June 26, 2015

Re: Air show exhibition at Dade-Collier Training and Transition airport

Dear County Mayor and Commissioners:

On behalf of the Everglades Coalition and its 57 member organizations, we write to oppose the use of the Dade-Collier Training and Transition airport for a trade-style air show exhibition. The very idea of commercializing this facility flies in direct conflict with the original creation of America’s first National Preserve to protect the Big Cypress Swamp and the greater Everglades ecosystem.

Big Cypress National Preserve was established “to assure the preservation, conservation, and protection of the natural, scenic, hydrologic, floral and faunal, and recreational values of the Big Cypress Watershed in the State of Florida and to provide for the enhancement and public enjoyment thereof …” 16 U.S.C. § 698f(a). The preserve’s creation came about due to the valiant efforts of the hunting, off-road vehicle, and environmental communities banding together to thwart the detrimental and inappropriate airport development proposal in this environmentally sensitive area.

This proposal would undoubtedly bring significant long-term impacts to a remote, ecologically-sensitive area and result in pressure for further development. Structures, electricity, water and sewer, and emergency services would be necessary to serve work crews and large crowds drawn by aerospace machinery. Roadways would need to accommodate the equipment used to transport materials, equipment, and participants. Performance of the show itself carries risk of aerial bird collisions, jet fuel spills and exhaust releases, and noise impacts that will disrupt native wildlife, nesting birds, the endangered Florida panther, and tourists to the nearby Oasis Visitor’s Center.

We urge the County to put a stop to this idea before any more time or resources are wasted in planning efforts. Someone has tried to sell the County a jar of snake oil in contradiction to its responsibilities. From the 1960’s, the County committed to locate another site for the flight training activities and transfer the land in question back to the Department of Interior. However, since then the County has attempted to turn this unique natural area into a money maker in one way or
another, including rock mining and other incompatible activities – rather than seeking to protect this amazing place.

Any attempt to continue to develop the jetport as a commercial air show will be met with vehement opposition from the Everglades Coalition and its member organizations. Instead, we offer our assistance to the County in finding more suitable alternative training grounds and to protecting this unique place. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Cara Capp
National Co-Chair

Jason Totoiu
State Co-Chair