



Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Schedule VIII B-2 Potential Reductions
2020 Legislative Session
October 3, 2019

In preparation for the 2020 Legislative Session, the Governor, House, and Senate instructed state agencies to prepare a list of potential reductions equal to 10% of the adjusted recurring budget for next year. The following list contains the staff recommendations for the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The 10% list totals \$27,961,083 of which \$3,509,563 is from General Revenue funds and \$24,451,520 is from trust funds.

Reduce Non-CARL Land Management Funding: (\$4,163,538) LATF

This proposal reduces the Commission's ability to manage new and current lands. The impact of this proposal would compound the effects of the 2019-20 reductions, as it would decrease funding directed to land management operations. Additional reductions will further diminish wildlife protection, public recreational opportunities, and land management programs on private, state or federally owned lands within the Wildlife Management Area (WMA) system, where the Commission is either a designated lead manager, or a secondary cooperator. Staffing on some land units within the WMA system may have to be reduced, which would result in a reduction of land management activities and maintenance of infrastructure for public access and recreational activities. Reduced funding will affect long-term resource protection programs, such as natural vegetation community restoration and imperiled species recovery. In some cases, such as exotic plant control, recent accomplishments may be compromised or negated if funding is inadequate to support necessary maintenance treatments. (DHSC)

Reduce Invasive Plant Management Funding: (\$7,437,089) LATF

This proposal would reduce the Commission's ability to manage aquatic and terrestrial invasive plants. A reduction in funding would result in fewer invasive aquatic plant control projects in public waterways and upland invasive plant control projects on public conservation lands. Delays or cancellation of plant control projects can cause geometric increases in growth of invasive plants. This would result in fewer project sites being funded, ultimately resulting in additional sites becoming re-infested after having spent state dollars getting the invasive plants under control. Growing invasive plant populations can have adverse impacts on recreational activities such as fishing, hunting, boating, swimming, and ecotourism, and can have an adverse impact on beneficial native habitat that is critical for the management of fish and wildlife. In addition, excessive invasive plant populations in public waterways can restrict water flow and cause flooding during critical periods, resulting in danger to human health and safety. A significant portion of the invasive plant control projects are conducted by contractors in the private sector. (DHSC)

Reduce Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network Operations, Education, and Outreach: (\$183,900) TF

This proposal would reduce funding for the Project WILD conservation education program. This program is dependent on volunteer facilitators who provide professional development trainings to elementary, middle and high school educators throughout Florida. This funding cut would reduce the amount of support available to this volunteer network and would result in approximately four hundred fewer teachers trained in our conservation education curriculum.

The proposal would also reduce operational funds which support youth saltwater fishing camps and marine education programming. Programmatic offerings to Florida Youth Conservation Center Network (FYCCN) partners would be reduced, which would decrease the number of youth exposed to the Office's conservation education and stewardship activities. This proposal would reduce the long-term support and recruitment of young anglers in Florida.

In addition, this proposal would reduce the FYCCN's ability to serve existing partners and to recruit new partners. A variety of strategies would be implemented to reduce expenditures, including a reduction in partnership coordinator travel to potential partner sites, a reduction in conference attendance to promote the FYCCN, a reduction in promotional materials, and a reduction in partner recreational equipment, such as kayaks, fishing gear, binoculars, and archery supplies. This would result in a decrease in the number of conservation education and recreational opportunities made available for youth and families throughout Florida. (FYCCN)

Reduce Operating Expenses, Other Personal Services, and Contracted Services: (\$321,673) TF

This proposal would eliminate a significant portion of travel by personnel in Executive Direction and Administrative Support Services offices, would reduce spending on communications, subscriptions, partnerships, utilities, and software, and would result in a reduction of support to Agency programs. The proposal would also limit the number of events and meetings each year hosted by the Commission, as costs would rise due to outsourcing services through hotel vendors and event planners. Much of the Commission's face-time with the public, stakeholders, and communities takes places in the field during statewide travels. Limiting travel and exposure to the critical resources we protect would weaken the Agency's ability to carry out its strategic plan.

In addition, the proposal would eliminate the Other Personal Services position housed in the Improvement & Planning Section (IPS). Eliminating this position will decrease the Office's ability to maintain the level of service currently provided towards facilitation and strategic planning.

