

Private Lands Innovation Initiatives Update



February 11, 2016
Division of Habitat and Species Conservation



This presentation provides an update on our private landowner initiative efforts.

Private Lands Area of Focus

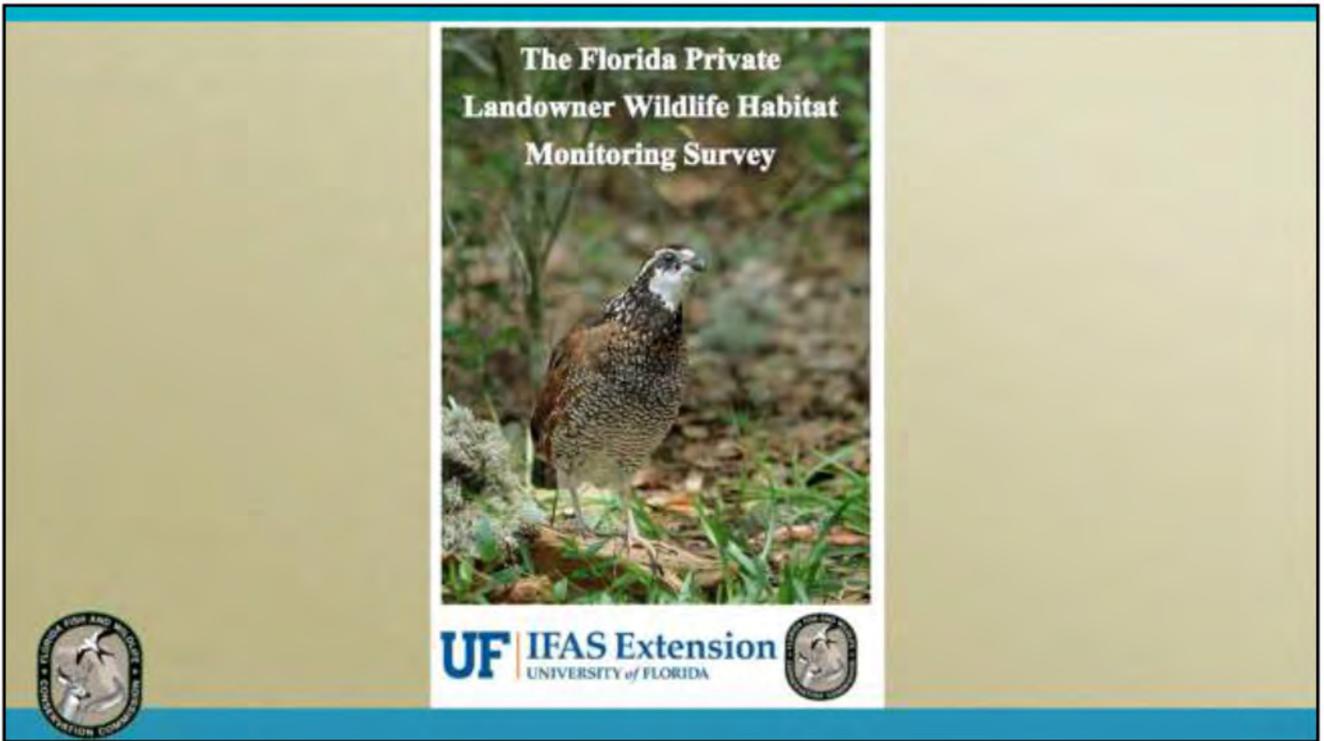
- Programs and tools available to landowners
- Locally-led conservation
- Private Landowner-led Advisory Group
- Analysis of programs that work



The June 2014 strategic discussion of conservation approaches on private lands resulted in the identification of several strategies that FWC staff would initiate to enhance our fish and wildlife conservation partnerships with private landowners across Florida.

