

Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative
Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy
Public and Florida's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Staff Input Workshops
October 18 – 22, 2004
Hosted by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Executive Summary

Prepared by Dynamic Solutions Group, LLC

Collecting public and Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) staff input is an important part of the planning process for developing Florida's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS). The general public was invited to participate in a series of open workshops (Tallahassee – October 18, Jacksonville – October 19, Kissimmee – October 20, Tampa – October 21, Dania Beach – October 22) to identify issues and advice regarding wildlife conservation in Florida. On the same dates, FWC staff (voluntary) workshops were also conducted for the same purpose.

All participants (public and staff) were asked to answer the following two questions:

1. List your issues or concerns about wildlife conservation in Florida.
2. List your suggestions and advice concerning actions that should be taken regarding wildlife conservation in Florida.

The two questions generated 1,307 issues/advice. Because there were multiple meetings and multiple workgroups within each meeting, there was much duplication within the total number of issues/advice.

All issues and advice were recorded on flipchart paper and posted on the wall. Each participant was given 6 dots and asked to place their dots on what they considered to be the most important issues/advice. This report represents a summary of those 659 issues/advice items which the participants thought most important. This report also focuses on several of the categories specified in the eight required elements (habitat, species, partnerships, etc.).

To insure public participation at the workshops, the following methods of contact were utilized:

1. radio announcements
2. public service news releases
3. direct contact by the FWC staff and contract personnel
4. direct email to 900+ stakeholders and technical contacts with a request that people spread the work throughout their networks.

Issue topics which received the most votes (listed in priority order)

| Priority | Public | Votes | FWC Staff | Votes |
|----------|------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| 1. | Habitat | 229 | Habitat | 150 |
| 2. | FWC | 51 | FWC | 107 |
| 3. | Education | 47 | Species | 44 |
| 4. | Species | 42 | Education | 43 |
| 5. | Partnerships | 12 | Survey/Data Gaps | 11 |
| 6. | Survey/Data Gaps | 11 | Stakeholders | 7 |
| 7. | Monitoring | 11 | Partnerships | 5 |
| 8. | Stakeholders | 8 | Monitoring | 0 |

Advice topics which received the most votes (listed in priority order)

| Priority | Public | Votes | FWC Staff | Votes |
|----------|------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| 1. | Habitat | 245 | FWC | 118 |
| 2. | Education | 73 | Habitat | 87 |
| 3. | FWC | 64 | Education | 69 |
| 4. | Stakeholders | 26 | Partnerships | 38 |
| 5. | Species | 23 | Survey/Data Gaps | 36 |
| 6. | Partnerships | 11 | Species | 11 |
| 7. | Survey/Data Gaps | 9 | Stakeholders | 7 |
| 8. | Monitoring | 2 | Monitoring | 7 |

Results of public workshops:

Attendance: 158 total

1. Tallahassee – 45
2. Jacksonville – 32
3. Kissimmee – 23
4. Tampa – 32
5. Dania Beach – 26

Public issues listed in relative priority:

1. Habitat issues: Lack of environmental protection, lack of land acquisition programs, lack of public access, water pollution (sewer outfalls), over-population (uncontrolled development), lack of management on ecosystem level, habitat fragmentation, inadequate funding for land management

2. FWC: Lack funding, lack for enforcement/regulations/laws, lack of better science as guiding principles, lack of staff, grant process needs to be streamlined
3. Lack of education: Education is more cost effective than regulation, lack of environment public education, lack of concern among the general public about conservation
4. Species issues: Commercial over-utilization of marine resources, lack of control over invasive/exotic species, too much single species management vs. ecosystem management
5. Lack of partnerships: Lack of collaboration between agencies on research and conservation strategies, lack of shared data, concern about maintaining partnership with traditional user groups
6. Survey and data gaps: Lack of baseline data
7. Lack of monitoring: Lack of water quality monitoring of fresh and marine waters, lack of standardized monitoring, lack of monitoring of keystone species
8. Lack of stakeholder participation: Concern that traditional stakeholders will not be included, concern that public involvement will not be adequate

Public advice listed in relative priority:

