



**Potential Reductions
2017 Legislative Session
Schedule VIII B
September 8, 2016**

In preparation for the 2017 Legislative Session, the Governor, House, and Senate instructed state agencies to prepare a list of potential reductions equal to 10% of the adjusted recurring budget for next year. The following list contains the staff recommendations for the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The 10% list totals \$26,684,507 of which \$2,788,049 is from General Revenue funds and \$23,896,458 is from trust funds.

Staff Recommendation

Reduce Unfunded Federal Grant Budget Authority (\$5,000,000) TF

This proposal would reduce unfunded/excess spending authority within the Federal Grants Trust Fund. FY 2015/16 budget reversion amounts support this reduction with the potential for no impact to the Agency.

Reduce Lake Restoration Funding (\$1,286,760) LATF

This proposal would decrease funding for aquatic habitat management and restoration projects. A reduction in budget authority would limit maintenance operations on completed lake restoration projects. Reduced funding would also result in fewer aquatic habitat enhancement projects in public waterways, and limit maintenance or repair of water management infrastructure on state owned lands. Engineering services for some lake and wetland projects would be delayed, as would start-up and planning for future restoration projects. Monitoring of aquatic plant and animal communities needed to evaluate present and future restoration activities would be reduced. A significant portion of the aquatic habitat enhancement projects are conducted by private sector contractors. (DHSC)

Reduce Invasive Plant Management Funding (\$6,856,177) TF

This proposal would reduce the agency's ability to manage aquatic and terrestrial invasive plants. A reduction in funding would result in fewer invasive aquatic plant control projects in public waterways and upland invasive plant control projects on public conservation lands. Delays or cancellation of plant control projects can cause geometric increases in growth of invasive plants. This would result in fewer project sites being funded, ultimately resulting in additional sites becoming re-infested after having spent state dollars getting the invasive plants under control. Increasing invasive plant populations can have adverse impacts on recreational activities such as fishing, hunting, boating, swimming, and ecotourism, as well as adversely impacting beneficial native habitat that is critical for the management of fish and wildlife. In addition, excessive invasive plant populations in public waterways can restrict water flow and cause flooding during critical periods resulting in danger to human health and safety. A significant portion of the invasive plant control projects are conducted by contractors in the private sector. (DHSC)

Reduce Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management Operations (\$289,310) SGTF

This proposal would reduce the Division's ability to spend potential proceeds generated from the lands it manages by 83%. Past use of this appropriation has been to spend revenue from the sale of sand at Tenoroc Fish Management Area on Tenoroc land management activities as required by statute. Management activities include, but are not limited to, improving pond access, maintenance of boat ramps, fishing platforms and fish feeders, mowing of grounds, parking areas and recreational fishing areas, fence and road maintenance and repair, and control of exotic plant communities. Section 259.032(11)(d), Florida Statutes, requires revenue received through leases, sales, and contracts be used to supplement land management operations. (DFFM)

Reduce Public-Information Material for Game Wildlife (\$60,000) TF

This reduction would eliminate informational materials that describe public hunting opportunities as well as public service announcements pertaining to alligator safety and mallard/mottled duck hybridization. These materials summarize public hunting opportunities for special-opportunity and spring turkey hunts. The televised public service announcements are designed to (1) increase public awareness and cooperation to conserve Florida's mottled duck, and (2) promote public safety and increase awareness concerning Florida's alligator population. The proposed reduction in outreach would decrease our efforts to inform the public, potentially would reduce public safety related to alligators, would compromise conservation efforts for Florida's mottled duck, and may result in lowered public satisfaction. (DHGM)

Small-Game Management Program (\$199,645) TF

This proposal would nearly eliminate the agency's ability to provide small-game (i.e., quail, squirrel, rabbit, dove, rail, snipe, and woodcock) management, including technical assistance for small-game habitat management to federal, state, and private landowners. It would eliminate cooperative partnership efforts with other management agencies and organizations for mourning doves and bobwhite quail. The reduction would reduce the agency's ability to provide small-game hunting opportunities, including public dove fields which would result in a decrease in agency revenues of about \$40,000 - \$60,000 from dove permits. The full time equivalent position currently dedicated to small-game management would be shifted to address other division or agency priorities. (DHGM)