Examples include:

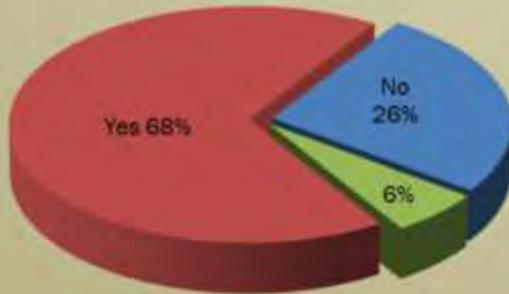
- Creation of a one-stop shop for landowners interested in technical or financial assistance
- Promoting and facilitating locally-led conservation
- Instigating a private landowner-led advisory group
- Conducting an analysis of our private landowner conservation programs



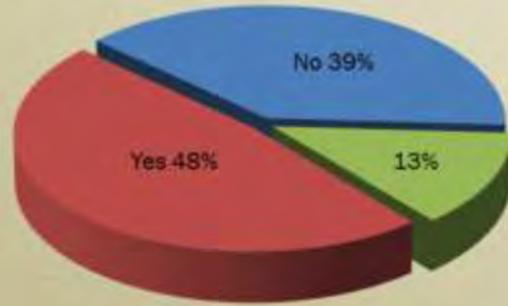
The FWC contracted with the University of Florida Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation to conduct a survey of private landowners across Florida during the spring and summer of 2015. This was the third private landowner survey we have conducted during the last ten years. The response rate from landowners this time was 16%, slightly lower than previous response rates, but still considered an adequate rate of return. We received valuable information from these landowners that we are utilizing to inform our Private Lands Innovation Strategic Initiative.

Private Land Stewardship Benefitting Wildlife

Do you actively manage for wildlife, including land stewardship practices that likely benefit wildlife?



Do you actively manage for wildlife, including land stewardship practices specifically intended to benefit wildlife?



Almost 70% of private landowners report managing their lands in ways they believe are providing benefits to wildlife. Almost half of private landowners report implementing land management activities specifically intended to benefit wildlife.

Private Land Stewardship Benefitting Wildlife

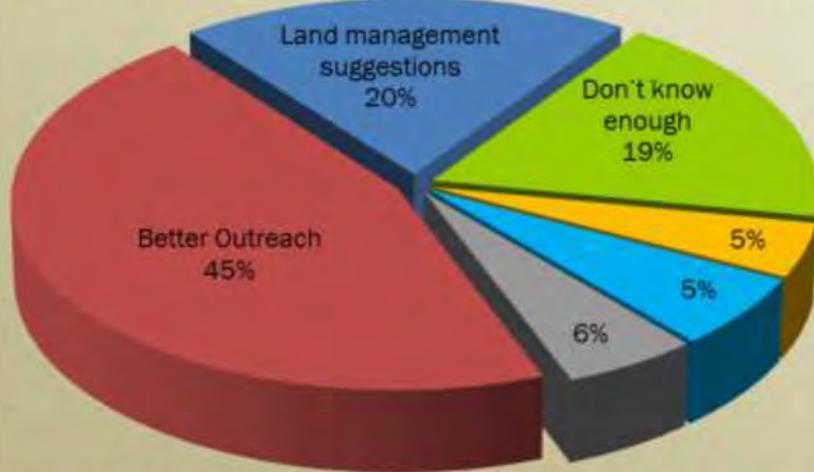
Respondents engaging in specific stewardship practices

Stewardship Practice	Number	Percent
Prescribed fire	196	32.2
Exotics control	218	35.9
Plant native vegetation	167	27.5
Restore habitat for T&E species	100	16.4
Actively manage/protect native habitat	308	50.7



The activities that private landowners reported conducting to benefit wildlife were predominately improvements to habitat conditions. Importantly, the two specific management activities reported were implementation of prescribed fire and control of exotic vegetation.

Private Landowner Recommendations



- Better communication/outreach
- Don't know enough
- Complaints
- Land management suggestions
- Financial suggestions
- Miscellaneous



We asked private landowners for their recommendations on ways the FWC could improve its working relationships with private landowners. Almost half of the recommendations pertained to better communication and outreach. This correlates with nearly 70% of private landowners reporting that they have had no interaction with FWC staff, biologists or law enforcement, during the last five years. Almost 20% of the landowners reported having insufficient familiarity or knowledge of the FWC's efforts to engage private landowners to offer recommendations.

