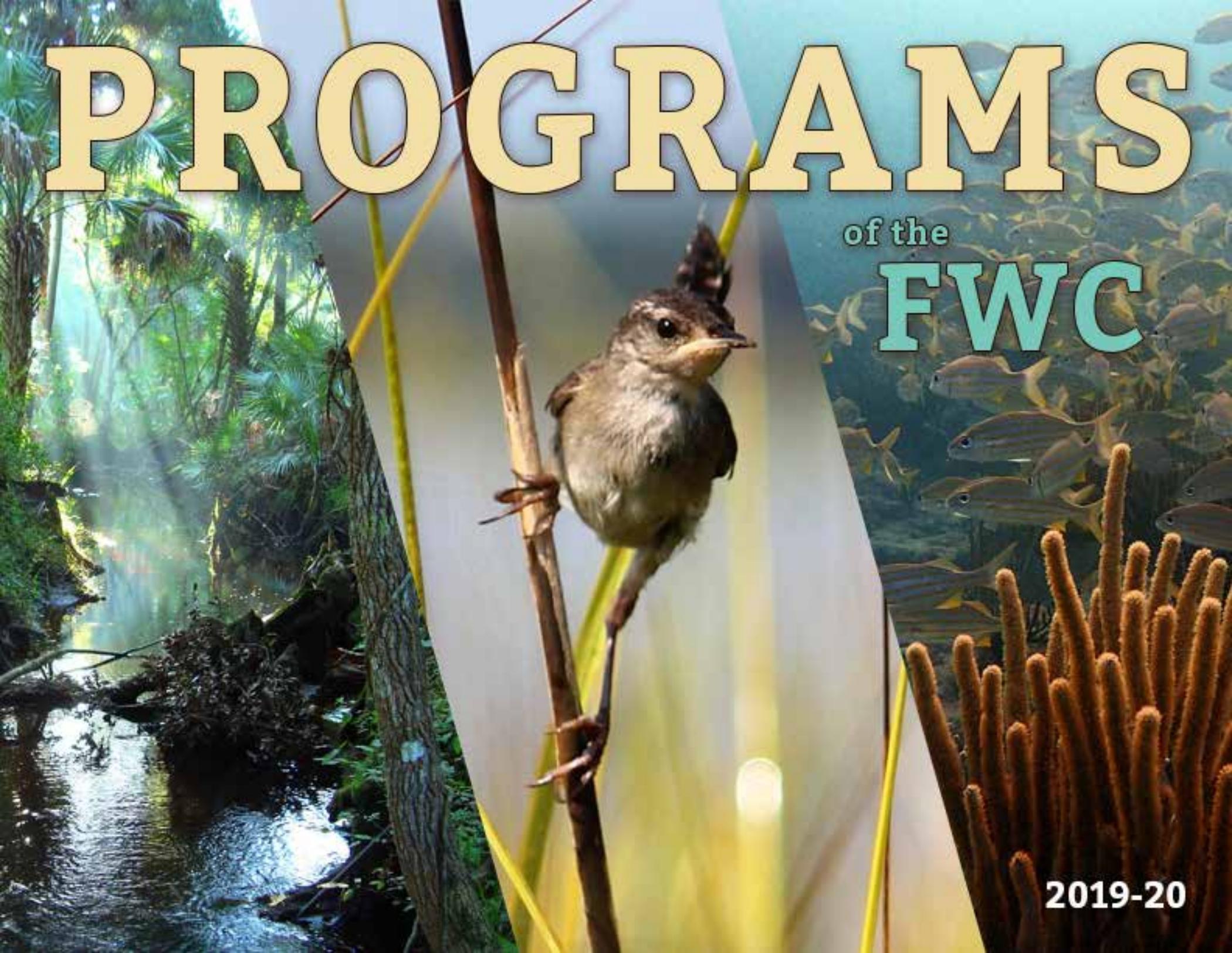


# PROGRAMS

of the

# FWC



2019-20

# From the Executive Director

Thank you for your interest in the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

It is a privilege to be a part of conserving fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people. This document explains how we organize our agency and deliver on our mission.

Keeping Florida's environment healthy and safe to provide pristine habitats and abundant recreational opportunities requires teamwork. FWC commissioners, appointed by the Governor, serve as trustees and make policy decisions to manage the resources for future generations. FWC staff are situated as subject matter experts, contributing hands-on research, management and law enforcement efforts. We work closely with a



**Eric Sutton**





diverse group of public and private partners and consider the public part of our team.

Sportsmen and women and other outdoor enthusiasts are vital to our mission. The fundamental principle of our country's wildlife management structure is that oversight of these resources is largely entrusted to states, with all citizens owning an equal share. This conservation approach is referred to as the North American Model. Our efforts at the FWC rely upon the communications, funding and other support of Florida's residents and visitors.

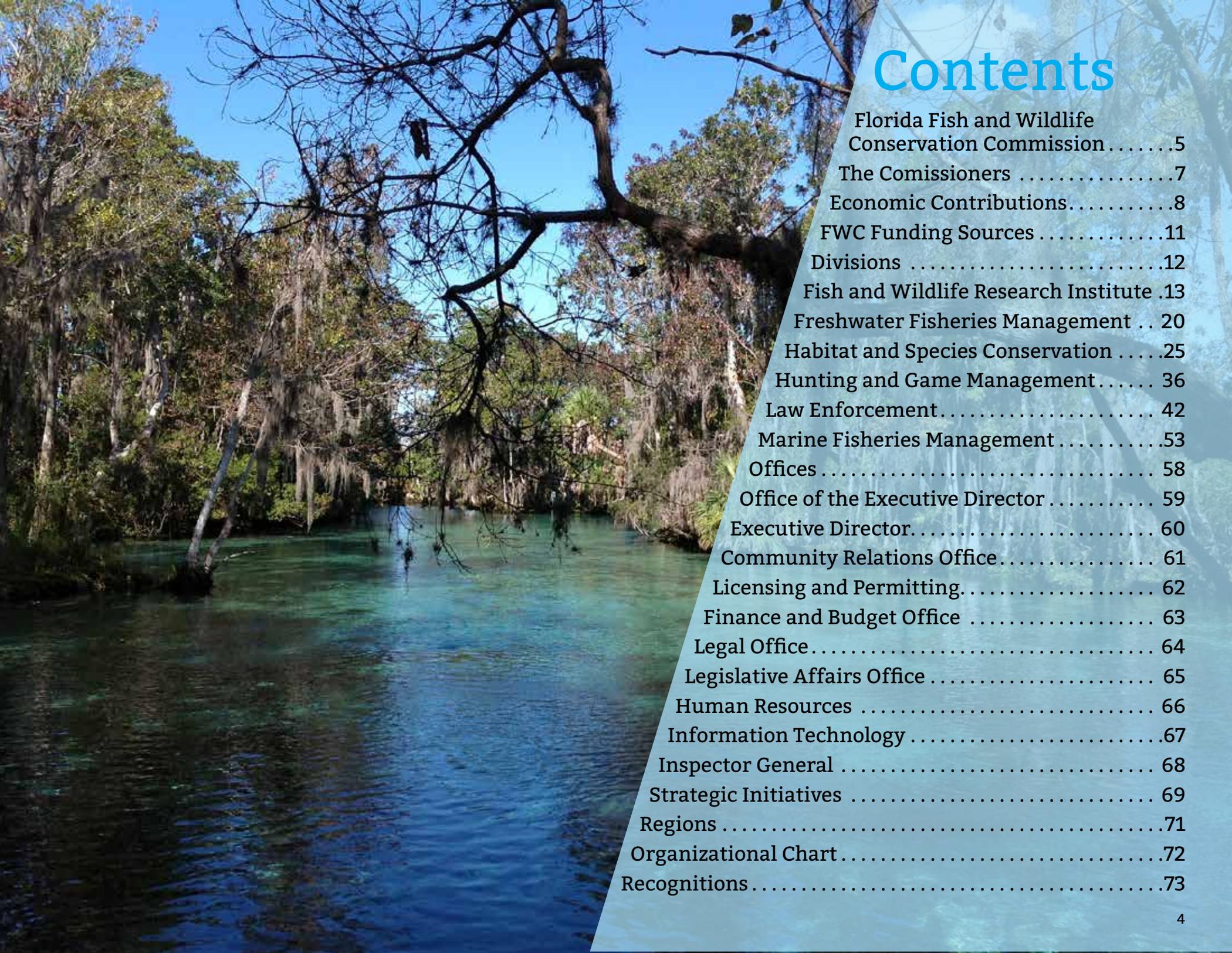
Please continue to attend our commission meetings, write and call our staff, sit on advisory groups, buy fishing and hunting licenses, and subscribe to our communications products. Take advantage of participation opportunities from coral conservation, invasive species removal and habitat restoration, to hunter safety education, youth outreach, and more. The more we work together, the more we can accomplish.

I hope you find this document useful and inspiring.