1. Habitat: Growth management (manage development – smart growth), provide more public access (to insure use and appreciation for wildlife), provide incentives to landowners and developers to leave habitat corridors, strengthen partnerships, develop comprehensive plans
2. Education: Educate public about natural cycles, ecosystems, biodiversity, wildlife values, land/water management, benefits of prescribed fire, danger of invasive species, better management practices; educate through TV spots, school curriculums, scouts, teachers, clubs/organizations, conservation groups; make grant money available for education projects
3. FWC: develop user fee system for those other than hunters/fishermen; base decisions on good science; legislative mandates for wildlife/habitat/zoning and land use; promote natural Florida tourism; open more areas for hunting, seek more funding through non-resident licenses, DOD funding, federal bill 2811, dedicated funding for land acquisition
4. Stakeholder participation: Develop a plan to involve stakeholders, host more workshops, solicit traditional user group participation, be sensitive to everyone's needs
5. Species: Make grant money available for wildlife rehabilitation, adequately fund eradication of exotics/invasive/feral species, partner with Department of Transportation to provide wildlife under/over passes
6. Partnerships: Create a scientific advisory group for developing monitoring protocols/standards, work with state/federal/local government and land owners to address wildlife management issues
7. Survey and data gaps: Conduct species inventories, establish benchmarks
8. Monitoring: Count populations

Results of FWC staff workshops:

Attendance: 126 total

1. Tallahassee – 27
2. Lake City – 24
3. Kissimmee – 12
4. Tampa – 23
5. West Palm Beach – 40

Staff issues listed in relative priority:

1. Habitat issues: Habitat loss/fragmentation/degradation/over-development, increasing human population's impact on habitats, declining water quality, lack of technical expertise and funding
2. FWC: Lack of decision making based on science, pressure from special interest groups, high staff turn-over
3. Species issues: Lack of knowledge about the status/distribution/effects of exotic/invasive species, lack of knowledge about the impact of outside populations on Florida's populations, preservation of natural genetic diversity, lack of interest/support for invertebrates
4. Lack of education: Lack of strong conservation ethic among public, lack of public understanding about wildlife conservation issues
5. Survey and data gaps: Incomplete inventories (life history/distribution / abundance), inadequate data for monitoring populations
6. Lack of stakeholder participation: More public involvement is needed, concern about inadequately identifying and getting support from major stakeholders, concerned about maintaining good will among historic/core stakeholders
7. Lack of partnerships: Lack of partnership efforts among state/federal/local governments and NGOs
8. Lack of monitoring: No monitoring issues were identified

Staff advice listed in relative priority:

1. FWC: Develop strategies for permanent funding, increase law enforcement effort, create stiffer penalties for environmental violations, promote legislation/policies to minimize ecological impact of human population growth, host an annual wildlife conservation symposium, develop programs to get youth involved
2. Habitat: Determine human carrying capacity for Florida, develop and implement growth development strategies, provide incentives to landowners to properly restore/manage habitat, provide funding for land acquisition
3. Education: Increase FWC educational efforts through Project WILD, brochures, public service announcements, press releases, multilingual signage and publications, school and public programs, educate/train FWC staff
4. Partnerships: Increase partnerships through intra-disciplinary sharing, seek common goals between agencies

5. Survey and data gaps: Identify and prioritize research needs, fill in gaps about species abundance and distribution, expand research on impacts of anthropogenic alterations to freshwater inflow on estuarine/marine and freshwater species, inventory all public lands
6. Species: Develop more management emphasis/strategies for nongame species (e.g., neotropical migrants), declare ware on exotics, develop multi-species habitat management protocols
7. Stakeholder participation: Improve coordination among stakeholders by sharing data and information, promote volunteer positions and programs
8. Monitoring: Develop biologically sound survey/monitoring processes, measure success of actions, develop regional protocol for species monitoring on Commission lands

Workshop(s) Record General Summary

Top Ten Issues:

Public Workshops:

1. Lack of environmental protection (habitat loss, exotics, lack of funding, stricter regulations for development)
2. Education is more cost effective than regulation
3. Lack of land acquisition for wildlife and proper regulation/management
4. Growing development in Florida (unchecked development)
5. Lack of access to gain more public use and support of wildlife
6. Lack of area wide use fees – "Everybody pays" for conservation (funding source)
7. Concern that traditional users (fishing/hunting) might not be included
8. Lack of monitoring water/marine quality
9. Lack of managing on ecosystem level (not a species by species level)
10. Lack of enforcement personnel

Staff Workshops:

1. Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation
2. Concerns about sound science based decisions vs. political based decisions
3. Lack of strong conservation ethic among the general public
4. Increasing human population impacts on the environment
5. Lack of public education
6. Concerns about public perceptions or expectations vs. biologically appropriate action vs. political feasibility
7. Loss of expertise/personnel to other agencies/groups
8. Lack of sound biological information and data on many Florida species
9. Negative impact of exotic species, lack of knowledge about their status, distribution, and effects
10. Lack of prosecutions of violations