Private Lands Innovation Strategic Initiative



During the last year, a cross-agency team of FWC staff began developing a Private Lands Innovation Strategic Initiative Plan. The plan is comprised of six goals and associated implementation strategies. Performance measures are also being developed to assess the level of accomplishment toward achievement of these goals.

Goal 1 recognizes the need to increase the awareness and appreciation of the significant fish and wildlife conservation occurring on private lands across Florida. Most of these lands are “working lands” which are primarily managed to provide forest products and agriculture crops. However, the manner by which Florida’s private landowners are managing their lands to produce these forest and agriculture products are also maintaining significant and important wildlife habitat.

Communication: Outreach and Education

Creating a One-Stop Shop for Private Landowners

Florida Land Steward Partnership

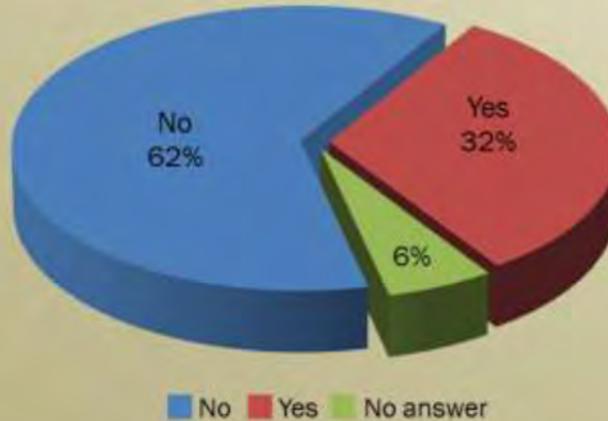
- Coordinated Website
- Calendar of Events
- Newsletter
- Workshops and Field Days



FWC has partnered with the Florida Forest Service, the Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences at the University of Florida, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service to form the Florida Land Steward Partnership. Our goal for this partnership is to create a one-stop shop for private landowners interested in technical or financial assistance programs.

Awareness of Florida Land Steward Partnership

Have you heard of the
Florida Land Steward Partnership?



As part of our recent survey, we asked private landowners if they were aware of the Florida Land Steward Partnership, and whether they felt it was an improvement. While only 32% of the survey respondents reported being aware of the Florida Land Steward Partnership, 63% of those landowners reported the partnership to be an improvement over working with the agencies individually.

Communication: Outreach

- Festivals
- Presentations
- Radio shows



FWC staff are engaging in a variety of forums to provide outreach to private landowners, stakeholders and the general public.

Envirothons



Annual environmentally themed academic competition for high school aged students throughout North America



FWC Hosts the State Envirothon contest at Beau Turner Youth Center



FWC staff work with other agencies and entities to conduct Envirothons for youth. This includes providing training opportunities for Envirothon contestants.

Communication: Workshops

How to Prevent Wildlife Conflict

November 21, 2015, Naples



Integrate Wildlife and Forestry

October 15, 2015, Jefferson County



FWC staff are working with other natural resource agencies and entities to provide workshops. These workshops cover a wide variety of wildlife and habitat-related topics and typically include field visits where workshop participants have the opportunity to see the application and results from habitat management techniques first hand. Many of the workshops are held on privately-owned lands and often private landowners present the information.

Communication: Blogs / Articles

The screenshot shows the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Florida website. The header includes the USDA logo, "Natural Resources Conservation Service Florida", and "United States Department of Agriculture". Navigation links for "Topics", "Programs", "Newsroom", and "Contact Us" are visible. A search bar and social media icons are also present. The breadcrumb trail reads "You are here: Home / Programs / Landscape Initiatives / Longleaf Pine".