With regards,

Eric Sutton

Executive Director



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# Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

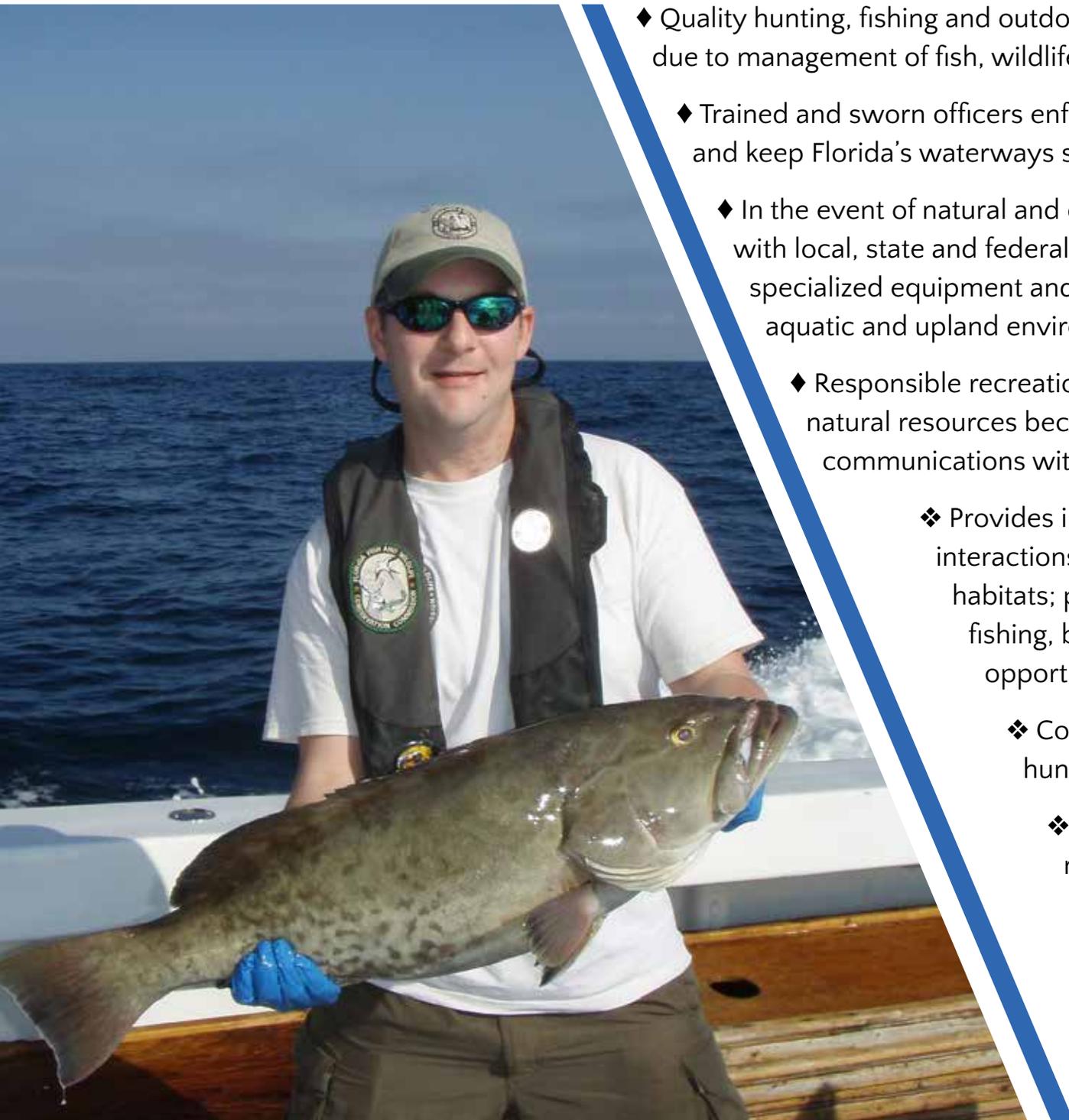
The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) consists of 2,112.5 full-time-equivalent employees, including 853 sworn law enforcement officers. All personnel work together to protect and manage more than 575 species of wildlife, 200 species of freshwater fish and 500 species of saltwater fish. The FWC works to balance the needs of these fish and wildlife species and the habitats that support them with the needs of Florida's growing population of 21.6 million people and the record number of visitors coming to the state – 126 million last year.

## Mission

Managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people.

## Benefits

- ◆ Scientific data drives management decisions for fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.
- ◆ Diverse wildlife resources and people benefit from studies about Florida's delicate and complex ecosystems and the impact humans have on them.



- ◆ Quality hunting, fishing and outdoor recreational opportunities continue, due to management of fish, wildlife and habitats.
- ◆ Trained and sworn officers enforce rules that protect fish and wildlife and keep Florida's waterways safe for millions of boaters.
- ◆ In the event of natural and other disasters, officers also cooperate with local, state and federal partners, using the agency's specialized equipment and extensive knowledge about Florida's aquatic and upland environments.
- ◆ Responsible recreation and stewardship of the state's natural resources become a reality. Through the FWC's communications with a variety of audiences, the agency:
  - ❖ Provides information about human-wildlife interactions; conservation; fish and wildlife habitats; protected species; and hunting, fishing, boating and outdoor recreational opportunities.
  - ❖ Conducts safety training and classes for hunters and boaters.
  - ❖ Teaches classes in outdoor recreational activities, such as bird-watching, fishing and hunting.
  - ❖ Coordinates programs, such as Kids' Fishing Clinics, specifically for people who traditionally have not participated in outdoor activities.

# The Commissioners

The FWC's seven Commissioners are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Florida Senate to five-year terms. Their constitutional duty is to exercise the "...regulatory and executive powers of the state with respect to wild animal life and fresh water aquatic life and shall also exercise regulatory and executive powers of the state with respect to marine life, except that all license fees and penalties for violating regulations shall be as provided by law."



**Robert A. Spottswood**  
Chairman



**Michael W. Sole**  
Vice Chairman



**Rodney Barreto**



**Steven Hudson**



**Gary Lester**



**Gary Nicklaus**



**Sonya Rood**

# Economic Contributions

A fishing boat is silhouetted against a vibrant sunset sky with orange, yellow, and red clouds. The boat has a tall mast with various equipment. In the background, a long pier extends across the water. The water is dark blue with some ripples. A large, light blue triangular graphic is on the right side of the slide, containing text.

When a family goes fishing or hunting, buys binoculars to view wildlife, visits a nature preserve, goes boating or visits a seafood restaurant in Florida, it is contributing to the economic prosperity of the state and to jobs. Results from various studies, summarized on the next page, show in human terms the value of protecting and managing wildlife.



## Economic impacts of hunting, freshwater fishing, saltwater fishing and wildlife-viewing

Category	Economic Contribution	Jobs
Hunting*	\$1.6 billion	14,673
Recreational freshwater fishing*	\$1.7 billion	14,040
Recreational saltwater fishing**	\$6.6 billion	96,801
Wildlife viewing*	\$4.9 billion	44,623

\* Sources: Southwick Associates 2012 report, using 2011 USFWS 5-year survey.

\*\* Source: National Marine Fisheries Service, 2017 report, using 2015 NOAA data.

## Economic impacts of boating industry

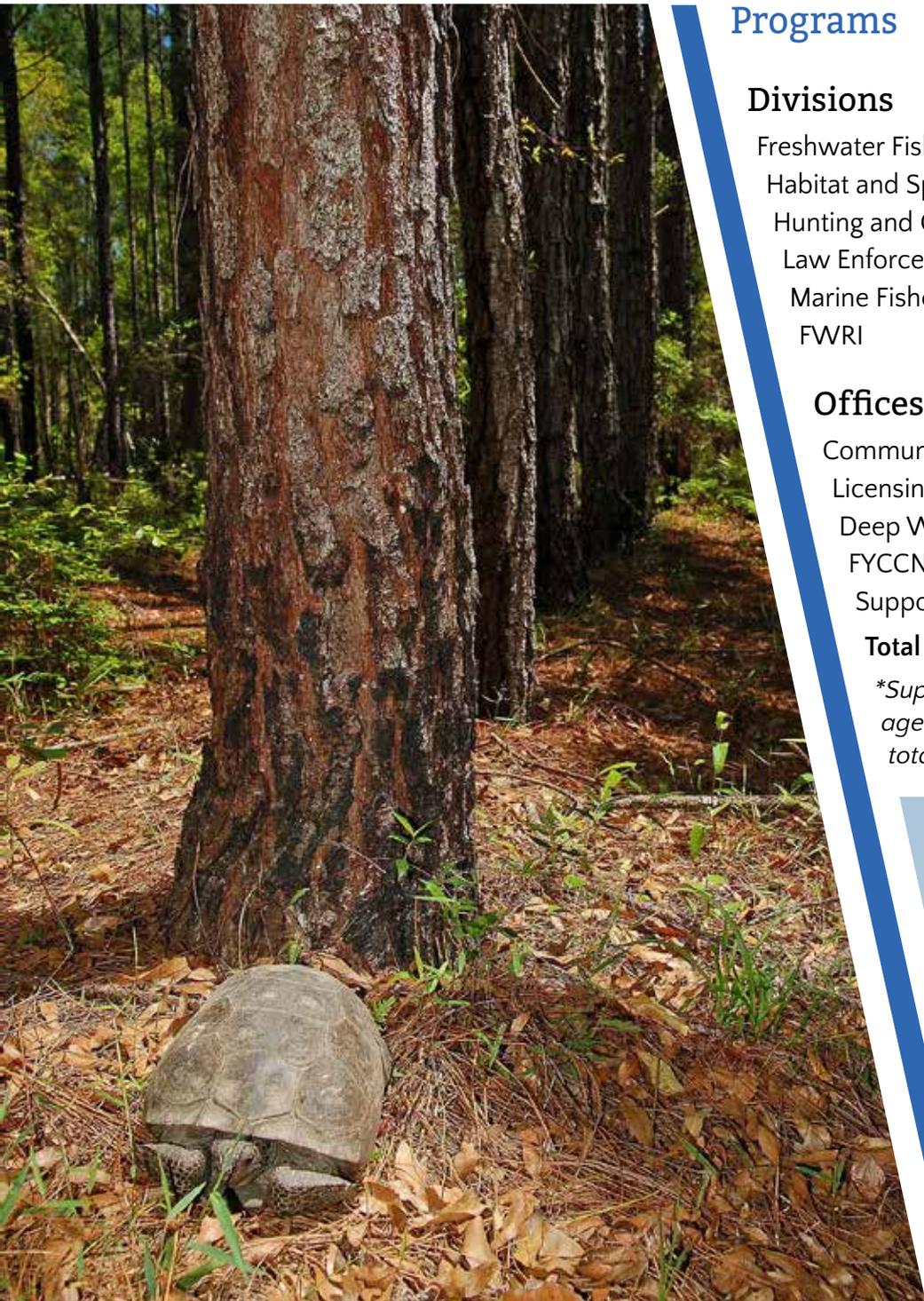
Category	Economic contribution	Jobs
Boating Industry	\$10.4 billion	82,752

