

Misconceptions about FWC's draft Panama City crayfish management plan

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Misconception: The commission wants to begin protecting the Panama City Crayfish (PCC) as an Endangered Species.

Fact: The PCC is already protected by FWC as a Species of Special Concern. This designation took place in 1987. The current listing prohibits the take of PCC. The commission was petitioned in 2001 to evaluate the species' status. A panel of scientists recommended listing the PCC as a Threatened Species based on recently adopted International Listing Criteria.

Misconception: The Draft Management Plan would prohibit the take of crayfish for bait.

Fact: Rules in the current draft plan actually allow for recreational harvest of crayfish within the PCC range after obtaining a no-cost permit. Current regulations prohibit take of the PCC and do not allow for recreational take.

Misconception: The PCC is harvested for food consumption.

Fact: While the PCC is certainly edible, its relatively small size as compared to other species of crayfish would make it undesirable as a common food source. There are no reports of the PCC being harvested for food consumption.

Misconception: Reclassifying the PCC to Threatened would stop development and automatically means more regulations.

Fact: The rules in the proposed draft management plan are actually less restrictive than current regulations. For instance some activities concerning ditch maintenance, power line maintenance, residential and business construction and silviculture have best management practices (BMPs) outlined in the draft plan. If a development project follows these BMPs then take permits for PCC would not be required. Under the new listing process the designation status of a species does not come with a standard set of rules and regulations. Regulations and permitted activities are species specific which means that activities that were once required to be permitted or illegal under the old classification of Species of Special Concern may be allowed without a take permit under the new classification of Threatened Species.

Misconception: The PCC draft management plan was developed by environmentalists and FWC staff.

Fact: The current draft management plan is a product of seven stakeholder meetings held by FWC staff with representatives from landowner, private business, corporation, local municipality, county government, and

conservation group interests. The proposed BMPs in the draft plan were largely in recognition of industry standards that have proven to be PCC friendly but could require permitting under current rules. There was a public meeting prior to the initial release of the draft plan. There will be an additional public workshop on May 17 during the second public input period, which runs from May 7 – June 14, 2007. This draft plan has already been revised in response to public comment and additional input will improve the plan and process.

Misconception: A person adding on to their current home or new development within the PCC known range would automatically require additional environmental permitting and assessments.

Fact: This would only be true if you were building in a wetland, the wetlands were in the PCC range, and preferred soils were present. The current draft plan defers to DEP set backs in regards to wetlands. The draft plan does not propose any additional set backs for wetlands than are already required by local or state government.

Misconception: Mosquito control would be prohibited.

Fact: The current draft plan does not call for any additional restrictions on pesticides. Some areas that currently have healthy populations of crayfish are also within the County mosquito control areas and are currently treated. Mosquito control pesticides applied properly and in recommended concentrations are environmentally safe and are not a concern. The draft plan does recognize the potential for harm from improperly applied pesticides or other toxic substances such as chemical spills.

Misconception: The draft plan calls for the creation of more wetlands.

Fact: The habitat emphasis in the draft plan is on protection and improving existing wetlands within the PCC home range. There are currently wetlands both natural and disturbed that are within the PCC home range that are no longer suitable habitat. The draft plan calls for identifying these areas, improving existing habitat, and reintroduction of PCC if necessary.

Misconception: The goal of this process is to increase government jobs and power.

Fact: The goal of the new listing process is to recover a species that has been threatened and insure the species long term well being in order to remove it from Florida's Imperiled Species list and avoid the need for more restrictive regulations in the future. The draft plan calls for a review and revision of the plan every five years. Progress will be reported annually in FWC's annual report to the legislature on Endangered and Threatened Species.