

MEMORANDUM

RTRC
Agenda Item No. 3(D)

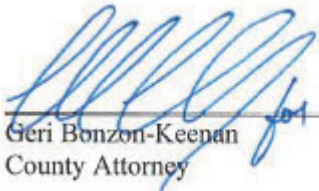
TO: Honorable Chairman Anthony Rodriguez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

DATE: June 9, 2026

FROM: Geri Bonzon-Keenan
County Attorney

SUBJECT: Resolution approving acceptance of donation of \$925,000.00 from the Center for Biological Diversity, Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition, South Florida Wildlands Association, and Tropical Audobon Society to the Miami-Dade County Environmentally Endangered Lands Management Trust Fund for the management and acquisition of pine rocklands pursuant to section 24-50.5

The accompanying resolution was prepared by the Department of Environmental Resources Management and placed on the agenda at the request of Prime Sponsor Commissioner Raquel A. Regalado.



Geri Bonzon-Keenan
County Attorney

GBK/wm

MDC001

Memorandum



Date: July 21, 2026

To: Honorable Chairman Anthony Rodriguez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Daniella Levine Cava *Daniella Levine Cava*
Mayor

Subject: Resolution Approving Conservation Organizations Donation to EEL Program for
Pine Rocklands Acquisition and Maintenance

Executive Summary

This item seeks approval from the Board of County Commissioners (Board) for the Miami-Dade County Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program to accept a donation of \$925,000.00 from the Center for Biological Diversity, Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition, South Florida Wildlands Association, and Tropical Audubon Society ("Conservation Organizations").

The donation is expressly intended for the acquisition or management of undeveloped pine rocklands in Miami-Dade County. Pine Rocklands are a globally critically imperiled type of forest that supports federally protected species. The EEL Program, implemented by the Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM), manages over 1,636 acres of pine rocklands and has over 415 acres of pine rockland habitat currently on its Acquisition List.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board adopt the attached resolution approving the acceptance of the \$925,000.00 donation from the Conservation Organizations to the EEL Program, for use in the management and acquisition of pine rocklands.

Scope

The EEL Program's scope is Countywide in nature as projects are located throughout the County.

Delegation of Authority

This item does not provide for delegation of authority to the County Mayor or County Mayor's designee.

Fiscal Impact/Funding Source

Approving the acceptance of the donation will result in a positive fiscal impact of \$925,000.00 to the County's EEL Program.

The funding source is a donation from the Conservation Organizations. The funds are expressly earmarked for the acquisition or management of pine rocklands in Miami-Dade County, supplementing existing funds designated for this purpose. No County match is required for this donated amount. The formal commitment from these organizations is further detailed in the donation letter attached hereto as Attachment A.

These funds will be deposited into the EEL Management Trust Fund but may be subsequently transferred from the EEL Management Trust Fund into the EEL Acquisition Trust Fund, or vice versa, by the Board of County Commissioners pursuant to the Code and any other applicable law. The terms of the donation allow these funds to be held in either of the two EEL Trust Funds.

Track Record/Monitor

The EEL Program Manager within the Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM), Janet Gil, will monitor the activities related to conservation lands acquisition and management.

Background

The historic loss, fragmentation, and degradation of native wetland and forest communities in Miami-Dade County has been well recognized. In May 1990, with the knowledge that remaining wetland and forest communities were endangered, the electorate of Miami-Dade County authorized the County to levy an ad valorem tax for two years to create the EEL Program and Trust Fund. The purpose of the EEL Program is to acquire, preserve, enhance, restore, conserve, and maintain environmentally endangered lands for the benefit of present and future generations. The County, in partnership with the South Florida Water Management District, the State of Florida, and other funding partners, has acquired approximately 24,217 acres of land in Miami-Dade County since the inception of the EEL Program through November 30, 2025.

