



GENERAL QUESTIONS

What is a Panama City crayfish?

The Panama City crayfish, a small freshwater crustacean, exists nowhere else in the world other than an 18-square-mile area of Bay County. First identified by Horton Hobbs in the 1940's, its range has declined significantly due to habitat loss and degradation. This species lives in wetland areas of the county. It is a small crayfish, growing to about two inches, and is one of 27 species of crayfish found only in Florida.

Do people eat this type of crayfish?

No. The Panama City crayfish is not the type of crayfish people buy to eat. People do sometimes use them as fish bait.

Why is the FWC concerned about the Panama City crayfish?

The Panama City crayfish (*Procambarus econfinae*), currently listed as a species of special concern, is exclusive to an 18-square mile area of Bay County. Its naturally small range has been dramatically reduced by habitat loss over the past 60 years. The major threats to the species include habitat loss and degradation, habitat fragmentation and subpopulation isolation, and direct mortality due to human activities.

Without appropriate conservation efforts, it could easily become extinct.

Is the Panama City crayfish a protected species?

Yes. It was listed as a species of special concern on Florida's imperiled species list in 1987. Currently, it is illegal to harm or harass a Panama City crayfish without a permit from the FWC.

Why is the FWC recommending reclassifying the Panama City crayfish?

A biological status review panel of scientific experts, most independent of the FWC, recommended reclassifying the Panama City crayfish from a species of special concern to threatened because of its small range, severely fragmented population, decline in habitat and the number of locations where it is found.

When will the Panama City crayfish be reclassified to threatened?

FWC Commissioners must approve a management plan before the Panama City crayfish can be reclassified. The plan is developed with extensive public input. A revised draft of the Panama City crayfish management plan is now available for public comment through June 14 at MyFWC.com.

FWC staff will evaluate comments, address concerns and modify the draft plan accordingly. FWC commissioners will review it and hear further public comment at their June meeting. Once the public has adequate opportunity to weigh in, the plan will come back to Commissioners in September for final approval. If approved, the Panama City crayfish will be reclassified from a species of special concern to threatened.

What is a Panama City crayfish management plan?

The management plan tailors a recovery program to ensure the conservation of the species. It outlines goals, measurable objectives and actions to ensure Panama City crayfish will continue to thrive. The plan



addresses the needs of the community, as it is developed with input from local, county, regional, state and federal agency partners, stakeholders and the public.

Who developed this first draft Panama City crayfish management plan?

FWC staff developed the plan with assistance of crayfish experts (outside the FWC) and the Panama City Crayfish Stakeholder Advisory Group. The group, which includes stakeholders such as Bay County, St. Joe Company, Gulf Power, other agencies, and residents, has been meeting monthly since September 2006 to develop the draft plan.

When will the final Panama City crayfish management plan be available?

FWC staff will evaluate public comments, address concerns and modify the draft management plan accordingly. FWC commissioners will review it and hear further public comment at their June meeting. Once the public has an adequate opportunity to weigh in, the plan will come back to commissioners in September for final approval. If approved, the Panama City crayfish will be reclassified from a species of special concern to threatened.

What does the Panama City crayfish draft management plan propose?

This draft management plan is a "conservation blueprint." The goal of the plan is to ensure the long-term conservation of the species throughout its historic range so it no longer warrants listing by the state of Florida. The plan outlines measurable biological objectives to enable scientists to know when this goal is achieved.

What are the measurable biological objectives outlined in the draft management plan?

There are four measurable objectives. These include:

- Increasing the species' current range by 20 percent,
- Increasing the known current area occupied by 10 percent,
- Increasing the number of known occupied locations by 10 percent, and
- Increasing the number and size of occupied sites in each location within 10 years.

If these objectives are reached for a period of 5 years, the Panama City crayfish will warrant delisting.

Will the management plan disrupt development or adversely affect the local economy?

The purpose of releasing a draft management plan for public input is to ensure it addresses the needs of the community and does not adversely affect the local economy. Bay County residents are encouraged to comment on the plan now through June 14.

The draft management plan proposes Best Management Practices designed to minimize impact to the Panama City crayfish. These practices were developed with input from stakeholders including Bay County, St. Joe Company, Gulf Power, other agencies, and residents. If Best Management Practices are used, no permit will be required for road or powerline construction and maintenance, residential and commercial construction or silviculture.

Will the Panama City crayfish ever be removed from Florida's imperiled species list?

If the objectives outlined in the management plan are met for a five-year period, then the conservation goal of the plan will be met and the Panama City crayfish will be removed from Florida's imperiled species list.



Once the crayfish is delisted, the management plan will remain in place to ensure conservation efforts, including monitoring, are sufficient to keep the species secure.

Why does the long-term conservation of a species require reintroducing it throughout the areas where it traditionally lived?

The best available information indicates the range of the Panama City's crayfish has declined from 55 square miles to 37 square miles due to habitat loss and degradation. Without appropriate conservation efforts, it could easily become extinct.

The Panama City crayfish draft management plan proposes four conservation objectives. If these objectives are met for a five-year period, the crayfish warrants removal from Florida's imperiled species list. If conservation efforts extend its occupied habitat beyond the current 37 square miles, the first objective will be met. This will be a great stride toward removing it from the imperiled species list.

Conserving the Panama City crayfish in healthy populations across its range also will ensure its resistance to any localized threats, including hurricanes and pollutant spills.

What is the historic range referred to in the Panama City crayfish draft management plan?

Scientists, independent of the FWC, created a map estimating the original crayfish habitat before it was altered by people. The map, developed using the best available information, accounts for the distribution of appropriate soils, the proximity of salt water and other barriers, and survey data.

Will I need a permit to get crayfish for bait?

If approved, a no-cost permit will be required to harvest any species of crayfish within the range of the Panama City crayfish. Permit information and applications will be available at MyFWC.com/permits. No permits will be needed to harvest crayfish outside of the Panama City crayfish range. Information gathered from the recreational take permit will help the FWC assess whether collecting the crayfish is a threat to the species.

If I want to add a room on my house and it's in the area where Panama City crayfish are found, do I need a permit?

Panama City crayfish are found in wetland areas of Bay County. Permits are already required for construction in wetland areas and this will not change.

What else is being done to protect the Panama City crayfish?

Recent and ongoing conservation efforts include rangewide surveys and a proposed Panama City crayfish conservation area to be established under a pending Candidate Conservation Agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the FWC and the St. Joe Company.

Can I still comment on the Panama City crayfish draft management plan?

Written comments on the Panama City crayfish management plan should be addressed to: Panama City Crayfish Management Plan, 620 South Meridian Street, Mail Station 2A, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1600, or submitted to the following email address: pcc_plan@myFWC.com.

The initial review period for comment was Feb. 16 – April 4. Substantive changes have been made to the plan and it is available for a second period of comment May 7 – June 14.



The FWC held a public meeting in Bay County December 13 to discuss the draft plan. Another public meeting is set for May 17, 2007 at the FSU – Panama City campus auditorium from 6 – 8 p.m. to ensure it meets the best interests of residents and the species.

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