The main content area features a "Longleaf Pine" article. The article title is "Longleaf Pine Initiative" with the subtitle "Conservation Beyond Boundaries LLPI". The article text states: "The majestic longleaf pine. Economically and environmentally beneficial, this king of trees is resistant to pests and diseases; it produces a clear, straight wood free of defects, withstands drought and fire and provides habitat for a host of wildlife. Longleaf pine once covered 90 million acres from Texas to Florida, but today only 3 percent of the habitat remains. Florida is one of nine states included in the NRCS Longleaf Pine Initiative that gives financial and technical assistance for conservation practices that help restore longleaf pine forests and enhance existing stands. But we are not alone in our efforts. In Florida many are working together, dedicated to reestablishing longleaf, from nonprofits and conservation groups to state and federal agencies."

The article is titled "Blog shares benefits, wonders of longleaf pine" and includes a photo of Aris Kane. The text below the photo reads: "Aris Kane is the northwest region conservation planning coordinator for Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. He has been working with longleaf restoration for about 25 years now. Aris says longleaf pine restoration is important to the FWC because the ecosystem is one of the most diverse in the world and one of the most endangered. Restoration of the habitat will benefit a large number of threatened and endangered species of wildlife."

On the left sidebar, there is a "Programs" menu with items: "Farm Bill", "Financial Assistance", "Easements", "Landscape Initiatives", and "Landscape Planning". Below this is a "Gulf Restoration" section with a photo of a bird and the text "Restoring the Gulf".

In the bottom left corner, there is a circular logo for the "FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION".

FWC staff are recognizing the need to increase and diversify our communication and outreach efforts. The challenges to achievement of our communication goal will include a re-allocation of time currently spent on technical and financial assistance program delivery activities.

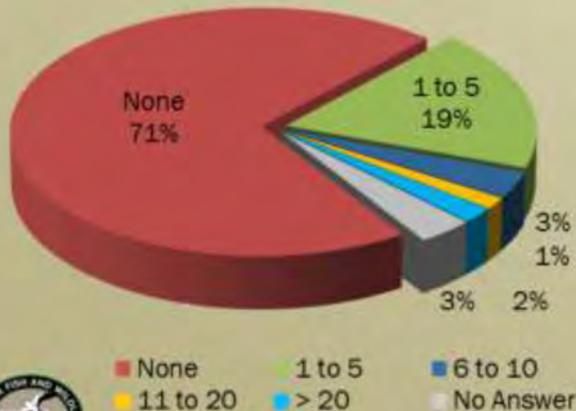
Private Lands Innovation Strategic Initiative



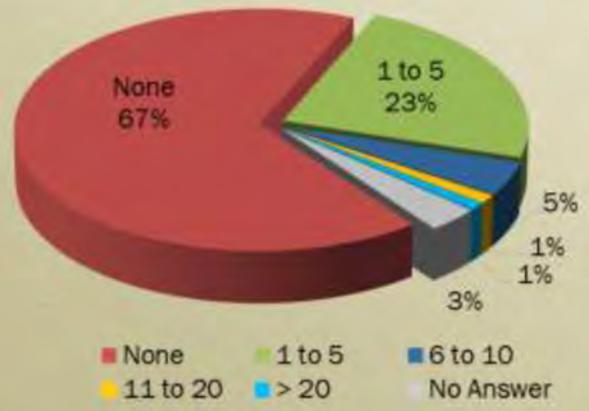
Goal 2 recognizes the importance of developing and maintaining strong conservation partnerships with private landowners. Such relationships require a time commitment on both parties. Based on the feedback received from our private landowner survey, FWC staff are doing a pretty good job at building partnerships with private landowners. However, we are currently only engaging approximately 30% of Florida’s private landowners, and the majority of those landowners have had five or fewer interactions with agency staff during the last five years.

Private Landowner Relations with FWC

Number of Interactions with FWC Biologists



Number of Interactions with FWC Law Enforcement Officers



Types of interactions with FWC personnel

- FWC visited my property - 139
- I contacted the FWC with a concern - 113
- Received technical assistance from the FWC – 52
- Attended a public meeting that involved the FWC – 47
- Other – 43
- Attended an FWC workshop - 31
- Received financial assistance from the FWC - 17

Engaging Landowners

Working with partners to more effectively reach landowners

- Florida Forest Service
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- The Nature Conservancy
- Private Consultants



FWC staff are working with National Wild Turkey Federation and Florida Forest Service staff to establish Prescribed Burn Associations. FWC staff are also working with The Nature Conservancy who has led an effort to get a grant for workshops on Tools for Engaging Landowners Effectively.

