



Media Advisory
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Congressman Francis Rooney Eliminates 5 Invasive Burmese Pythons During Everglades Hunt



Naples, FL – On Thursday, Congressman Francis Rooney participated in the South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) 'Python Elimination Program' in Big Cypress Swamp. The Congressman was successful in capturing and eliminating a total of five invasive pythons - two adults and three hatchlings, during the hunt.

Congressman Rooney stated, "My reason for hunting invasive Burmese pythons in the Everglades was to bring national attention to the damage caused by these devastating predators, which prey on native wildlife across South Florida. We all have a vested interest in restoring and protecting the Everglades and these invasive species are a serious problem."

Rooney continued, "After last night, there are five less invasive pythons alive to menace the Everglades ecosystem. Killing off these pythons is important, but is only part of the solution to the ecosystem's plight. I am working every day, all the time, to increase funding for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and will continue to raise awareness every way possible, including hunting pythons, about the Everglades, our state and national environmental treasure."

Dan O'Keefe, SFWMD Governing Board Chairman, welcomed the Congressman to the program, "Joining this hunt is a worthy challenge. Having also experienced the program firsthand by participating in a live hunt, I cannot say enough about the tremendous work of our bounty hunters working long hours and enduring the harsh summer elements to rid the Everglades of this destructive python threat. "

"Eliminating one snake from the Everglades is much more than a single kill." O'Keefe explained, "It's the prevention of 40 to 50 more snakes by destroying a large female carrying 40 to 50 eggs; and, it's the countless number of native Florida animals spared from the jaws of these killing-machines."

Background:

The purpose of the Python Elimination Program is to eliminate the invasive Burmese Python which damages the Everglades ecosystem and its native wildlife.

- The SFWMD is taking aggressive action to protect the Everglades and eliminate invasive pythons. The SFWMD Governing Board has renewed the Python Elimination Program after the pilot phase eliminated 158 pythons over a timespan of just over two months. The program has now expanded to include Broward and Collier counties, as previously hunting was only allowed in Miami-Dade County. Bounties attached to each snake eliminated incentivize hunters to spend time tracking, finding and killing these destructive snakes.
- Invasive Burmese pythons not only pose a threat to humans, but also rob the Everglades of native species, including panthers, birds of prey, alligators and bobcats of a primary food source.
- The Florida Congressional delegation has now signed a letter, led by Congressman Rooney, sent to President Trump. This letter called on the President to support Everglades Restoration projects in his fiscal year 2018 Budget.
- Congressman Rooney has met with President Trump to discuss funding for Everglades restoration efforts and is a member of both the Everglades and Estuary Caucus. He has testified four times on water quality issues.

- Link to additional information on the Python Elimination Program:
<https://www.sfwmd.gov/our-work/python-program>

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