

FIU is committed to protecting natural resources

Re the March 7 editorial, Hands off our water: I would like to address a few key points regarding discussions with our partners to find a new site for the Miami-Dade County Fair & Exposition, which currently is located on land adjacent to our Modesto A. Maidique Campus.

Particularly, I'd like to emphasize that FIU has never proposed to move the Urban Development Boundary or pursue incompatible land use outside of it. This university has always been committed to protecting the natural resources of our region. Indeed, our faculty is made up of some of the foremost experts on Everglades restoration and protection. Our sole purpose has been to find an available and agreeable site for relocation of the fair, so that FIU may grow into the 86 acres the fair currently occupies, just south of FIU's campus. The Bird Drive Basin site also presents an opportunity to establish a new legacy park for area residents on the rest of the property.

The Bird Drive Basin property, located about six miles west of campus, was originally acquired by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) for the purpose of water management and conservation. As we explored — together with county and fair officials — 16 possible new locations for the fair, we learned that the SFWMD had placed the Bird Drive Basin property on the surplus land list. In November 2011, we began discussions with them about the possibility of relocating the fair to a section of that property.

We look forward to ongoing talks with Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez, county commissioners, state legislators and fair officials as well as a public process to find a win-win resolution that will allow this community's only public research university to grow, prosper and provide access while preserving the fair and protecting our precious natural resources.

-MARK B. ROSENBERG

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