Source: National Marine Manufacturers Association: Economic Significance of Recreational Boating in Florida. 2013

## Economic impacts of the seafood industry

Category	Economic Contribution	Jobs
Commercial Harvesters	\$479 million	6,658
Seafood Processors & Dealers	\$833 million	4,620
Importers	\$12.8 billion	41,471
Seafood Wholesales & Distributors	\$1.3 billion	10,077
Retail	\$2.3 billion	16,889
<b>Total Impacts</b>	<b>\$17.7 billion</b>	<b>79,714</b>

Source: National Marine Fisheries Service, 2017 report, using 2015 NOAA data.



## Programs

### Divisions

Freshwater Fish	59.0	\$3,574,243	\$2,349,764
Habitat and Species	374.5	\$24,176,303	\$94,784,132
Hunting and Game	45.0	\$2,997,527	\$4,529,735
Law Enforcement	1,043.0	\$83,488,362	\$51,357,480
Marine Fisheries	34.0	\$2,445,406	\$27,853,709
FWRI	339.0	\$22,558,412	\$40,653,726

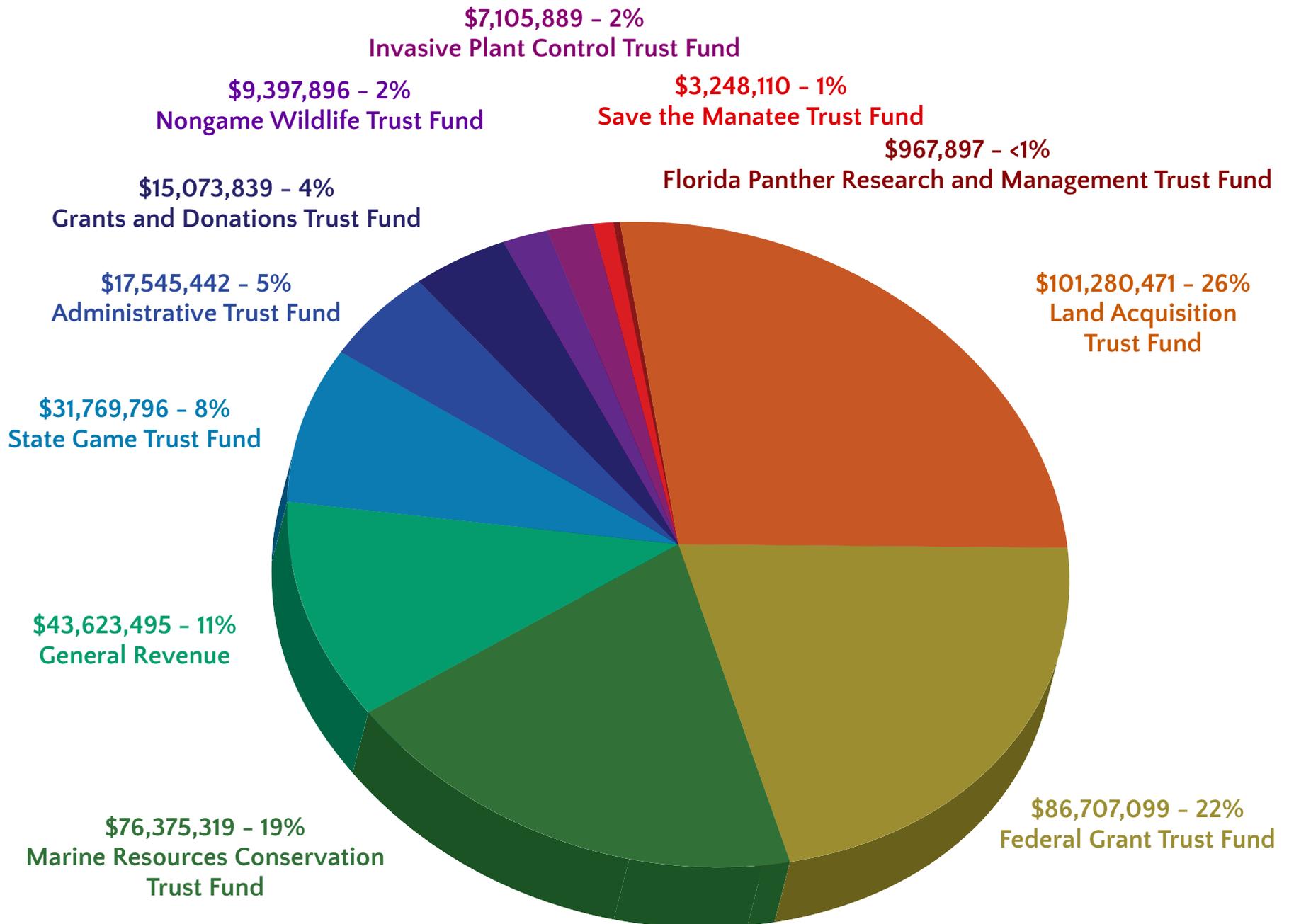
### Offices

Community Relations	12.5	\$748,003	\$414,335
Licensing and Permitting	20.0	\$1,106,495	\$3,651,277
Deep Water Horizon	1.0	\$121,327	\$1,414,661
FYCCN	14.0	\$845,777	\$1,364,584
Support Offices:*	170.5	\$12,096,345	\$10,583,560
<b>Total</b>	<b>2112.5</b>	<b>\$154,138,200</b>	<b>\$238,956,963</b>

*\*Support offices provide central administrative support for the agency. The agency's overhead from these offices is \$22,679,905 or only 5.53 percent of the total agency budget.*



# FWC Funding Sources Fiscal Year 2019-20



# Divisions

The FWC is comprised of six divisions and 9 offices plus five regions with regional directors. The six divisions are:

- ◆ Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
- ◆ Freshwater Fisheries Management
- ◆ Habitat and Species Conservation
- ◆ Hunting and Game Management
- ◆ Law Enforcement
- ◆ Marine Fisheries Management

# Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Gil McRae, Director  
100 Eighth Avenue SE  
St. Petersburg, FL 33701-5020  
727-896-8626

The work done by the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute reaches far beyond the confines of the FWC. Research conducted on habitats, freshwater and marine fisheries, harvested and imperiled species and other important plant and wildlife communities in Florida is used by federal, state and local governments, universities, recreational and commercial fishing interests, recreational hunting and boating interests, nongovernmental organizations and the public. FWRI integrates its research activities with management efforts of other FWC divisions.



## Mission

Through effective research and technical knowledge, FWRI provides timely information and guidance to protect, conserve and manage Florida's fish and wildlife resources.

## Strategies

- ◆ Monitors and provides information on the status of terrestrial, aquatic and coastal habitats; freshwater and marine fisheries; harvested species; imperiled species; and valuable plant and animal communities in Florida.
- ◆ Develops and implements restoration techniques for enhancement of terrestrial, freshwater and coastal habitats and wildlife communities.
- ◆ Responds to and provides technical support for catastrophes, including oil spills, ship groundings, die-offs, major chemical spills and natural disasters.
- ◆ Provides cause-of-death determination on manatees, bears, panthers, sea turtles and other animals, and screens for wildlife diseases such as avian influenza and chronic wasting disease.
- ◆ Identifies and monitors red tides and other harmful algal blooms, providing both technical support and advisories.



- ◆ Provides science-based biological, social and economic assessments of fish and wildlife resources, as well as decision support, to the Commission and others responsible for managing or regulating activities that depend on Florida's unique and diverse natural resources.
- ◆ Uses social science methods to describe, understand, predict and affect human attitudes and behaviors toward the natural environment. Encourages community members to act as citizen scientists by creating opportunities to report, share and submit information.
- ◆ Applies for and receives external grants representing over 40% of the Institute's funding to increase resources for critical research projects.

## **Fish and Wildlife Research Institute sections**

### **Center for Conservation Social Science Research**

The Center is responsible for conducting social science research geared towards better understanding human attitudes and behaviors towards the natural environment and informed decision-making. It has a twofold mission. First, a core group of social scientists provides consulting services for FWC programs – this includes advisement and



consultation for biologists and other FWC staff on the development and implementation of social science inquiry. Second, the staff affiliated with the center support the development and integration of social science within broader FWC programs. Staff conduct training on qualitative and quantitative social science methods, science communication, and stakeholder outreach and education.

## **Ecosystem Assessment and Restoration**

This section monitors coral reefs; assesses seagrass populations and coastal wetlands; evaluates maps of freshwater plants; and conducts upland research to support development of management practices to protect and improve the quality of habitat and diversity of wildlife on state-managed lands. Ecosystem Assessment and Restoration is responsible for monitoring and investigating harmful algal blooms, such as Florida red tide. This section also conducts surveillance for fish and wildlife diseases; investigates disease and mortality events; and evaluates the health of endangered panthers. The FWC's other scientific programs benefit from technical assistance from this section.

