

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Doc Kokol, Director, Office of Strategic Initiatives
Date: September 26, 2018
Subject: Staff Report - Expanding Participation in Conservation Strategic Initiative

Purpose:

Provide an update on the Expanding Participation in Conservation Strategic Initiative (EPIC), the Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network (FYCCN) and the Recruit, Retain and Reactivate (R3) campaign.

Summary:

A main goal of the EPIC Initiative is to increase conservation participation among youth and families representing Florida's diverse population by expanding partnerships with FYCCN and other programs that promote fishing, hunting, boating, wildlife viewing, shooting sports, and conservation appreciation. The FYCCN creates partnerships to connect youth and families with positive fish and wildlife-oriented outdoor experiences and provides a foundation for a lifetime of enjoyment and support for conservation. The R3 Campaign is an integral part of EPIC. EPIC provides the strategic oversight, the goals of the Initiative and R3 provides the tactical objectives. Implementing the Expanding Participation in Conservation initiative includes ensuring all FWC youth and family programs provide stewardship and hands-on activities.

Efforts are underway to recruit diverse audiences and potential partners that serve them to increase their conservation participation in FYCCN and other conservation education programs. Incentive plans and awards programs are in the works to recognize partners who are successfully implementing FWC programs with diverse audiences. Partner participation is being evaluated, and criteria have been established for viable partnerships. Over 350 partner sites have joined FYCCN to provide programming and have helped FWC reach over 2.3 million youth in the past seven years.

FWC's diverse educational programs provide youth and families with the core concepts that enable them to understand the need for conservation and create the next generation of stewards. Staff have compiled a comprehensive listing of current programs and are creating evaluations to determine the effectiveness and reach of each. Research on techniques and strategies to engage diverse audiences is being compiled, and best practices will be incorporated into our existing programs.

Participation in hunting and fishing has been declining since the 1980s. Hunting and fishing license and equipment sales produce the vast majority of funding for fish and wildlife conservation and habitat restoration. Equipment and travel expenses associated with hunting and fishing generate billions of dollars annually for the national economy and support hundreds of thousands of jobs. Hunting, fishing, and associated outdoor activities are enjoyed by millions of people, and offer opportunities to maintain a connection with nature. For all these reasons, the conservation community considers it vitally important to slow, and ultimately reverse, the decline in hunting, fishing, and associated activities. Addressing all aspects of R3 - recruiting, retaining and reactivating hunters and anglers is underway at FWC.

Staff Recommendation:

This presentation is for informational purposes and any discussion or direction that the Commission may want to provide.

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