

FROM THE OFFICE OF  
GOVERNOR  
RON DESANTIS

@GOVRONDESANTIS | WWW.FLGOV.COM | 850-717-9282 | MEDIA@EOG.MYFLORIDA.COM

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**Contact:** Governor's Press Office  
(850) 717-9282  
[Media@eog.myflorida.com](mailto:Media@eog.myflorida.com)

## **Governor Ron DeSantis Joins FWC and SFWMD in Announcing Python Removal Efforts to Protect the Greater Everglades**

**Fort Lauderdale, Fla** – Today, Governor Ron DeSantis joined the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to announce new efforts to remove pythons from the Greater Everglades. The Governor was joined by Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Noah Valenstein, FWC Commission Executive Director Eric Sutton and SFWMD board member Ron “Alligator Ron” Bergeron.

“I’m excited to announce our efforts to more aggressively tackle the problem of this invasive species and to further protect the Greater Everglades,” **said Governor DeSantis**. “Pythons are a threat to native wildlife and removing them is an important component of Everglades restoration.”

“I’m happy to join Governor DeSantis in celebrating another bold action for Florida’s environment,” **said DEP Secretary Noah Valenstein**. “Many Florida ecosystems are threatened by the effects of the Burmese Python. The Governor’s leadership in coordinating state agencies, the South Florida Water Management District and researchers to address this issue will help prevent further infestation and preserve the state’s native ecosystems.”

“We are grateful to Governor DeSantis for his bold leadership on this issue,” **said FWC Executive Director Eric Sutton**. “We will work closely with our partners to increase our efforts and exhaust all possible methods to address the threat of pythons to our fish and wildlife resources.”

“Thank you, Governor DeSantis, for your commitment to Everglades restoration,” **said SFWMD board member Ron “Alligator Ron” Bergeron**. “Harmful pythons disrupt the natural food chain and prey on native wildlife that depend on the Everglades. Together, with the Governor’s focused investment in saving the Everglades, we can help preserve this incredible ecosystem for generations to come.”



*Photo Credit: Governor's Press Office*

Pythons are an invasive species that disrupt the natural food chain balance and have no natural predators, causing them to multiply without impediment and further threaten endangered species. Pythons also decimate other animal populations, disturbing Florida's delicate ecosystem and threatening the biodiversity in the Everglades and surrounding areas.

The Governor is directing FWC and SFWMD to collaborate to do the following:

- Ensure python removal training programs are interchangeable.
- Share and jointly pursue research on new technology to help detect and remove pythons from the wild.
- Jointly host a Python Challenge every year as opposed to every third year.
- Develop agreements with local governments to expand access for state python removers on lands owned by local governments.
- Engage the public through a targeted education and outreach campaign that focuses on the importance of removing pythons from the Everglades.
- Create additional incentives for veterans to remove pythons.

The Governor's administration is actively working with the Department of Interior to increase the federal lands accessible for python removal, particularly within the Big Cypress National Preserve, which is largely inaccessible.

Additionally, FWC, DEP, and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) executed an agreement, under the Governor's direction, to allow for the removal of pythons in all state parks where pythons are found. This agreement allows an additional 134,648 acres of land to be accessible for python removal.