## **Freshwater Fisheries Research**

To ensure the health and sustainability of Florida's aquatic resources, the Freshwater Fisheries Research section collects and objectively analyzes fish, fishery, invertebrate and habitat data



and provides results to those in federal, state and local governments who make decisions that affect Florida's freshwater resources.

## **Information Science and Management**

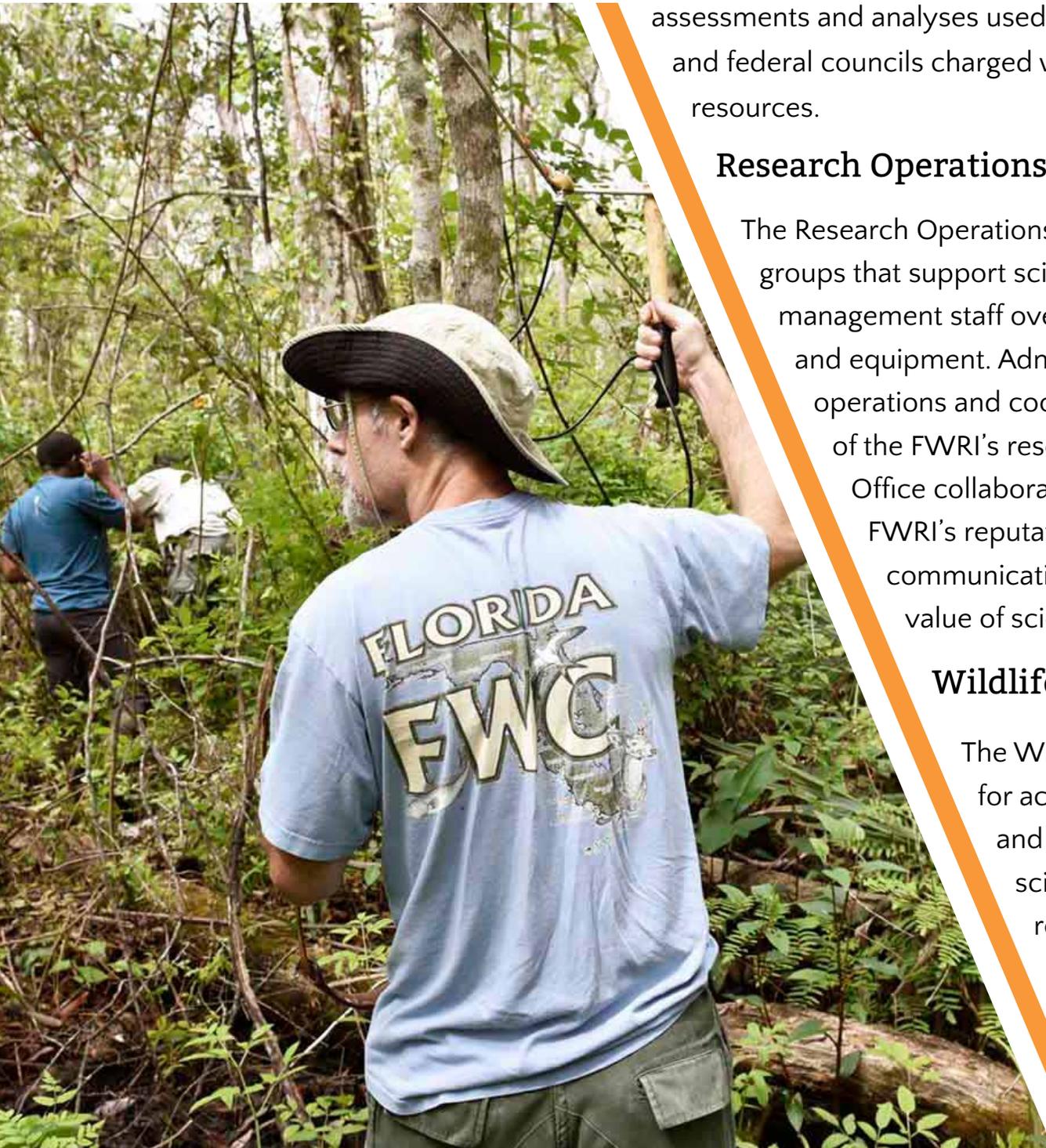
The Information Science and Management section produces, analyzes, manages and distributes scientific data and information that is used to aid in the conservation of fish and wildlife. This section employs techniques that include ensuring the statistical validity of FWRI research, electronic sharing, delivery of research findings, and computer mapping of habitats and species ranges. Researchers also maintain an extensive collection of fish and invertebrate specimens and provide data-management services and scientific library services.

## **Marine Fisheries Research**

To assess and predict marine fishery population trends, the Marine Fisheries Research section collects and integrates biological and harvest information from commercial and recreational marine fisheries and invertebrate species.

This section plays a major role in the Florida Marine Fisheries Enhancement Initiative – the FWC's cooperative effort to expand marine stock enhancement statewide.

This section also provides nearly all biological information, expert



assessments and analyses used by the FWC, interstate commissions and federal councils charged with managing Florida's marine fisheries resources.

## Research Operations

The Research Operations section consists of small work groups that support scientific activities of the FWRI. Facilities management staff oversees maintenance of all FWRI facilities and equipment. Administrative Services carries out financial operations and coordinates grants, which support much of the FWRI's research activities. The Communications Office collaborates agency-wide to promote and protect FWRI's reputation of excellence by creating strategic communications that enhance the understanding and value of scientific research.

## Wildlife Research

The Wildlife Research section is responsible for acquiring and distributing biological and ecological information critical for the science-based management, conservation, restoration and wise use of Florida's wildlife resources. This section provides information on best management practices for conserving these resources to federal, state and local managers and the public.



## FWRI budget summary

Funding Source	#FTE	FTE Salaries	Other Costs	Total Budget
Federal Grant Trust Fund		\$5,242,855	\$7,469,761	\$12,712,616
Florida Panther Research and Management Trust Fund		\$237,898	\$167,975	\$405,873
Grants and Donations Trust Fund		\$322,341	\$7,888,488	\$8,210,829
Land Acquisition Trust Fund		\$186,226	\$89,055	\$275,281
Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund		\$10,877,243	\$13,890,953	\$24,768,196
Nongame Wildlife Trust Fund		\$1,205,204	\$1,590,875	\$2,796,079
Save the Manatee Trust Fund		\$1,091,801	\$1,091,481	\$2,183,282
State Game Trust Fund		\$3,394,844	\$1,424,913	\$4,819,757
GR			\$4,262,000	
<b>Total Operating</b>		<b>\$22,203,965</b>	<b>\$35,835,936</b>	<b>\$58,039,901</b>
Fixed Capital Outlay:				
FWRI Repairs			\$1,066,025	
Deepwater Horizon			\$500,000	
Florida Aquarium			\$500,000	
Lowry Park Zoo			\$200,000	
Parker Manatee Aquarium			\$412,200	
Zoo Miami			\$100,000	
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>339.0</b>	<b>\$22,558,412</b>	<b>\$40,653,726</b>	<b>\$63,212,138</b>

