

Madam Mayor and Commissioners,

We at the Sustainability Advisory Board are concerned with plans for recreational development in the Salt Ponds including a part of the bicycle master plan that would facilitate further incursion into these delicate and invaluable wetlands.

The current bicycle master plan includes building a path across the Salt Ponds. While we applaud the aim of bicycle infrastructure in our city, when weighed against the interest of protecting native habitat and the only undeveloped parcel of land on the island we find it necessary to speak up.

In their recent study, *More Losers than Winners: Investigating Anthropocene Defaunation Through the Diversity of Population Trends*, Finn, Grattarola, and Pincheira-Donoso from Queen's University Belfast found 48% of species were undergoing declining populations and the declines are concentrated in tropical regions. Also, wetlands protection was cited by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as one of the most significant parts in mitigating the climate crisis. Here in Key West, the Salt Ponds are the cradle of our local biodiversity. It provides habitat and a nursery to numerous fish, birds, and insects that are vital to our local ecosystem. Furthermore, it is the only somewhat undeveloped landscape on our island that allows for these local fauna to thrive.

As we have seen the amount of litter on the Staples Avenue bridge and the nature walk on Atlantic Boulevard there is no way to protect our natural resources when increased human activity is facilitated. The environmental stakes at the Salt Ponds are too high for more development, however passive. To quote Finn, Grattarola, and Pincheira-Donoso, "Based on the signals of the current biodiversity crisis, the time to recognise this phenomenon as occurring has already passed, and now is the pivotal time to protect the future integrity of biodiversity, and thereby the persistence of humanity."

Thank you,

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/brv.12974>