Engaging Landowners

Central Florida Lygodium Strategy



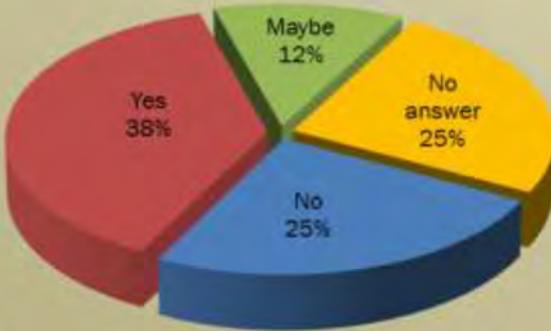
Division of Law Enforcement Outreach Strategy



- FWC's Division of Law Enforcement is increasing its outreach efforts to private landowners in order to better understand their fish and wildlife conservation challenges and needs.
- Lygodium is an invasive species of fern and is one of the most serious threats to Florida's natural areas.
- FWC participation in Central Florida Lygodium Strategy (CFLS) provides increased awareness and appreciation by the public, stakeholders, and staff, of the current and future importance of private lands to fish, wildlife and habitat conservation and leverages implementation of exotic vegetation control work on private lands that is funded by other agencies and organizations.
- Landowners engaged in CFLS are also provided information about other conservation programs they ask about , providing an opportunity to engage them further through a relationship of trust that has already been created through CFLS. This increases FWC ability to partner with private landowners to protect wildlife habitat on their lands. This work on private lands is also targeted to largely fall within 3 miles of public conservation lands, thereby providing a exotic vegetation control buffer for those lands.

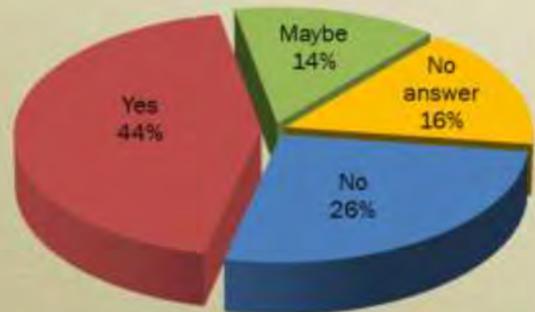
Private Landowner Relationships with FWC

Willing to share your knowledge of T&E species on your property with FWC?



■ No ■ Yes ■ Maybe ■ No answer

Willing to allow FWC to visit your property to more accurately estimate populations of T&E species?