Division of

# Freshwater Fisheries Management

Jon Fury, Director

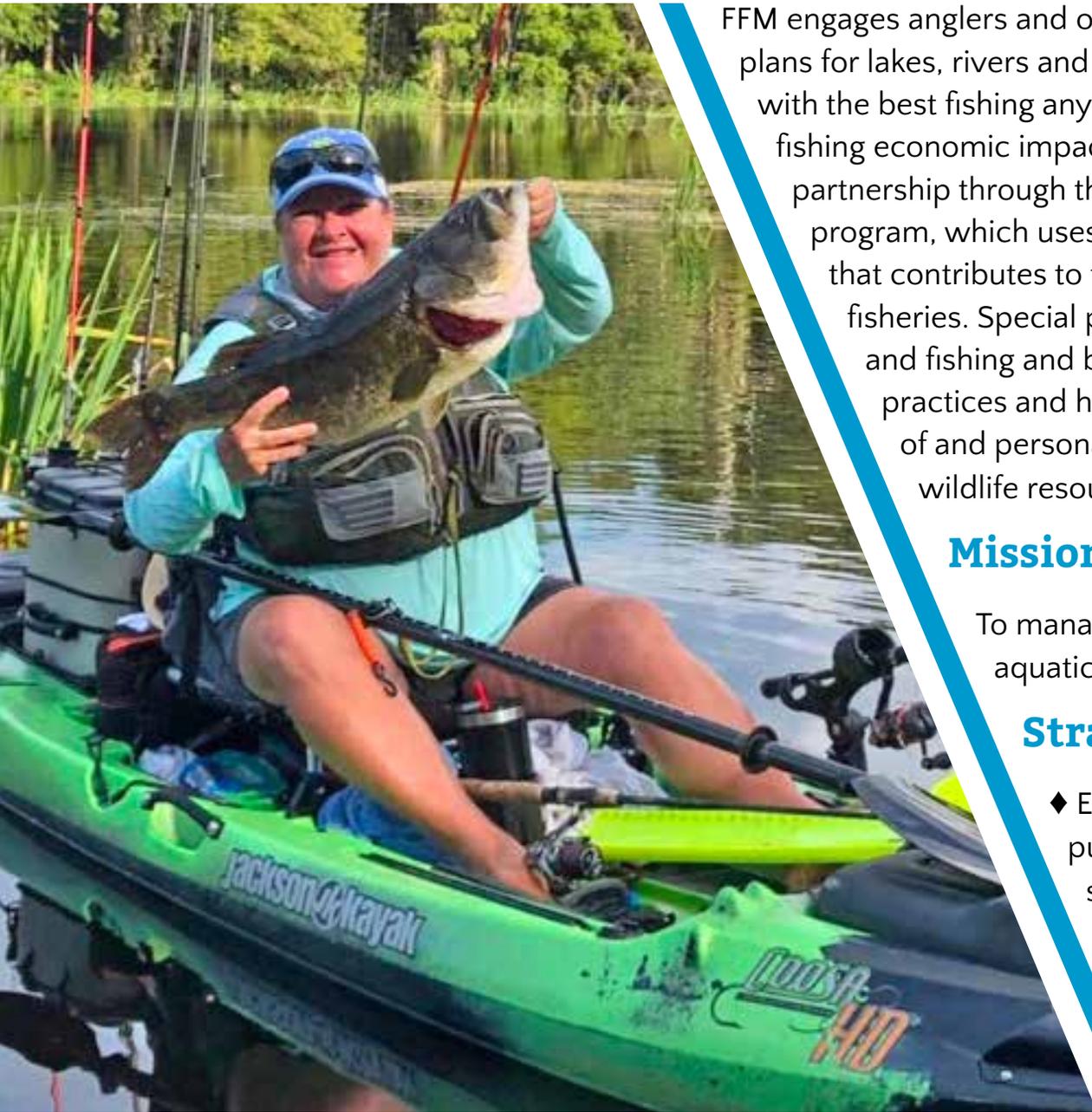
620 South Meridian Street

Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600

850-488-0331



The Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management promotes Florida's well-earned title of "Fishing Capital of the World" and works to improve freshwater fish populations and anglers' use of the resource.



FFM engages anglers and other stakeholders to develop management plans for lakes, rivers and 80 Fish Management Areas, providing anglers with the best fishing anywhere and expanding the \$1.7 billion freshwater fishing economic impact. FFM has developed a private-public partnership through the TrophyCatch conservation and marketing program, which uses citizen science to provide valuable information that contributes to the management of Florida's trophy bass fisheries. Special projects such as the high school fishing program and fishing and boating camps encourage responsible fishing practices and help bolster future generations' understanding of and personal investment in the conservation of fish and wildlife resources.

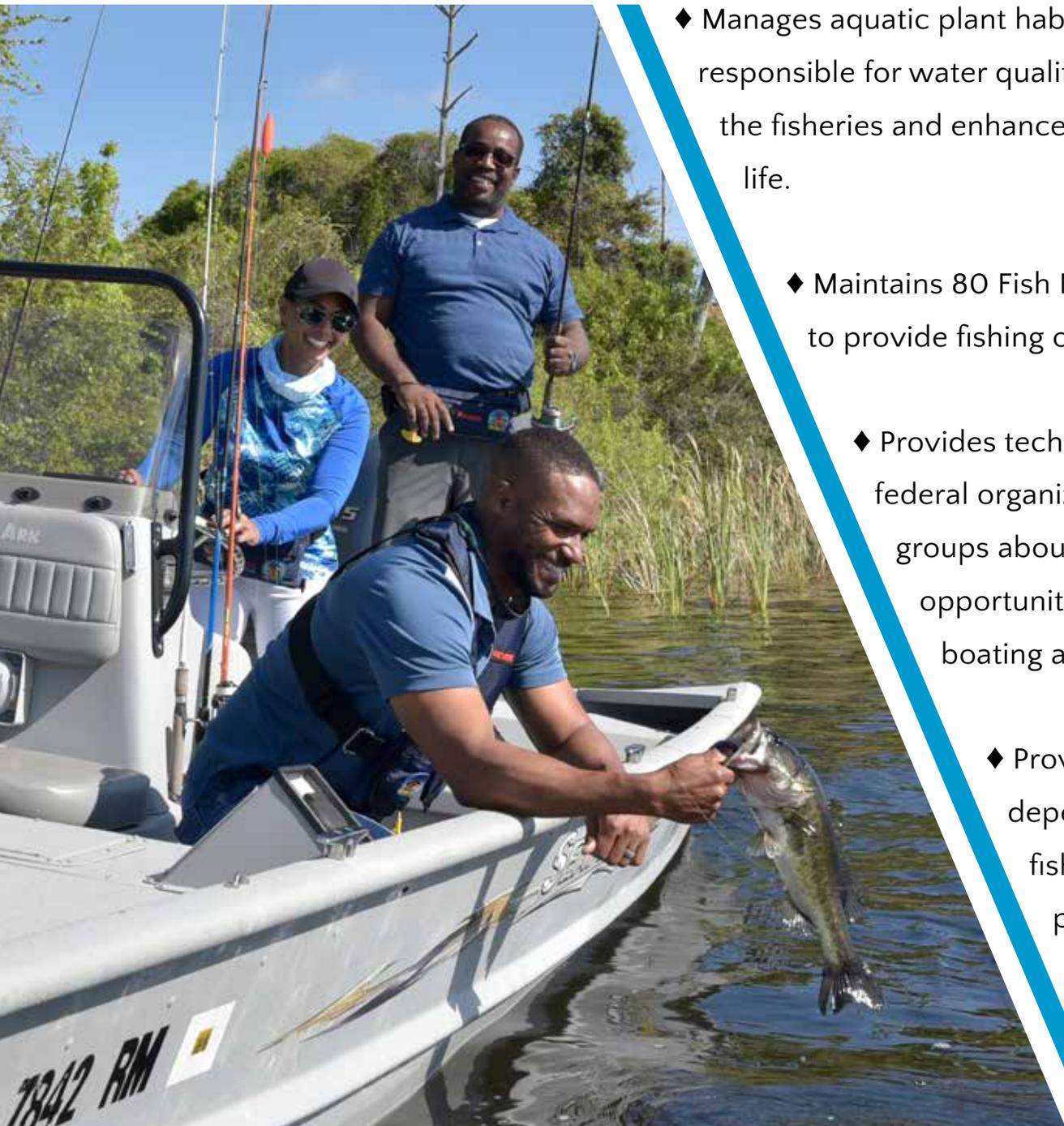
## Mission

To manage, enhance and conserve Florida's freshwater aquatic life for public benefit.

## Strategies

- ◆ Evaluates resource characteristics, informs the public of resource conditions and incorporates stakeholder input to determine goals in managing freshwater fisheries.
- ◆ Uses innovative and scientifically proven management strategies, including habitat enhancement, harvest regulations, public outreach and fish stocking to conserve or improve quality freshwater fishing opportunities.

*TrophyCatch is an award-winning partnership between FWC biologists, anglers and fishing industry leaders, such as Bass Pro Shops, that rewards the catch, documentation and release of largemouth bass weighing 8 pounds or heavier in Florida. FWC biologists use TrophyCatch data for bass research, to make informed decisions about the management of Florida bass fisheries, and to promote the catch-and-release of trophy bass.*



*Recreational fishing is an American tradition that brings friends and families together to enjoy the outdoors.*

- ◆ Manages aquatic plant habitat and interacts with agencies responsible for water quality and quantity to represent the needs of the fisheries and enhance habitat for freshwater fish and aquatic life.
- ◆ Maintains 80 Fish Management Areas throughout the state to provide fishing opportunities for a diversity of anglers.
- ◆ Provides technical services to public, state and federal organizations, universities and other interest groups about fisheries management issues, fishing opportunities, fish pond management, fish kills, boating access and other issues.
- ◆ Provides hatchery operations to produce dependable quantities of healthy freshwater fish to cost-effectively meet stocking program objectives.
- ◆ Encourages freshwater stewardship through instructional clinics, camps, publications, electronic media and fishing events.

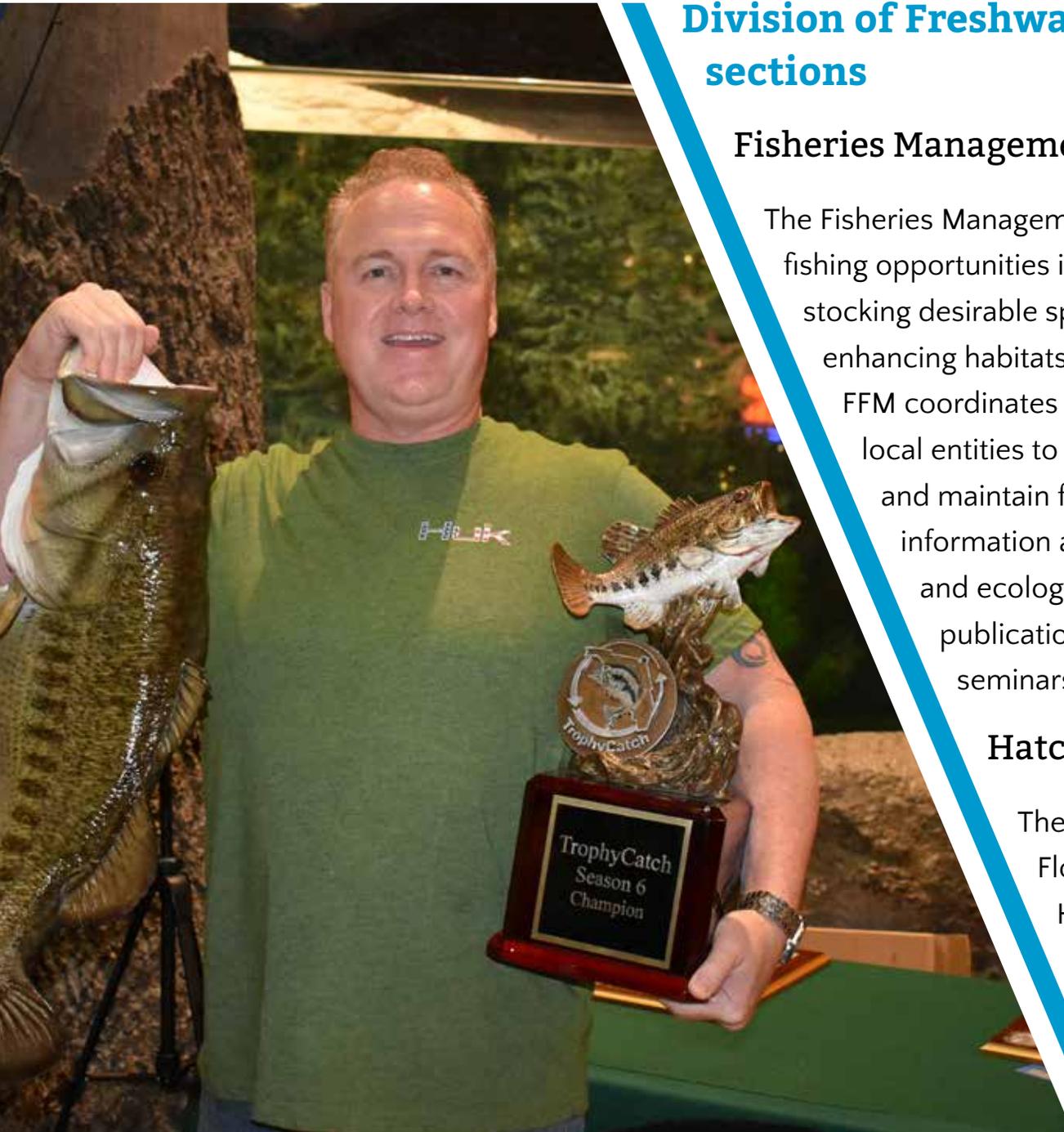
## Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management sections

