



# FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Protection

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building  
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Jeanette Nuñez**  
Lt. Governor

**Shawn Hamilton**  
Secretary

November 6, 2024

Dear FCT Partner:

The Florida Communities Trust (FCT) has directed staff to review and evaluate all FCT projects that are currently not developed pursuant to the approved Management Plan under Rule 62-818.00, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.). FCT staff has identified your project as a site that is not been developed pursuant to the terms of the Special Management Conditions. Consequently, you are out of compliance with the terms outlined in the Project Grant Agreement.

FCT was recently notified that an unauthorized private vendor was granted a lease by the Mayor of the Town of Marineland on the River to Sea project site without prior knowledge and approval from FCT. This is a direct violation of the Grant Award Agreement, (pgs. 6-7, Section IV, 'Obligations by FCT Recipient to Purchase the Project Site'). Please see Attachment I for timeline of non-compliance.

FCT asks that the Town of Marineland and Flagler County submit documentation for the following:

1. If the site is in the process of being developed, please provide an updated timeline and budget outlining your plan to bring this Project into compliance.
2. If the Town of Marineland would like to fully develop the site, but lack funds, you may submit a compliance project plan for outdoor recreation better suited to the grantee's current needs. Approval by FCT is required before any further action is taken by the Town of Marineland and Flagler County.
3. Immediate submission of a copy of the lease agreement with the private vendor and the Town of Marineland is required. The current operation of this private concession on a FCT project site violates site compliance. This agreement must be reviewed and approved by FCT to bring the site into compliance within program guidelines.
4. If you no longer wish to develop the site, you may request that the FCT seek an alternative manager of the site, such as Flagler County, or revert the property to the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund pursuant to Section 380.508(4)(f), F.S.

Please forward the requested information to FCT staff via email at:  
[melanie.orozco@floridadep.gov](mailto:melanie.orozco@floridadep.gov) no later than **COB Friday, November 22, 2024**.

FCT appreciates your continued effort to provide conservation and recreational opportunities to your community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melanie Orozco".

Melanie Orozco  
Florida Communities Trust  
Division of State Lands

## Attachment I

### Timeline of Non-Compliance:

On **October 12, 2023**, FCT staff met with Marineland town officials and Flagler County officials to discuss the best path forward to address the untouched development of the ten concrete slabs that were to be used as eco-friendly cabins on the River to Sea project site. These concrete slabs have been on the project site for approximately ten years with no timeline for development. A revised management plan was requested to include the cabins on the project site as well as the annual fundraising events held on the River to Sea project site.

During FCT's site visit on **October 12, 2023**, it was conveyed to all parties that the Town of Marineland and Flagler County had two options to bring the River to Sea project site into compliance by developing the cabins within a year's time or by demolishing all the concrete slabs and return the area back to a natural vegetative environment.

The pursuit of grant funding to complete the cabins on the existing slabs was approved by Flagler County's Board (BOCC) on **October 16, 2023**. The Town of Marineland did not approve the grant for the cabins on **October 16, 2023**. The Town of Marineland denied the support for a grant application to develop the cabins and instead voted to conduct a "feasible study" for the cabins and for another building to be added to the preserve. Flagler County's Board (BOCC) approved the request to apply for a grant to fund the cottages on **November 1, 2023**

After the Town's decision, Flagler County's recommendation of removal of the concrete slabs was presented to the Town of Marineland. The topic of the concrete slabs on River to Sea project site was brought as an agenda item multiple times by Flagler County officials before the Town of Marineland's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). Marineland's continued response was to perform a "feasibility study" for other uses, all of which were not proposed in the management plan for this project site and would not have aligned with the recreational requirements of FCT program guidelines.

On **February 14, 2024**, the University of Florida and Town of Marineland held a Whitney Lab 5K Run on the River to Sea Preserve without notifying FCT staff of the impacts of this event on the preserve. This race was held on **April 14, 2024**, without approval from FCT. The event on the project site included tent setups, registration tables, staked markers along race path throughout the preserve, and start/finish line poled banners. All proceeds benefited the Whitney Laboratory gift fund and included over 200 in person participants.

Flagler County officials met with Marineland's CRA on **April 18, 2024**, to ask for funding to remove the concrete slabs on River to Sea project site. The Town of Marineland did not agree to any funding but asked that Flagler County contact FCT to ask that the non-compliance status decision be delayed until 2026. As of November 6, 2024, the project remains in non-compliance status.