

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Kipp Frohlich, Director, Habitat and Species Conservation
Date: July 18, 2019
Subject: Staff Update: Pythons in Florida

Purpose:

Provide an update on efforts and opportunities to help detect and remove pythons from Florida's ecosystem, including recent efforts in research and management.

Summary:

Invasive fish and wildlife species impact Florida's economy, ecology and human health and safety. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has led efforts to address these impacts in Florida through regulatory action, education and outreach programs, removal efforts, funding and supporting innovative research and coordination with partners. One of the most challenging high priority invasive species is the Burmese python.

- In 2017, FWC removed perceived barriers to lethal removal year-round on 22 FWC managed state lands. By May 30, 2019, over 8,600 hours of surveys had been conducted by the Python Action Team, removing almost 500 pythons and 1 nest containing 39 eggs.
- Recent research efforts as a result of increased funding from the Florida Legislature have focused on refining existing detection and removal tools, developing new innovative ways to find and remove pythons, and paying experienced python hunters. The FWC has been a leader in supporting innovative research concepts including the development and testing of python traps, development of pheromones to attract pythons, use of python detection dogs, and other concepts. Through the collective efforts of our programs combined with those of the South Florida Water Management District, the National Park Service, USFWS National Wildlife Refuges, and by private individuals, over 8,000 pythons have been removed from the wild in Florida.
- As of May 2019, 114 Burmese pythons have been surrendered as part of the Exotic Pet Amnesty program. We hold ongoing Python Patrol trainings for natural resource workers, local law enforcement agencies, and others that may encounter pythons in the wild. Training includes identification, how to report any sightings, and safe capture techniques with a live wild-caught python.
- The FWC, with support from Everglades National Park, is leading the development of an Interagency Python Control and Management Plan for land managers and identifying goals for management. We continue to work with our partner agencies to develop, refine, and utilize the best available science and approaches to python removal. Future removal efforts include rapidly responding to new introductions of pythons, engaging more expert python hunters on public lands, increasing use of python detection dogs and sentinel pythons, developing python-specific traps, and working with technological innovators to come up with new solutions.

Staff Recommendation:

This presentation is for informational purposes and any direction that the Commission may provide.

Staff Contacts and/or Presenters:

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