Eliminate Commercial Saltwater Blue Crab Outreach (\$8,000) MRCTF

This proposal would eliminate the commercial blue crab outreach education program. This program includes education targeted at commercial blue crab fishers about new commercial blue crab regulations; publication of SEASTATS (a brochure that discusses the blue crab, and includes information on appearance, including how to distinguish males from females, distribution and habitat, reproduction, molting, feeding, parasites and diseases, and similar species found in Florida waters); and, produces signage that is posted at boat ramps indicating that it is a

felony to molest commercial blue crab traps. Elimination of these funds would reduce the ability of the Division to disseminate this information to the stakeholders. (DMFM)

Eliminate Transfer to Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services/IFAS/Invasive Exotic Plant Research funding (\$844,171) IPCTF

This proposal would eliminate the transfer to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to fund invasive exotic plant research at the quarantine lab in Ft. Pierce for insects that must be quarantined before being released. Currently, the agency pays \$844,171 on a recurring basis to help support this program. This reduction is 100% of the total program funding. (DHSC)

Reduce Funding for Public Hunting Outreach (\$111,998) SGTF/LATF

This reduction would decrease public involvement outreach to hunters and hunter surveys regarding their preferences and harvests, which are used to base hunting regulations decisions, and would reduce communication and coordination with hunters and other affected stakeholders concerning rule changes and other wildlife management decisions; decrease funding for economic analyses of proposed decisions, potentially resulting in decisions that may not adequately consider economic outcomes and thus may produce unanticipated consequences; lessen the ability to coordinate with other agencies and partners to accomplish scientific management of the wildlife species that are hunted and trapped in Florida and to enhance public hunting opportunities; reduce ability to monitor populations of wildlife species that are hunted and trapped; and reduce technical assistance to public and organizations/agencies concerning game wildlife management. (DHGM)

Reduce State Data Center services (\$160,000) ATF

Reduce existing services hosted at the State Data Center (SDT), such as enterprise email archiving, Oracle services (supporting RICS), and servers used for software development and testing. (OIT)

Eliminate Trap Retrieval Program (\$200,121) MRCTF

This proposal would eliminate the statewide retrieval of lost or abandoned commercial spiny lobster, stone crab, and blue crab traps using competitively-bid, contractual services. Currently \$25 of the commercial license fee for these three fisheries is specified by the Legislature to be spent on trap retrieval of lost or abandoned traps during closed seasons [sec. 379.367(2)(b), sec. 379.365(1)(a) and sec. 379.366(3)(a), F.S., respectively]. This program reduces the impact that commercial fishing gear has on the marine environment. These traps continue to trap target and non-target marine organisms after they are lost or abandoned. In addition, movement of some of the lost or abandoned traps can cause damage to marine habitat. This proposal would eliminate an OPS position that assists in the implementation of the Commission's spiny lobster, stone crab and blue crab trap retrieval program and trap debris removal program pursuant to s. 379.2424, Florida Statutes (F.S.), s. 379.368, F.S., and rule 68B-55, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.). Each year this position acts as Commission observer aboard commercial fishing vessels during trap retrieval operations statewide, and records and enters trap retrieval data in an online database. This OPS position also assists

in the implementation of the administrative penalty program; creates and maintains a statewide database of penalty assessments; and issues applications for Special Activity Licenses program pursuant to rule 68B-8, F.A.C. Additionally, this position would eliminate funding that is provided to private contractors to remove the traps. The trap retrieval program is authorized in s. 379.2424, F.S. This proposal would necessitate statutory changes. (DMFM)

Eliminate Oceanaria Reimbursements for Manatee Rehabilitation and Support for the University of Florida Marine Mammal Veterinary Program (\$2,104,000) MRCTF