An effect of this proposal would be a reduction in the number of license and permit transactions. Sales of licenses and permits represent a significant portion of cash flow to the Commission and reducing the volume of potential sales transactions would result in a decrease in earned revenue. The impact resulting from this reduction would be compounded by the subsequent decrease in Commission

eligibility toward the receipt of federal funding, which is based on the number of recreational license holders in the state. (\$150,000 OED; \$6,501 OLA; \$100,000 OLP; \$35,500 CRO; \$29,672 IPS)

Reduce Exotic and Nuisance Wildlife Funding:

(\$ 72,746) GR

(\$181,682) LATF

This proposal would reduce the agency's ability to remove harmful fish and wildlife from Florida. A reduction in funding would reduce the number of contracts that the agency could support that directly remove invasive wildlife by private contractors. This would also reduce crucial research by research institutes that focuses on reducing the impacts of invasive species, developing new removal techniques and technology, or assesses the risks of nonnative species in trade. (DHSC)

Eliminate the Fostering Success Program: (\$100,000) GR

This proposal would eliminate funding for the Fostering Success Program. This program provides part-time employment opportunities and career mentoring to aged-out foster children. The proposal would reduce the number of youth currently hired from seven to zero. (FYCCN)

Eliminate Transfer to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services/IFAS/Invasive Exotic Plant Research Funding: (\$633,128) IPCTF

This proposal would eliminate the transfer to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to fund invasive exotic plant research at the quarantine lab in Ft. Pierce for insects that must be quarantined before being released. Currently, the agency pays \$633,128 on a recurring basis to help support this program. This reduction reflects 100% of the total program funding. (DHSC)

Eliminate Oceanaria Reimbursements for Manatee Rehabilitation and Support for the University of Florida Marine Mammal Veterinary Program: (\$2,104,000) MRCTF

FWC has managed the Oceanaria Reimbursement Assistance Program for rescued, rehabilitated, and released Florida manatees since 1991. Since July, 2000, these funds have been available to reimburse the three contracted and federally permitted manatee rehabilitation facilities in Florida: Lowry Park Zoo, Miami Seaquarium, and Sea World Florida. These specialized, federally permitted, facilities are the only institutions available for acute-care, veterinarian-based rehabilitation of manatees. This reduction would reduce or eliminate this service to the state of Florida at a time when the number of manatees killed and injured annually is at record levels. Presently, the oceanaria are reimbursed for only about 50% of qualified expenses.

This reduction would also eliminate the University of Florida Marine Mammal Veterinary Program. This program is a joint endeavor of the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine and FWC. This program was developed to promote the health and understanding of marine mammals in Florida and is one of the few initiatives in the country training veterinarians, veterinary medical students, and related professionals in the care of marine mammals. This program provides much

needed expertise to FWC externships and specialized pathology services which are critical in determine cause of death for manatee carcasses. This reduction would eliminate at least 3 positions at the University of Florida. (FWRI)

Reduce Spending for Hardware and Software Maintenance, Technology Refresh, and Operating Capital Outlay: (\$468,000) ATF

This proposal would result in a significant reduction in the volume of software licenses and maintenance purchases by the Office of Information Technology necessary to provide enterprise services for the Commission. These items include backup licenses, Anti-virus and Anti-ransomware support licensing, virtual private network licenses, Google Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, WebQA, GovDelivery email distribution, and communications services. This reduction would limit funding necessary to maintain aging technology services by a factor of 70%. This would include wiring, switches, routers, video conferencing equipment, desktop computers, wireless networks and access points, commission data backup, commission meetings agenda management system, United Parcel Service, and Voice-Over IP telephone systems. Additionally, the proposal will reduce the amount of resources available to maintain existing systems such as PermitMe, PMARS, etc., and would reduce the capacity at which the Office is capable of replacing or repairing failed or outlaid equipment having a unit cost in excess of \$1,000. (OIT)