Top Ten Advice:

Public Workshops:

1. Encourage smart growth, enforce comprehensive growth management plans for habitat protection and objectives
2. Create more access to existing and future public lands and waters allowing more opportunity for the public to use/appreciate our natural resources and wildlife
3. Develop strategies to collect user fees from other groups besides hunters and fishermen
4. Create incentives to landowners and developers to leave habitat corridors
5. Strengthen regulations regarding local land use planning

6. Develop comprehensive plans to understand natural and human carrying capacities of these land and aquatic habitats
7. Insure ethical dog hunters continue as traditional user
8. Sensitize public to strategies for wildlife benefit (e.g., marine protected areas)
9. Develop education programs to involve youth through scouting, teachers, clubs and organizations, FWC, conservation groups
10. Acquire land – outright purchase or conservation easements

Staff Workshops:

1. Increase enforcement/education, impose stricter penalties, emphasize prosecution, implement cross training
2. Create human carrying capacity for state
3. Train and pay staff for retention (stop the brain drain), keep us current and on the cutting edge
4. Promote policies and legislation designed to minimize ecological impact of human population
5. Expand our educational outreach
6. Partnerships – partnerships – partnerships
7. Change funding paradigm
8. Prioritize research needs and fill in gaps in species abundance/distribution data
9. Improve incentives for non-development without infringing on landowners rights and economic values
10. Identify and implement management strategies with emphasis on habitats in need of active management

Workshop(s) Participation

Public meetings were attended by representatives of the following affiliations:

1. ACS
2. Apalachicola Bay & River Keepers
3. Arts & Science Foundation for Children
4. Audubon Society
5. Bass Fisherman
6. Brad & Cassel
7. Concern citizen
8. Cougar Ridge Center
9. Cry of the Water
10. Crystal Springs Preserve
11. Dade County Full Track
12. Dania Beach Board
13. Defenders of Wildlife
14. Disney's Animal Kingdom
15. DOW Wildlife Rehab
16. Ducks Unlimited
17. Eagle Watch
18. Environmental Education Resources Teacher
19. Everglades Coordinating Council
20. FAU
21. FDEP-BBAP
22. Florida Cattleman's Association
23. Florida Defenders of the Environment
24. Florida Department of Agriculture
25. Florida Department of Environmental Protection
26. Florida Fishermen's Federation
27. Florida Master Wildlife Conservationist
28. Florida Phosphate Council
29. Florida State University
30. Florida Wild Mammal Association
31. Florida Wildlife Federation
32. FNPS
33. Goose Creek Wildlife
34. Gopher Tortoise Council
35. GTMNERR
36. Gumbo Limbo Environmental Complex
37. Hernando County Planning Department
38. International Game and Fish Association
39. Landowner
40. Manatee County School Board
41. Miller Legg & Associates
42. National Park Service
43. Nature Coast Environmental Education
44. Naturalized Australian Pines of America
45. Ocean Conservancy

46. Operation Wildlife Survival
47. Phoenix Environmental
48. Pinellas County Extension
49. Pope Environmental
50. Save our Suwannee
51. SCI-NWTF
52. Seminole County Natural Lands
53. SFWMD
54. Sierra Club
55. South Florida Water Management District
56. Southwick Associates
57. Sportsmen Protecting Ocean Resources Together
58. St. Francis Wildlife Association
59. St. Joe Company
60. Standing Watch
61. The Florida Aquarium
62. The Tampa Tribune
63. TNC
64. UF/IFA Extension
65. United Water Fowlers of Florida
66. USF Environmental Science and Policy
67. USFWS
68. Wildlife Rescue Coalition

Staff meetings were attended by representatives from the following divisions:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| 1. CR | 10. HSC |
| 2. Data Portal | 11. HSC/ISM |
| 3. DHSC | 12. L & P |
| 4. DLE | 13. OED |
| 5. DOFF | 14. OPSC |
| 6. FFM | 15. ORS |
| 7. FWC | 16. SPC |
| 8. FWRO | 17. THCR |
| 9. HGM | 18. Wildlife-Manatee |

Financial support for this strategy development is provided in part by
 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
 State Wildlife Grant T-2, Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan

Dynamic Solutions Group, LLC 10/29/04