FWC has managed the Oceanaria Reimbursement Assistance Program for rescued, rehabilitated, and released Florida manatees since 1991. Since July, 2000, these funds have been available to reimburse the three contracted and federally permitted manatee rehabilitation facilities in Florida: Lowry Park Zoo, Miami Seaquarium, and Sea World Florida. These specialized, federally permitted, facilities are the only institutions available for acute-care, veterinarian-based rehabilitation of manatees. This reduction would reduce or eliminate this service to the state of Florida at a time when the number of manatees killed and injured annually is at record levels. Presently, the oceanaria are reimbursed for only about 50% of qualified expenses. This reduction would also eliminate the University of Florida Marine Mammal Veterinary Program. This program is a joint endeavor of the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine and FWC. This program was developed to promote the health and understanding of marine mammals in Florida and is one of the few initiatives in the country training veterinarians, veterinary medical students, and related professionals in the care of marine mammals. This program provides much needed expertise to FWC externships and specialized pathology services which are critical in determine cause of death for manatee carcasses. This reduction would eliminate at least 3 positions at the University of Florida. (FWRI)

Reduce Non-CARL Land Management Funding (\$3,397,507) LATF

This proposal reduces FWC's ability to manage new and current lands. The impact would be moderate affecting funding directed to land management operations pursuant to s. 201.15(5), F.S. A reduction would diminish wildlife protection, public recreational opportunities, and land management programs on private, state or federally owned lands within the Wildlife Management Area (WMA) system where FWC is either a designated lead manager or a secondary cooperator. Staffing on some land units within the WMA system would possibly have to be reduced resulting in the reduction of land management activities and maintenance of infrastructure for public access and recreational activities. Reduced funding will affect long-term resource protection programs such as community restoration and imperiled species recovery. In some cases such as exotic plant control, recent accomplishments may be compromised or negated if funding is inadequate to support necessary maintenance treatments. (DHSC)

Reduce Boating & Waterway Activities (\$1,149,505) MRCTF

A reduction of Boating and Waterway Activity funding would reduce the number of county-wide maintenance projects to replace compromised and degraded signs that

are necessary for safe boating, imperiled species, and swim zones among others. This would impact the ability to keep waters of the state managed in a proper and safe fashion and reduce funds for boating safety education. (DLE)

**Reduce Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network (\$10,000) GR,
(\$17,900) TF**

This proposal would decrease funding and reduce the number of youth hired for the Fostering Success Program, which will provide part-time employment opportunities and career mentoring to aged-out foster children. A decrease in funding would reduce the amount of support available to the Project WILD network and would result in approximately four hundred fewer teachers trained in our conservation education curriculum. This proposal would reduce operational funds used to support youth saltwater fishing camps and marine education programming. (FYCCN)

**Eliminate Volunteer Recruitment and Coordination Function (\$145,076)
LATF**

The statewide Volunteer Programs Coordinator and three Regional Volunteer Coordinators recruit, train and manage volunteers who assist FWC in achieving its conservation mission. These volunteer programs are focused on strategic needs areas – collecting information on species of greatest conservation need, controlling invasive species, enhancing focal habitats and managing human wildlife conflicts. Volunteers collect species data, enhance wildlife habitat and conduct outreach and education programs. With the support of these staff, volunteer hours in these focal areas have increased more than 100% and agency-wide volunteer hours have increased by almost 20% to a total of 111,000 hours in 2014-15. This represents a value of more than \$2 million. Volunteers help staff expand the duration and geographic reach of programs and free staff to work on additional priorities. The Statewide Program Coordinator also supports the agency as a whole by being the primary contact for volunteer inquiries, prepares annual volunteer reports to the Legislature, facilitates policy development and best management practices by leading an agency-wide volunteer management team, and provides training to agency staff important for risk management and volunteer retention. Volunteer retention has increased from 56% to 61% since this program was instituted, an important indicator of satisfaction. Every dollar invested in these positions has resulted in more than \$2 of services to the agency. Eliminating this program would result in fewer volunteers and would reduce the effort available for conservation programs of strategic importance to the agency. (OPAWVS)

