

# MEMORANDUM



**To:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners  
**From:** Kipp Frohlich, Director, Habitat and Species Conservation  
**Date:** December 13, 2018  
**Subject:** Nonnative Fish and Wildlife Proposed Rules

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**Purpose:**

Obtain approval to advertise proposed rules that modify Chapter 68-5, Florida Administrative Code (FAC) (Rules Relating to Non-Native Species).

**Summary:**

Invasive nonnative species are those that are not native to an area, whose introduction would likely result in establishment of a reproducing population and cause harm to the economy, environment or human health. Invasive nonnative species are considered the second most significant threat to biodiversity globally, after habitat loss. Florida is home to a variety of unwanted and damaging species including pythons; large lizards, such as tegus, monitors and iguanas; many freshwater fish species; and marine species, such as lionfish. The issues associated with invasive nonnative wildlife in Florida have increased in frequency and severity over the last decade, costing more than \$3 million annually in efforts related to regulation, prevention, control, and removal. Despite these efforts, Florida continues to experience negative impacts from nonnative fish and wildlife that escape captivity. Prevention and control tools, such as alternatives to releasing pets into the wild, early detection and rapid response, are not able to fully address the impacts.

In September, the Commission directed staff to move forward with gathering public input on rule concepts regarding nonnative fish and wildlife. These concepts included adding some species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as “Injurious” to Florida’s Prohibited species list, adding permit criteria for importing nonnative species and adding definitions in Chapter 68-5, FAC. Five public workshops were held in south and central Florida, an online survey was conducted, and a method for the public to submit comments via email was provided. Feedback received from the public strongly supports increasing invasive species regulations to protect Florida’s environment, economy and human health and safety. The majority of public input received supports moving forward with adding the recommended species to the Prohibited species list. Feedback from multiple individuals and institutions helped to refine the proposed definitions and most supported the proposed definition concepts. Currently any person importing nonnative species is required to obtain an import permit. While public feedback supported the development of conceptual language that would establish criteria for evaluation of import permit requests, changes to this language may impact a broad range of stakeholders including tropical fish dealers, marine life dealers, and the captive wildlife industry. Staff need additional time to work with stakeholders to ensure that proposed changes are adequately discussed and propose to bring language to a future meeting.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Approval of the proposed rule language of Chapter 68-5, FAC for advertisement and further public comment. Final rule language will be presented at a subsequent Commission meeting.

**Staff Contacts and/or Presenters:**

Kristen Sommers, Leader, Wildlife Impact Management Section  
Sarah Funck, Biological Administrator, Wildlife Impact Management Section