### Fisheries Management

The Fisheries Management section ensures the best freshwater fishing opportunities in Florida's lakes, rivers and streams through stocking desirable sportfish, producing annual fishing regulations, enhancing habitats and maintaining Fish Management Areas. FFM coordinates with stakeholders and federal, state and local entities to protect and conserve freshwater resources and maintain fishing quality. Fisheries management information and strong aquatic stewardship, ethics and ecology messages are communicated through publications, electronic media, youth fishing camps, seminars and events.

### Hatchery Operations and Stocking

The state has two freshwater hatcheries: the Florida Bass Conservation Center at Richloam Hatchery and the Blackwater Fisheries Research and Development Center. They produce approximately 4-5 million freshwater fish annually, which are stocked in more than 100 Florida lakes, rivers and community-managed waters.



*Season 6 TrophyCatch Champion, Michael Donohue shows off his trophy and replica mount of his winning 15-pound, 11-ounce bass.*



## FFM budget summary

Funding Source	#FTE	FTE Salaries	Other Costs	Total Budget
Federal Grant Trust Fund		\$2,062,426	\$1,020,023	\$3,082,449
Grants and Donations Trust Fund		\$0	\$138,926	\$138,926
Land Acquisition Trust Fund		\$82,325	\$775,009	\$857,334
State Game Trust Fund		\$1,429,492	\$415,806	\$1,845,298
Total Operating		\$3,574,243	\$2,349,764	\$5,924,007
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>59.0</b>	<b>\$3,574,243</b>	<b>\$2,349,764</b>	<b>\$5,924,007</b>

*FWC biologists often use electrofishing techniques to assess freshwater fish populations. Electrofishing is not harmful to the fish, habitat or humans.*

Division of

# Habitat and Species Conservation

Kipp Frohlich, Director

620 South Meridian Street

Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600

850-488-3831



The Division of Habitat and Species Conservation integrates scientific data with applied habitat and species management to maintain stable or increasing populations of fish and wildlife. Conservation integration efforts focus on the ecosystem or landscape scale to provide the greatest benefits to the widest possible array of fish and wildlife species.

*The burrowing owl is a pint-sized bird that lives in open, treeless areas. The burrowing owl spends most of its time on the ground, where its sandy brown plumage provides camouflage from potential predators. One of Florida's smallest owls, it averages 9 inches in height with a wingspan of 21 inches.*



Accomplishing this mission requires extensive collaboration and partnering with local, state and federal agencies to maintain diverse and healthy fish and wildlife populations for the benefit of all Floridians and visitors. Doing so provides direct ecological, economic, aesthetic, scientific and recreational benefits.

## **Mission**

To ensure healthy populations of all native wildlife and their habitats on a statewide basis.

## **Strategies**

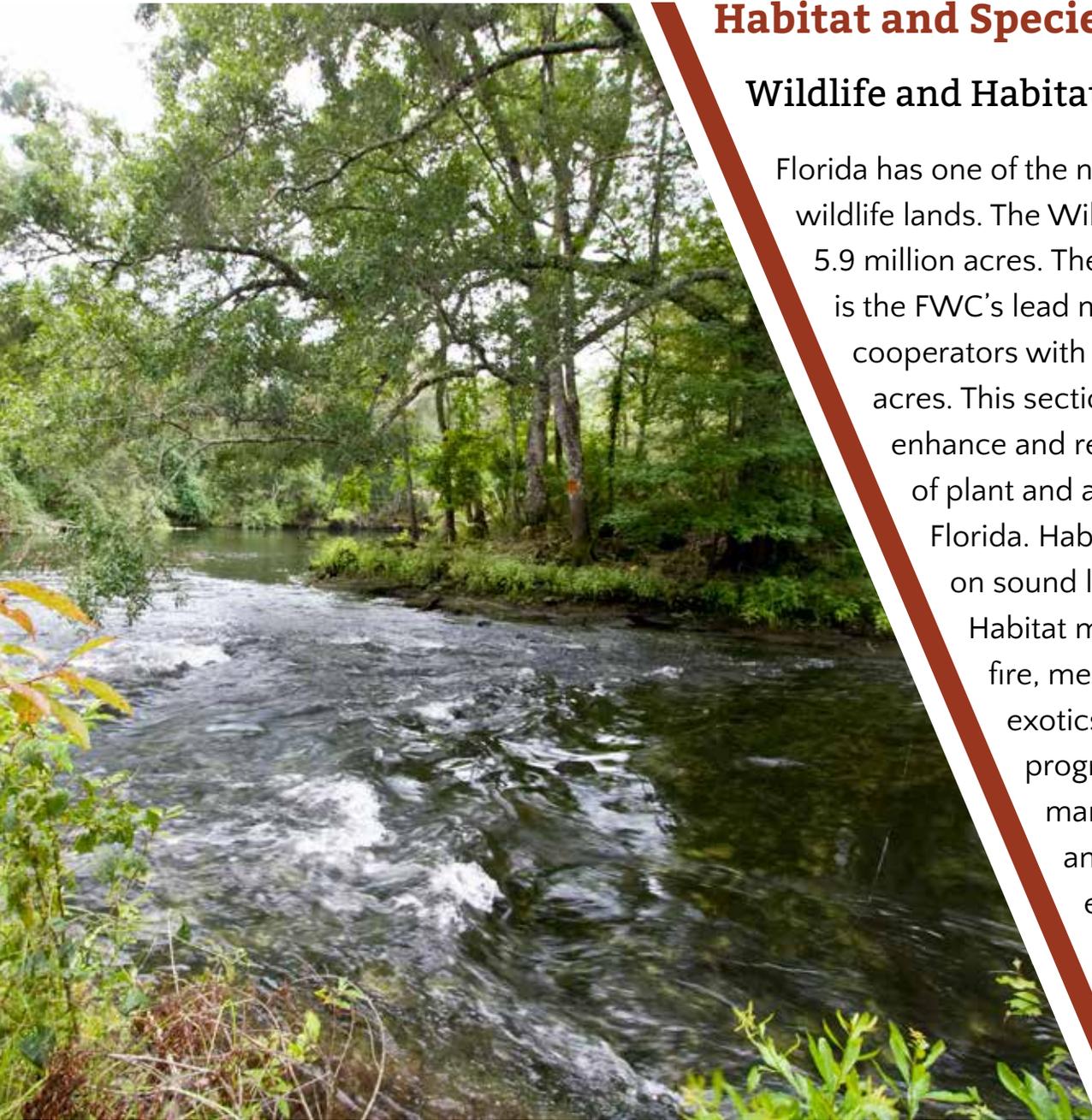
- ◆ Manages aquatic habitat for marine, estuarine and freshwater systems to benefit the widest possible array of fish and wildlife.
- ◆ Manages natural plant communities on public lands for diversity of wildlife species while providing quality recreational experiences.
- ◆ Works in partnership with landowners to provide for a diversity of species.
- ◆ Provides support and assistance for habitat-related issues to private and public sector landowners, including local, state and federal governments, to inform and influence land- and water-use decisions affecting wildlife habitat management.

*The FWC approved Species Conservation Measures and Permitting Guidelines for several of the more than 50 species in the agency's Imperiled Species Management Plan.*



- ◆ Develops and implements species management plans that serve as conservation blueprints for managing threatened species and implements conservation programs that are designed to maintain Florida's unique wildlife diversity.
- ◆ Coordinates nonnative species management and research to protect native species in Florida by funding the control of invasive fish and wildlife and focusing on prevention, early detection, removal activities and rapid response to introductions of nonnative fish and wildlife.
- ◆ Implements conservation programs for imperiled species, such as manatees, Florida panthers and sea turtles, to increase populations of these imperiled species.
- ◆ Directs, regulates and funds the control of invasive plants on public conservation lands and in public water bodies for the protection of native plant and animal life, human health, safety, recreation and property.
- ◆ Provides services to enhance visitors' experiences on Florida's wildlife management area system, promotes wildlife-focused tourism and engages volunteers to participate in the agency's conservation mission.