Cancel Network Bandwidth Upgrades (\$172,000) ATF

This would result in a 63% reduction of projected recurring funding for necessary future network upgrades across the State. Bandwidth, service levels and response times will stay the same until funding becomes available, as these upgrades have not yet been implemented. This will limit our ability to provide additional and improved network services to the affected sites. (OIT)

Reduce Spending for Hardware and Software Maintenance (\$238,300) ATF

This reduction would result in a 50% reduction of necessary software licenses and maintenance purchases by this office to provide enterprise services for the

Commission, such as backup licenses, Anti-virus and Anti-ransomware support licensing, VPN licenses, Google GIS mapping, GovDelivery email distribution and communications services. This will also reduce funding necessary to maintain aging technology services by 70%. This includes wiring, switches, routers, video conferencing, desktop computers, commission data backup, commission meetings agenda management system, UPS, and telephones. (OIT)

Reduce Operating Expenses and Contracted Services (\$270,541) TF

This proposal would significantly reduce the Expense budget of OED. This reduction would be achieved by reducing operating expenses and travel where possible, restricting collaboration between the Commission and other state and federal natural resources agencies that enhance the total conservation effort in Florida. (\$181,000 OED; \$26,501 OLA; 63,040 OLP)

Eliminate Red Tide Research & Monitoring (\$1,907,336) GR and \$670,000 in Grant Revenue

This reduction would eliminate research and monitoring efforts led by FWC, Mote Marine Laboratory and numerous partners to monitor coastal waters for red tide and other harmful algal blooms in support of shellfish safety regulations, public health and ecosystem health. FWC's red tide monitoring and research program has been the front line of response to red tide for nearly 60 years and is an integral component of Florida's shellfish food safety program. Elimination of this program will result in the closure of the only FDA certified laboratory in Florida testing for red tide toxins in shellfish. Loss of this capability would require that the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services find alternative certified laboratories (likely out of state) for this service resulting in higher costs and delays in re-opening shellfish areas impacted by red tides. In addition to negatively impacting the safety of Florida's seafood supply, this reduction would result in a loss of crucial water quality and harmful algal bloom monitoring data relied on by the Florida Department of Health to protect the health of Floridians and visitors. This reduction would also significantly impair FWC's ability to respond to fish kills and wildlife die offs resulting in large uncertainties regarding the causative nature of these events. State funding in this program is used to leverage over \$600,000 in federal grant funds directed at understanding and mitigating harmful effects of algal blooms and improving seafood safety. This reduction would result in FWC eliminating those grant funded projects and returning those federal funds. Economic impacts of red tides in Florida have been estimated to exceed \$20 million annually for past blooms. (FWRI)

Eliminate Continuous Improvement Section (4.0 FTE, \$314,444) ATF/LATF

This proposal would eliminate the Continuous Improvement Section (CIS) which was designed to lead and support the Agency Strategic Planning and Implementation, the facilitation program and continuous improvement projects within the agency. There are currently four FTE positions assigned to this unit. The elimination of this unit would require continuous improvement processes to be outsourced; and, facilitation and strategic planning to be coordinated by perspective Divisions and Offices. (FBO)

