

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

From: Dr. Thomas Eason, Director, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation

Date: April 14, 2016

Subject: Conflict Wildlife Strategic Follow-Up and 2016 Python Challenge™ Update

Purpose:

To provide the Commission an update on the recent and current activities regarding the Conflict Wildlife Strategic Initiative and Wildlife Conflict Commission Policy Focal Area, including a summary of the 2016 Python Challenge™.

Summary:

As Florida becomes more urbanized and the human population increases, incidents of human-wildlife conflict are likely to increase. To address this changing landscape, the agency is moving toward framing wildlife conservation and management around the concept of managing the impacts of wildlife on people. This shift aligns with the agency's Conflict Wildlife Strategic Initiative and the Future of Fish and Wildlife Conservation, Wildlife Conflict Commission Policy Focal Area. Recent strides have been made to address human-wildlife conflict by shifting focus and adding capacity to address emerging human-wildlife conflict for both native and nonnative species.

The wildlife assistance function of the agency was formalized in 2013 and works across division lines to address human-wildlife conflict. Additional resources and staff have recently been allocated that has allowed a more proactive approach to working with affected communities and stakeholders. Recently, the agency implemented a wildlife incident tracking system in 2015 that allows for data collection and analysis of incidents around the state that is helping to identify emerging issues and allow for targeted community outreach.

Invasive wildlife issues have also risen greatly in Florida over the last decade, and our constituents are more frequently encountering nonnative wildlife. One recent program, the 2016 Python Challenge™ concluded in February 2016 and focused on activating more citizens to become part of long-term management, educating the public, and fostering the protection of the Everglades ecosystem. Staff are also addressing the expansion of tegus and Nile monitors and coordinating response to nonnative species reports from the public.

More information will be provided on these initiatives and outcomes.

Staff Recommendation:

This presentation is for informational purposes and any discussion or direction that the Commission may have.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter

Kristen Sommers, Leader, Wildlife Impact Management Section