

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

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

Date: November 18, 2015

Subject: Imperiled Species Management Plan (ISMP) and Proposed Rules

Purpose:

To present the draft Imperiled Species Management Plan (ISMP), a summary of associated draft rule revisions, and several draft species guidelines, along with the final Eastern chipmunk Biological Status Review Report. Staff seek Commission approval to advertise the proposed rule revisions and for the recommended final listing determination to remove the Eastern chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*) from the Florida Endangered and Threatened Species List.

Summary:

The Imperiled Species Management Plan (ISMP) is a comprehensive plan for conserving multiple imperiled species and represents an innovative approach that has not been previously attempted in Florida or elsewhere in the U.S. It is one of the key strategic issues in the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Strategic Plan. The ISMP combines managing the specific needs of 57 species with larger scale strategies addressing how to help multiple fish and wildlife species thrive and survive in the habitats they share. Of the 57 species included in the plan, 14 will remain listed as State-designated Threatened; 23 will change listing from Species of Special Concern to State-designated Threatened; 5 will remain Species of Special Concern; and 15 will be removed from the imperiled species lists but continue to be covered by the ISMP.

The FWC approved this new conservation model in 2010, and the final draft of the ISMP is expected to come before FWC Commissioners for approval in 2016. Creating the plan has been a collaborative effort. Partners and stakeholders have been heavily engaged in developing the plan. The ISMP depends on on-going partnerships with other agencies, stakeholders, private landowners and the public to successfully achieve its goals. More than 500 comments were received from the public on the draft ISMP released in February 2015. The updated draft incorporates ideas received during the initial public input period. There will be an additional 60-day period of opportunity for further public feedback on the ISMP before it is finalized for FWC Commission approval.

The 2011 Biological Status Review Report recommended leaving the Eastern chipmunk as a Species of Special Concern until new data could be collected. Those data have been collected, an updated Biological Status Review Report has been prepared, and staff's final recommendation following the 45 day peer review is removal of the Chipmunk from the list. Staff is seeking Commission approval on the final listing recommendation.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff is requesting Commission approval to advertise the proposed revisions to Rules 68A-9, -16, -25, -26, -27 (as described in the attached fact sheet) and on the recommended final listing determination to remove the Eastern chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*) from the Florida Endangered and Threatened Species List.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Claire Sunquist, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation

Imperiled Species Management Plan Fact Sheet

Species included in the ISMP:

- **8 Mammals:** Big Cypress fox squirrel, Everglades mink, Sanibel rice rat, Sherman’s short-tailed shrew, Homosassa shrew, Sherman’s fox squirrel, Eastern chipmunk, and Florida mouse
- **21 Birds:** American oystercatcher, black skimmer, Florida burrowing owl, Florida sandhill crane, least tern, little blue heron, Marian’s marsh wren, reddish egret, roseate spoonbill, Scott’s seaside sparrow, snowy plover, southeastern American kestrel, tricolored heron, Wakulla seaside sparrow, white-crowned pigeon, Worthington’s marsh wren, osprey (Monroe County population), brown pelican, limpkin, snowy egret, and white ibis
- **12 Reptiles:** Barbour’s map turtle, Florida brown snake (Lower Keys population), Florida Keys mole skink, Florida pine snake, Key ringneck snake, rim rock crowned snake, short-tailed snake, alligator snapping turtle, peninsula ribbon snake (Lower Keys population), red rat snake (Lower Keys population), striped mud turtle (Lower Keys population) and Suwanee cooter
- **4 Amphibians:** Florida bog frog, Georgia blind salamander, gopher frog and Pine Barrens treefrog
- **9 Fish:** blackmouth shiner, bluenose shiner, crystal darter, key silverside, saltmarsh top minnow, Southeastern tessellated darter, harlequin darter, Lake Eustis pupfish, and mangrove rivulus
- **3 Invertebrates:** Black Creek crayfish, Santa Fe crayfish, and Florida tree snail

Rule amendments proposed in support of implementing the ISMP include:

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| 68A-27: Rules Relating to Endangered or Threatened Species | Listing status changes for 38 species; removal of moratorium reference; add language allowing for take, possession or sale as authorized in a management plan; add language allowing for intentional take for human safety; removal of different permitting issuance standards for 4 species |
| 68A-26: Rules Relating to Amphibians | Provide protection by excluding two frogs being removed from list from rule allowing take of frogs |
| 68A-25: Rules Relating to Reptiles | Provide protection from overexploitation for two snakes and one turtle being removed from list by prohibiting take and possession |
| 68A-16: Rules Relating to Birds | Provide consistency between listed and non-listed species rules, and consistency with Federal implementation of Migratory Bird Treaty Act |
| 68A-9: Miscellaneous Permits | Change clarifies that federal authorizations other than permits also are acceptable as indication of federal authorization to take and/or possess migratory birds or their nests |

Species Conservation Measures and Permitting Guidelines

Species Conservation Measures and Permitting Guidelines, or species guidelines for short, are being separately developed to help landowners and managers – whether public or private – get all the basics on what they need to do to help conserve a species and avoid causing take of that species. Species guidelines contain information on the current status, protections, biological background, distribution and survey information, recommended practices, measures to avoid take, coordination with other state and federal agency processes, FWC permitting measures, and contact information. Species guidelines are designed to function as a helpful toolkit and agency guidance on what to do if that species of fish or wildlife is found or could potentially be found on private or public lands. The guidelines will offer options for species conservation that can be implemented up-front – in ways that are earlier and easier to implement – as a way to avoid causing take of the species.