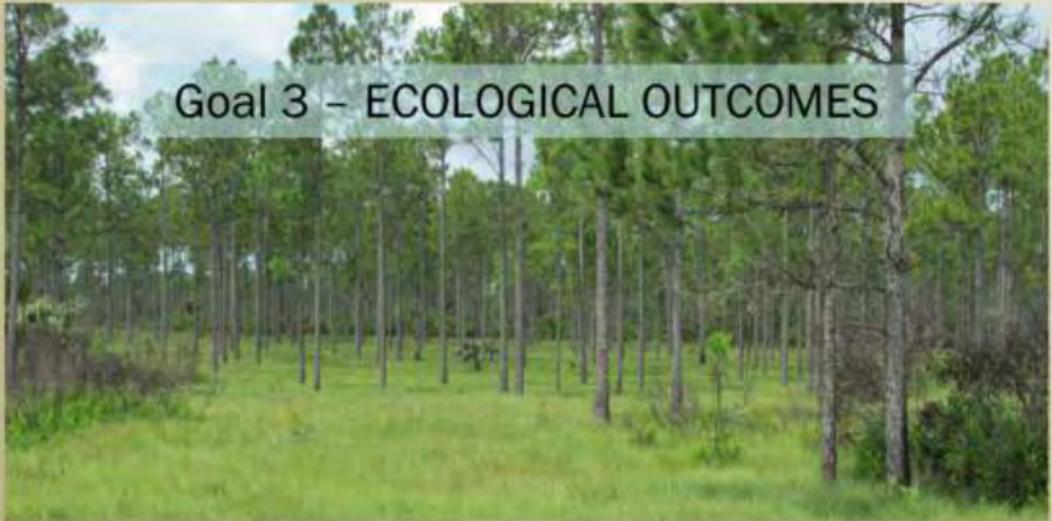


■ No ■ Yes ■ Maybe ■ No answer



A higher percentage of landowners reported a willingness to work with FWC to assess their property for T&E species (imperiled species) than those that reported an unwillingness to work with FWC in that regard. However, landowners also expressed their concerns regarding how information gained from the imperiled species assessments might be used to constrain or restrict their land use.

Private Lands Innovation Strategic Initiative



Goal 3 identifies the need to recognize the habitat conservation value of private lands and the land management activities implemented on private lands that contribute to fish and wildlife conservation.

Although one-third of Florida's lands and waters are designated and managed for conservation, approximately half of Florida remains in private ownership and managed for forestry and agriculture. These rural working lands provide important habitat for many of Florida's fish and wildlife. We are collaborating with Florida's private landowners to find ways to better recognize their contributions to the state's conservation portfolio without undermining the trust we are building or compromising our working relationships.

Private Lands Innovation Strategic Initiative

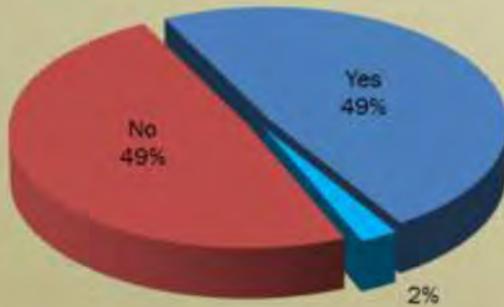
Goal 4 – ECONOMIC SUPPORT & RECOGNITION



Goal 4 recognizes the need for economic support and recognition for landowners that are willing to manage their property in ways that provide habitat for fish and wildlife. We are learning however, that Florida's private landowners have a variety of perspectives regarding economic support and recognition for their wildlife conservation efforts.

Financial Assistance

Were you aware government agencies provide financial assistance for wildlife habitat improvement?



■ No Answer ■ No ■ Yes

How interested are you in applying for financial assistance to improve wildlife habitat on your land?



■ No Answer ■ No Interest ■ Slight
■ Moderate ■ High



Half of the private landowners responding to our survey reported they were unaware that the government offered financial assistance for wildlife habitat improvement.

We also learned that only half of the landowners who responded to the survey questions pertaining to financial assistance had either no interest or only a slight interest in applying for financial assistance to improve wildlife habitat on their land.

New or Improved Incentives

- Payment for Ecosystem Services
- Habitat Exchanges
- Mitigation Banking
- Easement Programs



FWC staff are working with a growing number of public and private partners to develop new and improved incentive programs. We are learning that Florida's private landowners have diverse perspectives regarding economic incentives for their wildlife conservation efforts. This is requiring that staff remain open-minded and adaptive to finding new ways to promote and support wildlife conservation on private lands.

Private Lands Innovation Strategic Initiative



Goal 5 recognizes the need to limit barriers and increase support for wildlife and habitat conservation on private lands. FWC staff are working with other state and federal regulatory agencies, private landowners and other stakeholders to identify ways to streamline regulatory processes, provide increased regulatory certainty for landowners and stakeholders, and to better account for the conservation resulting from the various regulatory processes addressing wildlife impacts.

