

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

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

Date: November 16, 2016

Subject: Final Action -- Critical Wildlife Areas

Purpose:

To provide the Commission with final proposals on a state-wide initiative to establish 14 new Critical Wildlife Areas (CWAs) and modify five existing CWAs, including modifications resulting from continued public outreach efforts.

Summary:

CWAs are established by the Commission to protect important concentrations of wildlife from human disturbance during critical periods of their life cycle. Currently, there are 20 CWAs in Florida. At the June Commission meeting, sites in seven counties were identified as potential new CWAs. These included:

- Lanark Reef and Flag Island in Franklin County
- Withlacoochee Caves in Citrus County
- Dot, Dash and Dit Islands in Manatee County
- Roberts Bay Rookery in Sarasota County
- three areas in Pine Island Sound (Hemp key, Useppa Oyster Bar, and Broken Islands) and three areas in Estero Bay (Matanzas Island, two islands known as M50 and M50/52, and Coconut Point East Island) in Lee County
- a bird rookery in Stick Marsh and a spoil island in Indian River Lagoon, both in Brevard County and,
- the Port Orange Rookery in Volusia County.

In addition, staff recommended that five existing CWAs be modified to improve conservation:

- St. George Causeway CWA in Franklin County
- Myakka River CWA in Sarasota County
- Alafia Banks CWA in Hillsborough County
- Bird Islands CWA in Duval and Nassau Counties, and
- Rookery Island CWA in Collier County.

Staff have developed specific recommendations regarding proposed boundaries for closure and closure periods for each site, have held public meetings to present the proposals, and solicited public input. Staff will present the details for final approval, including modifications to proposals as a result of public input. If the Commission determines that new CWAs and significant changes to existing CWAs are warranted, they will be established by Executive Order following final approval.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approving the proposed Critical Wildlife Areas.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Kipp Frohlich, Carol Rizkalla, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation