in great shape for generations ahead."

"NPCA is thrilled that the Kanter property can now be acquired for restoration, and will be protected from oil and gas exploration," **said National Parks Conservation Association Senior Everglades Program Manager Cara Capp.** "Floridians know that oil drilling and exploration in the Greater Everglades is dangerous and must be stopped – it threatens our water supply and fragile ecosystems, especially in the face of climate change impacts. Today's announcement is a victory for Everglades National Park. We applaud Governor DeSantis for neutralizing this threat and negotiating a positive outcome that will benefit the Everglades and all Floridians."

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