The EEL Program is responsible for managing over 29,000 acres of natural area preserves, which currently include more than 1,636 acres of critically important pine rocklands. Pine rockland habitat is designated a Globally Critically Imperiled Natural Community by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) and is rich with rare and endangered flora and fauna. Numerous species endemic to South Florida are found in pine rocklands. Pine rocklands, like other upland forests in South Florida, serve as important stops on the Atlantic Flyway for migratory bird, provide crucial environmental services and support over 20 federally protected species. Pine Rocklands are characterized by an open canopy of South Florida Slash Pine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*) over a rich, patchy understory. Its structure is heavily influenced by the presence of exposed oolitic limestone bedrock, known as pinnacle rock, which limits soil development and creates features like solution holes. The diverse shrub layer, composed of over 100 species of palms and hardwoods like saw palmetto and silver palm, primarily derives from the tropical flora of the West Indies. The community is further defined by a highly varied herbaceous layer of perennial grasses and forbs, including numerous species endemic to the region such as such as Deltoid Spurge (*Chamaesyce deltoidea*), Carter's Small-flowered Flax (*Linum carteri* var. *carteri*), and Florida Brickell-bush (*Brickellia mosieri*).

The natural process most crucial to the pine rockland's survival is regular fire, historically occurring every three to seven years, which prevents its succession into a denser rockland hammock. Fire maintains the open canopy, controls the encroachment of woody tropical hardwoods, and sustains the high herbaceous diversity. Without prescribed fire, which is often complicated by surrounding urban development, the ecosystem declines, leading to a loss of ground-layer species. This unique habitat, which is crucial for several federally listed animals like the Miami Tiger Beetle and Florida Leafwing Butterfly and rare invertebrates, has been drastically reduced by urban development and agriculture. Management is further complicated by natural

disturbances like hurricanes and sea-level rise, as well as the constant threat of invasive plants, which must be controlled through a combination of fire and other methods.

Despite the EEL Program's success, over 415 additional acres of this unique habitat remain on the EEL Acquisition List, identified for potential purchase and inclusion in the preserve system. To bolster these conservation efforts, a coalition of conservation organizations, the Center for Biological Diversity, Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition, South Florida Wildlands Association, and Tropical Audubon Society, have collectively committed to making a generous donation of \$925,000.00 to the EEL Program. This commitment is formally documented in the donation letter included as Attachment A. This financial gift is expressly earmarked for the acquisition and maintenance of Pine Rocklands within Miami-Dade County. This resolution is therefore being presented to the Board to formally approve the acceptance of this significant donation, ensuring the funds can be used to protect and restore this endangered and biodiverse habitat, supplementing the County's existing conservation funding.

Conclusion

Pursuant to Section 24-50.5(1)(b)(ii) and (2)(b)(ii) of the County Code, the EEL Acquisition Trust Fund and the EEL Management Trust Fund are authorized to receive monies from foundation or private grants and donations; therefore, the attached resolution approving the acceptance of the \$925,000.00 donation is recommended for approval.



Roy Coley
Chief Utilities and Regulatory Services Officer



December 18, 2025

Janet Gil
Program Director
Environmentally Endangered Lands Program
Miami-Dade County

Re: Donation to Miami-Dade County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program for the Conservation of Pine Rocklands

Dear Ms. Gil,

On behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity, Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition, South Florida Wildlands Association, and Tropical Audubon Society, we are pleased to convey \$925,000 to Miami-Dade County's Environmentally Endangered Lands Program for the acquisition and maintenance of undeveloped pine rocklands in Miami-Dade County.

Pine rocklands are a precious part of Miami-Dade County's environmental heritage. As critically endangered as they are biodiverse, these rare forests support more than 20 federally protected species, including the largest known population of endangered Florida bonneted bats and the only two known populations of endangered Miami tiger beetle. Pine rocklands also provide relief from urban heat, recreational and educational opportunities, and other important environmental services to the people of Miami-Dade County.

