

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

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

Date: September 2, 2015

Subject: 2016 Python Challenge™

Purpose:

To provide the Commission an introductory report on 2016 Python Challenge™.

Summary:

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), with the Wildlife Foundation of Florida, hosted the Python Challenge™ in 2013 — the first public month-long competitive harvest of Burmese pythons from state-managed lands. This event raised national and international awareness about Burmese pythons and other invasive species issues in Florida, and reached more than 80 million television viewers from across the nation alone. This competitive event resulted in the removal of 68 pythons — more than had ever been removed during the same time period in previous years, increasing our knowledge about python locations and diet. It also provided the opportunity to better understand public interest in participating in nonnative species removal.

Staff is planning for a second month-long Python Challenge™ starting in mid-January 2016. This event will focus on activating more citizens to become part of a long-term management solution, educating participants and the public in general, and fostering the protection of the unique Everglades ecosystem. More in-person training opportunities will be offered and a new e-learning module is being developed. The Python Challenge™ website is being updated and improved, the registration process is being streamlined, and family-friendly components such as a photo contest are being added.

More information on upcoming public events, the competition, registration and training will be provided during the presentation.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff is presenting this for informational purposes and any feedback that the Commission may have.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter

Kristen Sommers, Leader, Wildlife Impact Management Section