Eliminate Trap Retrieval Program: (\$182,525) MRCTF

This proposal would eliminate the statewide retrieval of lost or abandoned commercial spiny lobster, stone crab, and blue crab traps using competitively-bid, contractual services. Currently \$25 of the commercial license fee for these three fisheries is specified by the Legislature to be spent on trap retrieval of lost or abandoned traps during closed seasons [sec. 379.367(2)(b), sec. 379.365(1)(a) and sec. 379.366(3)(a), F.S., respectively]. This program reduces the impact that commercial fishing gear has on the marine environment. These traps continue to trap target and non-target marine organisms after they are lost or abandoned. In addition, movement of some of the lost or abandoned traps can cause damage to marine habitat. This proposal would eliminate an OPS position that assists in the implementation of the Commission's spiny lobster, stone crab and blue crab trap retrieval program and trap debris removal program pursuant to s. 379.2424, Florida Statutes (F.S.), s. 379.368, F.S., and rule 68B-55, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.). Each year this position acts as Commission observer aboard commercial fishing vessels during trap retrieval operations statewide, and records and enters trap retrieval data in an online database. This OPS position also assists in the implementation of the administrative penalty program; creates and maintains a statewide database of penalty assessments; and issues applications for Special Activity Licenses program pursuant to rule 68B-8, F.A.C. Additionally, this proposal would eliminate funding that is provided to private contractors to remove the traps. The trap retrieval program is authorized in s. 379.2424, F.S. This proposal would necessitate statutory changes. (DMFM)

Reduce Freshwater Fisheries Management Operations: (\$42,612) SGTF

This proposal would reduce DFFM's regional operational budget by 56% in

Contracted Services and Other Personal Services categories and eliminate the Land Use Proceeds Disbursements category.

A reduction in Contracted Services would leave \$14,996 in this category to cover annual publishing and mailing of freshwater fishing regulations statewide. Additional contracting needs could not be supported in this category. A reduction in Other Personal Services would leave \$14,408 in this category which would impact our ability to hire temporary staff to document fish populations and evaluate Division management projects (e.g. angler surveys). A reduction in \$4,612 of Land Use Proceeds Disbursements would eliminate the Division's ability to spend potential proceeds generated from the lands it manages at Tenoroc Fish Management Area. However, this would not result in a significant impact to operations.

All categories except Land Use Proceeds Disbursements are used as State match for our Sport Fish Restoration federal grant. This proposal would reduce our potential to capture \$127,836 of future federal grant funding. (DFFM)

Reduce WMA User Pay Program: (\$416,180) SGTF

This proposal would reduce the agency's spending authority supporting the Commission's Wildlife Management Area (WMA) User Pay Program and decrease opportunities for public hunting on commission-managed lands. This budget reduction would preclude the continued private/public partnership supporting the Grove Park and Gulf Hammock WMAs and thereby will most likely lead the removal of these areas from the Wildlife Management Area program by the landowners. Private hunting leases might be undertaken by the owners of these timber lands to continue to provide nature-based recreational opportunities. This proposal would retain the private lands that constitute the Flint Rock WMA in the system. (DHGM)

Eliminate Marine Habitat Monitoring and Mapping Programs: (5.0 FTE; \$528,875) MRCTF

Affected activities related to FWC marine habitat research and management are described below. Program components include research and management of corals, seagrasses, and marine habitat mapping. The proposed reduction would eliminate FWC's participation in coral reef monitoring that provides long-term coral health and population trends in the Florida Keys. The proposed reduction would eliminate FWC's capability to participate in health assessments of the Florida reef tract and respond to the current widespread coral disease event. We would lose our ability to directly participate in research that provides information necessary for coral management. We will no longer participate in resource damage assessments associated with vessel groundings or oil spills that result in monetary awards to the State of Florida for resource damages. FWC would no longer have staff to conduct seagrass research and would end its ongoing pre- and post-surveys of the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program on improving the marine habitats of Florida Bay and Biscayne Bay. FWC would no longer have the resources to address habitat loss due to algal blooms in the Indian River Lagoon. Geographic Information System (GIS) support will end for marine habitat mapping. This support is used in multiple ways by scientists, resources managers and the public for developing strategies to improve marine habitat quality and

management. Uses of GIS range from helping to locate optimal artificial-reef placement, aquaculture permit assessment, predicting distribution of commercially important fish, location of seagrass beds and coral reefs for inclusion in boater guides, and generally transferring geographic information to the public about the marine ecosystem. FWC and FWRI's ability to execute statutorily-mandated scientific work would be reduced or eliminated and \$8.9 million in grant revenue would be turned away. (FWRI)