**Eliminate Marine Habitat Monitoring and Mapping Programs
(6.0 FTE; \$528,875 and \$8.9 million in grant revenue) TF**

Coral Monitoring: 2.0 FTEs, \$174,230 TF and \$3,786,283 grants

Coastal Habitat Monitoring: 3.0 FTEs, \$279,300 TF and \$4,973,699 grants

Marine Habitat Mapping: 1.0 FTE, \$75,345 TF and \$233,219 grants

Affected activities related to FWC marine habitat research and management are described below. Program components include research and management of corals, seagrasses, and marine habitat mapping. The proposed reduction would eliminate FWC's participation in coral reef monitoring that provides long-term coral health and population trends in the Florida Keys. The proposed reduction would eliminate FWC's capability to participate in health assessments of the Florida reef tract, which currently does not have a positive trend. We would lose our ability to directly participate in research that provides information necessary for coral management. We will no longer participate in resource damage assessments associated with vessel groundings or oil spills that result in monetary awards to the State of Florida for resource damages. FWC would no longer have staff to conduct seagrass research and would end its ongoing pre- and post-surveys of the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program on improving the marine habitats of Florida Bay and Biscayne Bay. FWC would no longer have the resources to address habitat loss due to algal blooms in the Indian River Lagoon. Geographic Information System (GIS) support will end for marine habitat mapping. This support is used in multiple ways by scientists, resources managers and the public for developing strategies to improve marine habitat quality and management. Uses of GIS range from helping to locate optimal artificial-reef placement, aquaculture permit assessment, predicting distribution of commercially important fish, location of seagrass beds and coral reefs for inclusion in boater guides, and generally transferring geographic information to the public about the marine ecosystem. FWC and FWRI's ability to execute statutorily-mandated scientific work would be reduced or eliminated and \$8.9 million in grant revenue would be turned away. (FWRI)

**Reduce Marketing and Education Efforts for Hunting
(1.0 FTE; \$67,818) SGTF**

This reduction would decrease public information materials related to hunting and the conservation and management of game wildlife species. The effect would be that the public would receive less information about hunting and its role in wildlife management as well as reduced communications concerning regulations and public hunting opportunities, which in turn would reduce hunter satisfaction and decrease the ability to retain and recruit hunters. (DHGM)

**Eliminate 23 Law Enforcement Officer Positions (10.0 FTE; \$870,713) GR
(13.0 FTE; \$1,149,505) MRCTF**

A reduction of 23 sworn law enforcement officer positions would significantly impede the ability of the Division of Law Enforcement to provide law enforcement services to the citizens of Florida, meet the constitutional charge to protect fish and wildlife resources, and provide disaster relief or homeland security services when needed. The reduction would result in fewer high-visibility patrols in manatee areas, panther areas, wildlife management areas, state parks, state forests, and popular

boating and fishing areas, currently serving as a deterrent to illegal activities. The agency's ability to respond rapidly to calls for service from the public would be reduced, and remaining officers would have to cover larger patrol zones. Efforts to insure the health and safety of the public would be reduced if these positions were eliminated, reducing the agency's ability to adequately provide boating safety patrol, investigate boating accidents, and respond to critical incidents that have a direct impact on the safety of Florida's citizens and visitors. FWC's ability to respond to man-made and natural disasters would also be adversely impacted. Responding safely to major catastrophic events requires extensive training, preparations, logistics, and scheduling. Having fewer people to respond to such events presents additional workload and risk to those who do respond.

Abbreviations

(R) – Recurring Appropriation

(NR) – Non-Recurring Appropriation

DFFM – Divisions of Freshwater Fisheries Management

DHGM – Division of Hunting & Game Management

DHSC – Division of Habitat & Species Conservation

DFFM – Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management

DLE – Division of Law Enforcement

DMFM – Division of Marine Fisheries Management

FCO – Fixed Capital Outlay

FGTF – Federal Grants Trust Fund

FPRMTF – Florida Panther Research and Management Trust Fund

FTE – Full Time Equivalent Employee Position

FWRI – Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

FWC – Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

FY – Fiscal Year

FYCCN – Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network

GDTF – Grants and Donations Trust Fund

GR- General Revenue Fund

IPCTF – Invasive Plant Control Trust Fund

LATF – Land Acquisition Trust Fund

Maint - Maintenance

Mgmt – Management

MRCTF – Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund

OCR – Office of Community Relations

OED – Office of the Executive Director

OSI – Office of Strategic Initiatives

NWTF – Nongame Wildlife Trust Fund

OPAWVS – Office of Public Access and Wildlife Viewing Services

OPS – Other Personal Services (part-time & temporary employment wages)

SGTF – State Game Trust Fund

TF –Trust Funds (various)

USFWS – United States Fish and Wildlife Service

WMA – Wildlife Management Area

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