The Environmentally Endangered Lands Program has been a strong and capable steward of the county's pine rocklands, currently managing more than 1,630 acres for the benefit of the public and targeting hundreds more for conservation, restoration, and stewardship. We hope this donation will substantially further the Program's critical work to support the long-term protection, restoration, and management of Miami-Dade County's exceptional pine rocklands.

Sincerely,

Elise Bennett
Florida & Caribbean Director
Center for Biological Diversity

Matthew Schwartz
Executive Director
South Florida Wildlands Association

Lauren Jonaitis
Executive Director
Tropical Audubon Society

Al Sunshine
President
Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition



MEMORANDUM

(Revised)

TO: Honorable Chairman Anthony Rodriguez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

DATE: July 21, 2026

FROM: 
Gen Bonzon-Keenan
County Attorney

SUBJECT: Agenda Item No.

Please note any items checked.

- _____ **“3-Day Rule” for committees applicable if raised**
- _____ **6 weeks required between first reading and public hearing**
- _____ **4 weeks notification to municipal officials required prior to public hearing**
- _____ **Decreases revenues or increases expenditures without balancing budget**
- _____ **Budget required**
- _____ **Statement of fiscal impact required**
- _____ **Statement of social equity required**
- _____ **Ordinance creating a new board requires detailed County Mayor’s report for public hearing**
- _____ **No committee review**
- _____ **Requires more than a majority vote (i.e., 2/3’s present ____, 2/3 membership ____, 3/5’s ____, unanimous ____, majority plus one ____, CDMP 7 votes (majority of membership) ____, CDMP 2/3 members present but not less than 7 votes (majority of membership) ____, CDMP 9 votes (2/3 membership) _____) to approve**
- _____ **Current information regarding funding source, index code and available balance, and available capacity (if debt is contemplated) required**

Approved _____ Mayor
Veto _____
Override _____

Agenda Item No.

RESOLUTION NO. _____

RESOLUTION APPROVING ACCEPTANCE OF DONATION OF \$925,000.00 FROM THE CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, MIAMI PINE ROCKLANDS COALITION, SOUTH FLORIDA WILDLANDS ASSOCIATION, AND TROPICAL AUDOBON SOCIETY TO THE MIAMI-DADE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTALLY ENDANGERED LANDS MANAGEMENT TRUST FUND FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND ACQUISITION OF PINE ROCKLANDS PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-50.5

WHEREAS, this Board desires to accomplish the purposes outlined in the accompanying memorandum, a copy of which is incorporated herein by reference,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, that:

Section 1. The foregoing recitals are incorporated in this resolution and are approved.

Section 2. This Board hereby approves the acceptance of the \$925,000.00 donation from the Center for Biological Diversity, Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition, South Florida Wildlands Association, and Tropical Audubon Society to the Environmentally Endangered Lands Management Trust Fund, for use in the management and acquisition of pine rocklands in Miami-Dade County.

The foregoing resolution was offered by Commissioner _____, who moved its adoption. The motion was seconded by Commissioner _____ and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

Anthony Rodriguez, Chairman
Kionne L. McGhee, Vice Chairman
Marleine Bastien
Sen. René García
Roberto J. Gonzalez
Danielle Cohen Higgins
Natalie Milian Orbis
Micky Steinberg
Juan Carlos Bermudez
Oliver G. Gilbert, III
Keon Hardemon
Vicki L. Lopez
Raquel A. Regalado

The Chairperson thereupon declared this resolution duly passed and adopted this 21st day of July, 2026. This resolution shall become effective upon the earlier of (1) 10 days after the date of its adoption unless vetoed by the County Mayor, and if vetoed, shall become effective only upon an override by this Board, or (2) approval by the County Mayor of this resolution and the filing of this approval with the Clerk of the Board.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA
BY ITS BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

JUAN FERNANDEZ-BARQUIN, CLERK

By: _____
Deputy Clerk

Approved by County Attorney as
to form and legal sufficiency.



Cristina M. Rabionet