

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

From: Mr. Kipp Frohlich, Director, Habitat and Species Conservation

Date: September 26, 2018

Subject: Imperiled Species Management Plan Strategic Initiative Update, Rule Changes, Species Guidelines and Species Action Plans

Purpose:

Provide an overview and update on the development and implementation of one of the Agency's Strategic Initiatives, Florida's Imperiled Species Management Plan (ISMP); provide an overview and seek approval for: listing-status changes for 5 species, development of a new mammal rule, Species Conservation Measures and Permitting Guidelines for 8 species, and minor updates to the Imperiled Species Management Plan.

Summary:

Florida's ISMP was created in response to decades of challenges with listing designations of species in Florida. From 1972 through 1999, Florida's listing process had no fixed criteria or standardized review process. Several proposed listing actions in the 1990's and early 2000's were controversial and raised concerns that Florida's listing process needed a stronger framework supported by biological information. Dissatisfaction with the listing process pointed to broader concerns with how imperiled species were managed in Florida. Staff recognized the need for a new approach and began to design a comprehensive conservation model for the Imperiled Species Management Program, of which an improved listing process was one component. Refining this concept involved years of work with stakeholders to understand the shortcomings of the previous management approach, then creating strategic solutions supported by most stakeholders. In 2010, the Commission unanimously approved this new conservation model, including rules for a revised listing process that refined the criteria for listing, developed a single category for state-listed species (removing the Endangered and Species of Special Concern categories) and added the requirement to develop management plans for all species added or removed from the state list. These changes led to a stakeholder supported system that is more transparent and more accountable.

After the 2010 program approval, staff developed Florida's ISMP to address the conservation of 57 state-listed species, including 37 State-Threatened species, 5 Species of Special Concern (SSC), and 15 species removed from the list following Commission approval in 2016. The ISMP is integral to implementing the Imperiled Species Management Program and outlines the next 10 years of actions to meet the goal of conserving or improving the status of imperiled species to reduce the risk of extinction. Implementation of the plan is facilitated by several components: individual Species Action Plans (SAP), Species Conservation Measures and Permitting Guidelines (Guidelines), Integrated Conservation Strategies, and policies related to listed species. These components, along with 6 measurable objectives, contribute to the goal and make progress toward improving the status of Florida's imperiled species. Staff will provide an update on progress towards achieving the ISMP's objectives and present the final steps for completing Objective 1.

Objective 1 of the ISMP is to re-evaluate 5 species designated as SSC. Staff conducted the review process before bringing listing recommendations to the Commission in 2016 and 2017; the Commission approved the staff recommendations to list the Suwannee alligator snapping turtle as State Threatened, and to remove the harlequin darter, Homosassa shrew, osprey (Monroe County population), Sherman's fox squirrel, Apalachicola alligator snapping turtle, and alligator snapping turtle from the Florida Endangered and Threatened Species List. To complete the process described in rule for changes in listing status, staff are now proposing revisions to the SAPs and updates to species summaries in the ISMP.

Proposed rule changes will also be presented; these include removing species from 68A-27.005, F.A.C. (SSC) and adding them to 68A-27.003(2), F.A.C. (State-Threatened species) or into species-specific chapters. No mammal chapter exists, and staff will present language for organizing mammal-related rules similar to existing chapters for birds, reptiles, and amphibians. The new mammal chapter would include species being delisted or recently delisted, species with similarity of appearance concerns, and possession limits for species that may be maintained as pets. Staff will present Guidelines for the Eastern chipmunk and for the 7 species being delisted. Guidelines for species removed from the list are intended to outline current protections, voluntary conservation practices, and help to achieve the SAP goal to prevent the need to re-list in the future.

Staff Recommendation:

Approval of proposed rule changes to remove 5 species from 68A-27.005, F.A.C., add the Suwanee alligator snapping turtle to 68A-27.003, F.A.C., add alligator snapping turtles to 68A-25.002, F.A.C., create the new mammal rule (68A-29.002). If approved these changes will be advertised and filed for adoption without further hearing, unless requested by a member of the public.

Approval of updates to the ISMP to reflect the revised SAPs for these species and approval of the Species Conservation Measures and Permitting Guidelines for the alligator snapping turtles (3 species), Eastern chipmunk, harlequin darter, Homosassa shrew, osprey, and Southern fox squirrel.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Claire Sunquist Blunden, ISMP Coordinator, Species Conservation Planning Section (SCP)
Brad Gruver, Section Leader, SCP