*The FWC designed the Python Action Team Removing Invasive Constrictors to further engage qualified individuals with python management efforts. Team members are paid for their efforts to survey for and, when possible, capture Burmese pythons in specific areas throughout many public lands in South Florida. In June of 2019, Team Members Beth Koehler and Peggy Van Gorder removed the program's 500th snake.*



## Habitat and Species Conservation sections

### Wildlife and Habitat Management

Florida has one of the nation's largest systems of state-managed wildlife lands. The Wildlife Management Area system includes 5.9 million acres. The Wildlife and Habitat Management section is the FWC's lead manager on 1.4 million acres and assists cooperators with wildlife management on another 4.5 million acres. This section's activities are designed to maintain, enhance and restore native natural habitats for the benefit of plant and animal populations and the citizens of Florida. Habitat management is adaptive and is based on sound land management principles and practices. Habitat management activities include prescribed fire, mechanical and chemical control of invasive exotics, and hydrology restoration. Section programs include land conservation, long-term management planning and a variety of surveys and monitoring designed to ensure management efforts are accomplishing desired objectives. Wildlife-centric public use is emphasized and promoted through development and maintenance of infrastructure designed to provide WMA users with a quality outdoor experience. Public use activities include a variety of hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities.

*Beautiful Aucilla WMA lies between the Aucilla and Wacissa rivers, 12 miles southeast of Tallahassee. Wildlife management areas provide homes for some of Florida's most iconic, and threatened, wildlife species. At the same time, they contribute unparalleled hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing and other recreational opportunities.*



## Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Restoration

This Section uses a multidisciplinary approach to restore, enhance and manage publicly-owned aquatic resources to improve the ecological health of freshwater, estuarine and marine habitats. This is accomplished by designing and constructing projects to improve aquatic habitat and implementing a variety of management treatments to maintain or enhance ecological resource values for wetland-dependent fish and wildlife. This Section works cooperatively with other state, local and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, stakeholders, and user groups to build partnerships to address various issues affecting aquatic resources, including nutrient enrichment, public access and habitat improvements

### Species Conservation Planning

Conserving Florida's native wildlife diversity is the mission of this section. It develops and implements high-priority conservation activities for native wildlife, with an emphasis on imperiled species. Partnerships with other governmental agencies (local, state and federal), nongovernmental organizations and individuals help achieve conservation goals for wildlife. This section manages most of the state's threatened species and coordinates activities relating to Florida's listing process and permitting of human activities that may affect listed species. An Imperiled

*Aquatic restoration and enhancement projects are designed not only to improve habitat conditions, but to ensure the long-term sustainability of fish and wildlife resources that depend on these systems.*



Species Management Plan conserves 57 species currently listed as state-threatened and species recently removed from the state's imperiled species lists. The ISMP combines specific species action plans with broader integrated conservation strategies benefiting multiple species. This section also continues development and implementation of the Coastal Wildlife Conservation Initiative, the Florida Shorebird Alliance, the Gopher Tortoise Management Plan, wildlife permitting and incentive-based conservation, as well as providing regional wildlife conservation operations and technical assistance.

### **Imperiled Species Management**

This section is responsible for conservation of manatees, sea turtles, panthers and black bears through implementation of federal recovery plans and state management plans. Staff in the programs with federally-listed species work closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on management and recovery tasks. All four programs have seen significant gains for the species they manage, including population increases.

The Bear Management Program is working with local governments, communities and waste management companies to assist them with adopting BearWise

*The illegal trapping of native birds like painted buntings has long been a concern in the state, particularly in south Florida where trapping is believed to be widespread. Birds are lost from the wild population and, in many cases, may be mistreated and are sometimes killed or injured when illegally trapped. A newly established rule will provide an additional tool for law enforcement officers to help stop the poaching of these birds, while still allowing for lawful uses of bird traps.*



*The Florida manatee is a native species found in many of Florida's waterways. The Florida manatee population has grown to over 6,600 animals today and as a result, in early 2017 the Florida manatee was reclassified from an endangered to a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act. The Imperiled Species Management Section continues to work to conserve manatees through educational outreach and development of rules and guidelines.*

measures, such as securing garbage, to reduce human-bear conflicts. It has initiated several tasks from the 2012 Bear Management Plan, including setting up seven Bear Stakeholder Groups throughout the state to provide the agency with input on how people and bears can coexist in their geographic regions and to engage citizens in actions to support bear conservation. Other key section tasks include development of rules and regulations that provide needed protections, providing technical assistance to local governments and other state agencies for planning purposes and permit reviews, and addressing human-wildlife conflicts. The section coordinates with the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute's researchers to identify information needs that will assist in making management decisions. The section conducts outreach activities to encourage the public to become engaged in actions that will help these iconic species' long-term survival.

## **Wildlife Impact Management**

This section is the organizational home of two programs addressing human-wildlife interactions and managing the impact of native and nonnative fish and wildlife species. The role of the FWC's wildlife assistance biologists is to assist the public with nuisance wildlife and conflict issues regarding



many species, including coyote and bear, through education, outreach and technical assistance. Staff working with the nonnative fish and wildlife program are working with local, state and federal partners to manage invasive species in Florida, including Burmese pythons and tegus. The section works with staff in the FWC Division of Law Enforcement's Captive Wildlife and Investigations Sections to prevent nonnative species from harming native fish and wildlife and to develop science-based regulations to prevent the release and establishment of nonnative species. The section also partners with other agencies to promote responsible pet ownership of nonnative wildlife and increase awareness of the problems associated with introduced species.

### **Invasive Plant Management**

This section is responsible for directing, coordinating and funding two statewide programs controlling invasive upland plants on public conservation lands and invasive aquatic plants in public waterways.

It regulates, through a permitting program, projects for control of aquatic plants that do not meet the eligibility requirements for state funding. The FWC protects Florida's native plant and wildlife diversity through the management of invasive plants on public lands and waterways, dissemination of information, public education efforts; contractual research; and surveillance of plant communities on public lands and waterways. This section's goal is

*The FWC's Wildlife Assistance Program provides education, outreach, and technical assistance to citizens to help reduce human-wildlife conflict. Staff work with individuals and communities experiencing conflicts with wildlife to find sustainable resolutions and to develop strategies to coexist with native wildlife wherever possible. Program staff has developed new educational materials on coyotes including infographics and an educational video to raise awareness about proper hazing techniques.*



to protect native fish and wildlife habitat by reducing existing populations of invasive plants and preventing new invasive plant populations from becoming established.

## Office of Conservation Planning Services

This office coordinates the agency's review of and comments on growth management and regulated land and water use project proposals that have potential to impact Florida's fish, wildlife and habitat resources. Conservation Planning Services staff utilize a science-based, proactive approach to inform and influence land and water use decisions to build public-private conservation partnerships with Florida landowners. Working with private and public sector landowners, this office also develops and helps implement comprehensive habitat-based management plans and incentive programs for private landowners. New best management practices for conserving wildlife on private lands used for agriculture or commercial forestry have been developed in partnership with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Conservation Planning Services also provides managers of publicly owned lands with technical

*Insects have been released to control some of Florida's most problematic invasive plants, including the air potato and Brazilian peppertree.*



assistance to implement wildlife conservation strategies that reduce negative impacts on fish and wildlife.

## Public Access Services Office

The Public Access Services Office develops recreational opportunities, public access improvements and interpretive materials to enhance visitors' enjoyment and understanding of fish and wildlife and their habitats on Florida's wildlife management area system. The office also promotes wildlife tourism through programs such as the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail, and provides technical assistance to local governments that fosters sustainable nature-based recreation particularly in rural communities and regions. The office coordinates and supports agency volunteer programs to achieve greater conservation benefits and leverage state dollars. Tens of thousands of Floridians partner with the FWC through these programs.

*The Landowner Assistance Program is a cooperative, voluntary effort among Florida private landowners, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and other partners to improve habitat conditions for fish and wildlife. Biologists with the Landowner Assistance Program can help you as a private landowner manage your land to benefit wildlife. We also can direct you to other available conservation resources, including financial and educational support.*



## HSC budget summary

Funding Source	#FTE	FTE Salaries	Other Costs	Total Budget
Invasive Plant Control Trust Fund		\$2,345,271	\$4,760,618	\$7,105,889
Federal Grant Trust Fund		\$4,240,322	\$13,262,858	\$17,503,180
Florida Panther Research and Management Trust Fund		\$247,621	\$287,717	\$535,338
Grants and Donations Trust Fund		\$523,944	\$3,250,088	\$3,774,032
Land Acquisition Trust Fund		\$8,911,339	\$66,871,727	\$75,783,066
Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund		\$627,882	\$573,609	\$1,201,491
Nongame Wildlife Trust Fund		\$2,134,484	\$2,181,789	\$4,316,273
Save the Manatee Trust Fund		\$900,505	\$164,323	\$1,064,828
State Game Trust Fund		\$4,244,935	\$2,660,447	\$6,905,382
General Revenue		\$0	\$770,956	\$770,956
<b>Total Operating</b>		\$24,176,303	\$94,784,132	\$118,960,435
<b>Total Budget</b>	374.5	\$24,176,303	\$94,784,132	\$118,960,435

*The FWC worked with partners to host the City Nature Challenge in Tallahassee and Leon County in 2019. The FWC held a series of events, both on its wildlife management areas and in local parks to encourage the public to get outdoors and enjoy the native wildlife present in their community.*

