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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0918

August 21, 2024

Office of Governor Ron DeSantis
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Dear Governor DeSantis and ARC members,

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) proposes expanding its Great Outdoors Initiative into Jonathan Dickinson State Park by opening nearly 1,000 acres of the park's 11,500 pristine acres of wilderness for the development of several golf courses.

My current understanding of the process is that the entirety of the decision to move forward with this development comes down to a vote by the members of FDEP's Acquisition and Restoration Council

(ARC). Ahead of the vote, the citizens of my community will have the opportunity to make their voices heard during a public comment meeting scheduled for Tuesday, August 27, 2024.

Currently, not one of the ARC's 7 voting members is scheduled to be in attendance at this meeting. Instead, a "subject matter expert" is slated to speak. This individual is not a member of the ARC and will not be casting a vote in favor or in opposition to moving the development proposal forward.

The absence of the ARC members at this public comment meeting will deprive them of the ability to hear from the actual public about the impact their decision will have on our community. It also gives the appearance of a box-checking exercise to citizens who deserve to have their voices heard by the actual decision-makers.

The proposal to open any state park in Florida for development is the first of its kind. It would be negligent for the ARC members to vote on this proposal without being eye-to-eye with the people actually impacted. The Treasure Coast and Palm Beach communities merit the attendance of every ARC member at the public meeting scheduled for August 27, 2024.

Please confirm the attendance of all ARC voting members for August 27 or offer a new date in the future for public comment where all ARC members will be in attendance to hear from the community and answer questions from the community.

Furthermore, we expect that ARC members will visit the site before any vote — so they are truly informed of the impact their actions will have on our community. Anything less removes any legitimacy from the process and is a slap in the face.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Mast", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Brian Mast
Member of Congress