Reduce Marine Fisheries Assessment: (10.0 FTE; \$1,397,330) MRCTF

This reduction will reduce marine fisheries monitoring and assessment efforts that support science-based management of valuable commercial and recreational fisheries. Saltwater fishing in Florida generates over \$5 billion in economic impact and supports over 50,000 jobs. Scientists in this program monitor the abundance of recreational and commercial fishes in six estuaries around the state and conduct detailed studies offshore which inform management actions such as size limits and closed seasons. This information is critical to evaluating the effects of current fishery regulations and predicting future stock levels. This reduction would result in the closure of the FWRI field lab on Apalachicola Bay and create a significant data gap for statewide fisheries assessments for species such as snook, seatrout, red drum, red snapper and gag grouper. State funds in this program are used as match for grants from federal, state and nonprofit sources. This reduction would require us to forego grant funded work in excess of \$2 million. (FWRI)

Eliminate Law Enforcement Officer Positions:

(35.0 FTE; \$3,336,817) GR
(62.0 FTE; \$5,740,163) MRCTF
(5.0 FTE; \$464,875) SGTF
(2.0 FTE; \$185,950) NWTF

This reduction would eliminate law enforcement officer positions. The calculation is based on the officer class (8515). The actual number would vary as higher-level positions are eliminated based on vacancies. The per officer savings is \$92,975 including salaries & benefits, incentives, human resource contract costs and operating expenses.

Out of the agency's \$34.1 million recurring General Revenue (GR) budget, \$33.3 million (97%) supports the Division of Law Enforcement. It is unavoidable to include some portion of law enforcement in any need to significantly reduce agency GR appropriations. Due to the Division of Law Enforcement's primary role of fish, wildlife, state parks, state forests, and boating safety law enforcement patrol, the vast majority of its appropriations are used for salaries of employees that provide or support the patrol function. Reducing the number of employees is the only viable solution to reducing large amounts of funding.

A reduction of 104 sworn law enforcement officer positions would impede the ability of the Division of Law Enforcement to provide law enforcement services to the citizens of Florida, meet the constitutional charge to protect fish and wildlife resources, and provide disaster relief or homeland security services when needed. The reduction would result in fewer high-visibility patrols in manatee areas, panther

areas, wildlife management areas, state parks, state forests, and popular boating and fishing areas, currently serving as a deterrent to illegal activities. The agency's ability to respond rapidly to calls for service from the public would be reduced, and remaining officers would have to cover larger patrol zones. Efforts to insure the health and safety of the public would be reduced if these positions were eliminated, reducing the agency's ability to adequately provide boating safety patrol, investigate boating accidents, and respond to critical incidents that have a direct impact on the safety of Florida's citizens and visitors. FWC's ability to respond to man-made and natural disasters would also be adversely impacted. Responding safely to major catastrophic events requires extensive training, preparations, logistics, and scheduling. Having fewer people to respond to such events presents additional workload and risk to those who do respond. (DLE)

Abbreviations:

(R) – Recurring Appropriation
(NR) – Non-Recurring Appropriation
CRO – Community Relations Office
DFFM – Divisions of Freshwater Fisheries Management
DHGM – Division of Hunting & Game Management
DHSC – Division of Habitat & Species Conservation
DFFM – Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management
DLE – Division of Law Enforcement
DMFM – Division of Marine Fisheries Management
FCO – Fixed Capital Outlay
FGTF – Federal Grants Trust Fund
FPRMTF – Florida Panther Research and Management Trust Fund
FTE – Full Time Equivalent Employee Position
FWRI – Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
FWC – Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
FY – Fiscal Year
FYCCN – Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network
GDTF – Grants and Donations Trust Fund
GR- General Revenue Fund
IPCTF – Invasive Plant Control Trust Fund
IPS – Improvement and Planning Section
LATF – Land Acquisition Trust Fund
Maint - Maintenance
Mgmt – Management
MRCTF – Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund
OCR – Office of Community Relations
OED – Office of the Executive Director
OLA – Office of Legislative Affairs
OLP – Office of Licensing and Permitting
OSI – Office of Strategic Initiatives
NWTF – Nongame Wildlife Trust Fund
OPAWVS – Office of Public Access and Wildlife Viewing Services
OPS – Other Personal Services (part-time & temporary employment wages)
SGTF – State Game Trust Fund
TF –Trust Funds (various)
USFWS – United States Fish and Wildlife Service
WMA – Wildlife Management Area