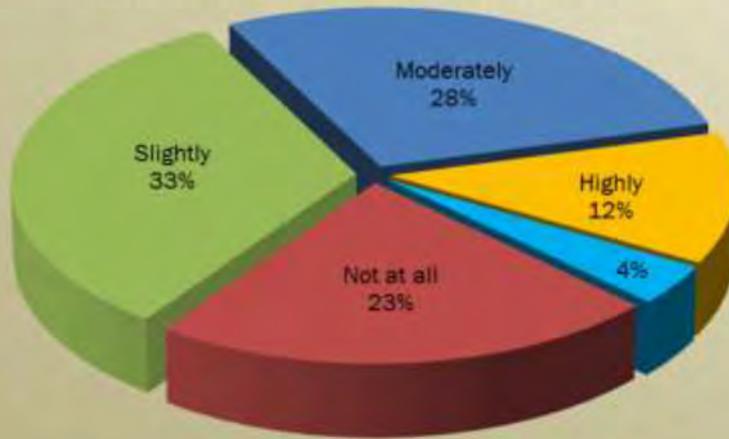
Private Lands Innovation Strategic Initiative



Goal 6 recognizes the need to enhance our capabilities for providing technical assistance to private landowners.

Interest in Technical Assistance

How interested are you in attending technical workshops on how to improve wildlife habitat on your land?



■ No answer ■ Not at all ■ Slightly ■ Moderately ■ Highly



Information gained from our recent survey of private landowners indicate that while their technical assistance needs may not be changing, the media by which they choose to receive the technical assistance is changing. For example, only 40% of landowners reported being highly or moderately interested in attending a wildlife habitat management workshop.

Florida Wildlife Conservation Guide

*An online resource that facilitates effective land use planning,
project design, and habitat management*



Contact Us: FWCG.helpdesk@fwc.com

Suggested Citation: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Florida Natural Areas Inventory. Florida Wildlife Conservation Guide. Tallahassee, Version November 2011 (annual update).

Please consider taking our [Online Surveys](#) to provide us feedback.

Disclaimer: Guidance documents provided in this guide do not represent formal biological opinions, formal comments, and approvals, nor do they provide incidental take authorization. These guidelines provide users with common and general recommendations for project planning purposes, assessment guidance of existing conditions of a study area, and initial guidance for mitigation or conservation opportunities.



The Florida Wildlife Conservation Guide is an online resource developed in consultation with private landowners, land use consultants, environmental organizations, local, state and federal government agencies. The Guide is available to anyone interested in making wildlife or habitat assessments or incorporating fish and wildlife needs into land use plans.



Landowners have expressed interest in receiving technical information via short videos such as YouTube. Videos on habitat management techniques have been created and work has begun on landowner testimonials about conservation and how FWC has helped them that will be posted to the Agency website.



Landowners have expressed interest in receiving technical information via fact sheets. These one-page fact sheets highlight important information about a particular management activity or strategy and identify where the reader can obtain more detailed information.

Technical Assistance

- Pro-active
- Science-based
- Solution-oriented



Wildlife Viewed as an Asset – Not a Liability



Our guiding principles for technical assistance delivery, whether one-on-one, workshops, video, fact sheets or blogs include working pro-actively, providing science-based information and being solution-oriented.

Over the last 5 years, we have averaged assisting approximately 600 landowners with 200,000 acres per year through our Landowner Assistance Program. The technical assistance we provide can vary widely from one landowner to the next and across different project types.

A desired outcome from our technical assistance to private landowners is that they view wildlife, including imperiled species, as an asset instead of a liability.



FWC staff continue to actively participate in the Florida Land Steward Partnership. This partnership provides a one-stop shop for information regarding financial and technical assistance to landowners. This information is being conveyed in a variety of media forms. Program partners also coordinate workshops, tours, field days, and other trainings.

However, in spite of our current efforts to adapt our programs to better meet the needs of Florida's private landowners, we recognize that the needs and interests of these landowners will continue to change, that there remains an ever increasing need to garner broad public awareness and appreciation for the conservation efforts of private landowners, and we must find meaningful ways to recognize their wildlife conservation efforts.

In closing, I would like to share with you a video recently produced by FWC staff that provides private landowner testimony to the benefits of developing a conservation partnership with the FWC.