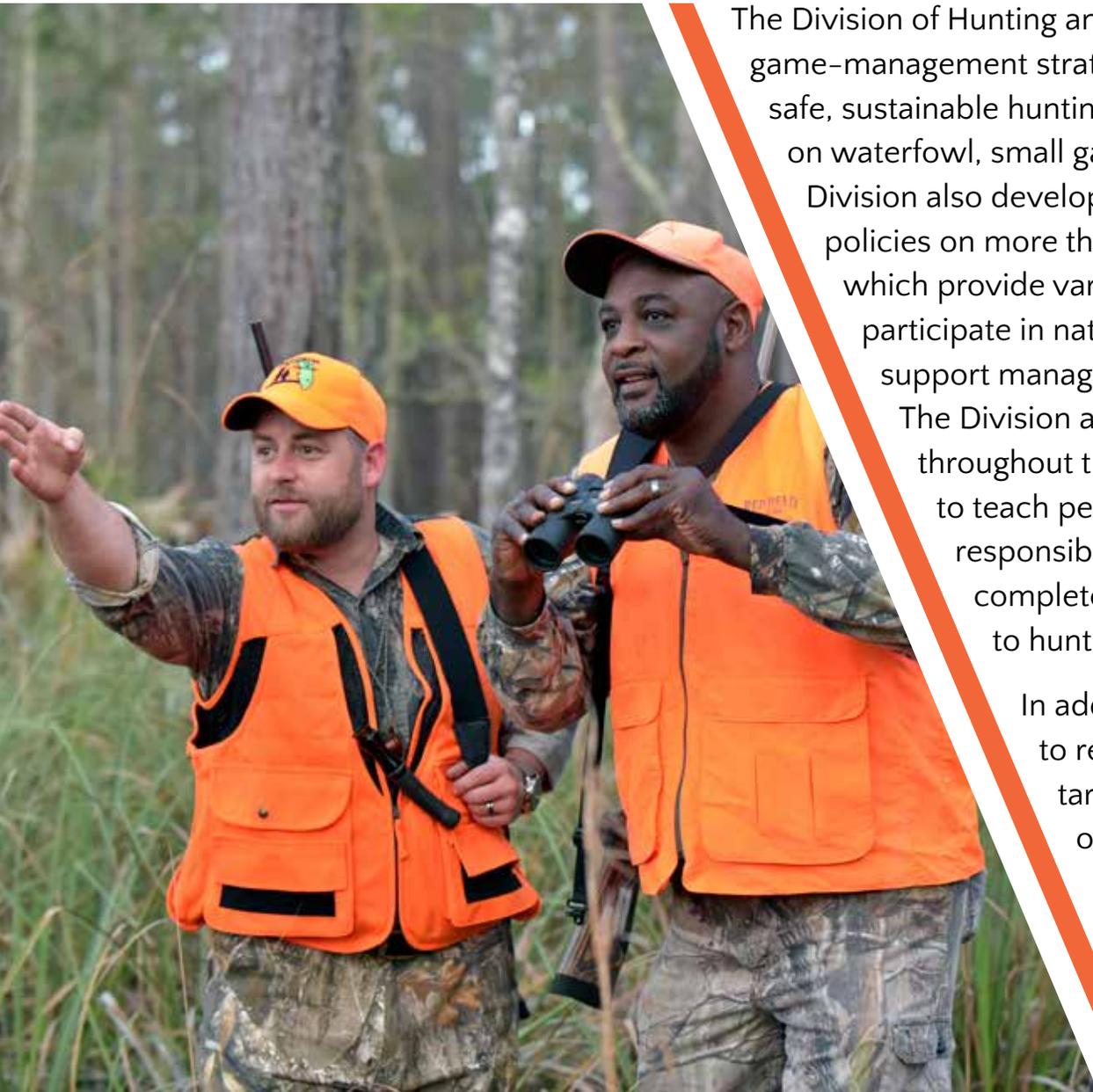
# Hunting and Game Management

George Warthen, Director  
620 South Meridian Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600  
850-488-3831



The Division of Hunting and Game Management uses scientifically proven game-management strategies and professional expertise to perpetuate safe, sustainable hunting opportunities statewide, with an emphasis on waterfowl, small game, deer, wild turkey and alligators. The Division also develops rules and recommends wildlife management policies on more than 5.9 million acres of public hunting lands, which provide various hunting opportunities.

*After five years of collecting data during Florida's experimental September teal-only season, this additional waterfowl hunting opportunity is being approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Data shows the early teal-only hunting opportunity, which occurs after the 5-day teal and wood duck only season, has minimal impacts on other waterfowl and waterbird species.*



The Division of Hunting and Game Management uses scientifically proven game-management strategies and professional expertise to perpetuate safe, sustainable hunting opportunities statewide, with an emphasis on waterfowl, small game, deer, wild turkey and alligators. The Division also develops rules and recommends wildlife management policies on more than 5.9 million acres of public hunting lands, which provide various hunting opportunities. Division staff participate in national, state and regional advisory groups to support management and regulation of Florida's game wildlife. The Division also manages public shooting sports facilities throughout the state and offers hunter safety programs to teach people hunting laws, ethics, conservation and responsible use of firearms. People who successfully complete a hunter safety course may purchase a license to hunt unsupervised in Florida.

In addition, the Division oversees Florida's initiative to recruit, retain and reactivate (R3) hunters and target shooters. R3 in Florida, which is founded on a national initiative, coordinates resources and programs of conservation agencies, industry partners and non-governmental organizations to increase participation in conservation. R3 efforts focus on identifying what people need to become involved in conservation and developing, measuring and adapting programs to better serve those interested in learning to hunt and target shoot. Providing people

*Florida's initiative to recruit, retain and reactivate (R3) hunters and shooting sports enthusiasts is a collaborative effort focused on harnessing the resources of conservation agencies, industry partners and non-governmental organizations. To increase participation in hunting and conservation, R3 efforts focus on identifying what people need to become involved and then better serving those who are interested with training and tools such as the FWC's [MyFWC.com/NewHunter](https://myfwc.com/NewHunter) webpage.*



with opportunities to engage in hunting and the shooting sports helps the conservation funding model remain strong.

## Mission

To manage and conserve game wildlife for the future, while fostering safe and responsible hunting.

## Strategies

- ◆ Manages hunting activities and associated wildlife resources using science-based strategies to ensure that conservation objectives are met and hunting opportunities are sustainable.
- ◆ Develops or expands new hunting opportunities and improves existing hunting opportunities statewide.
- ◆ Provides programs to recruit Floridians as participants in conservation, hunting and other wildlife-related activities, retain those already involved in hunting, and reactivate those who have lapsed.
- ◆ Provides high-quality programs for hunter safety training.
- ◆ Manages public shooting ranges throughout the state to safely support the needs of recreational target shooters, hunters and hunter safety students.

*Wild turkeys are a conservation success story in Florida, and FWC biologists are gaining an even greater understanding of wild turkey abundance and distribution through a new online summer wild turkey survey. This survey, which invites members of the public to report sightings of wild turkeys, especially juvenile birds or poults, will be used in conjunction with annual harvest surveys for a more complete understanding of the state's wild turkey population. Data are compiled on a statewide and regional basis using a standardized protocol, which will allow biologists to compare information year over year in Florida and with other state's survey results.*



- ◆ Brings together hunting interest groups, governmental and nongovernmental agencies, research institutes and the public to consider ways to effectively manage Florida's game wildlife species.
- ◆ Provides scientific expertise to the Commission so they can make the best informed decisions about managing Florida's game wildlife resources.

## Division of Hunting and Game Management sections

### Game Management and Public Hunting

Managing Florida's wild game populations using science, leadership and key partnerships occurs in this section. Section staff use scientific research to develop sound management practices to conserve wild game species while providing opportunities for responsible and sustainable hunting. The section also develops partnerships, rules, regulations and publications that facilitate safe and sustainable public hunting opportunities on more than 5.9 million public acres in Florida. Section staff coordinate the distribution of rule-related information and publications, provide technical assistance to the hunting public, and work with stakeholders and partners to coordinate support for hunting-related activities on public lands.

*Beginning with 2019-2020 hunting seasons, new statewide deer hunting rules took effect, including a statewide annual bag limit and a requirement to report harvested deer. The annual statewide bag limit, which is five deer per hunter of which no more than two deer can be antlerless, was developed through extensive collaboration with staff and stakeholders and aligns with the goals and objectives outlined in the Commission-approved strategic plan for deer management. This adaptive approach to deer management is intended to improve hunting opportunities by encouraging harvest among more hunters as well as greater selectivity while helping maintain a healthy and reasonably balanced deer herd. The new harvest reporting system will foster bag limit compliance and give the FWC another source of deer harvest data. For more information, visit [MyFWC.com/Deer](http://MyFWC.com/Deer).*



## Hunter Safety and Public Shooting Ranges

In this section, programs are offered throughout the state to address the Division's mission. Florida Statutes require most hunters to be certified. The section provides hunter safety courses as well as workshops and special events to ensure Florida hunters are well prepared to be safe, responsible and conservation-minded.

Specialized courses include Becoming an Outdoors-Woman, advanced archery, basic muzzleloading firearms and safety training camps for young hunters. To safely support the needs of recreational target shooters, hunters and hunter safety students, the Division manages 11 public shooting ranges located throughout the state. The newest FWC-managed range was constructed in Palm Beach County to meet the growing demand for safe, clean and family-friendly public shooting sports facilities.

*Several FWC-managed shooting facilities offer opportunities to learn and practice archery skills, including new archery ranges at the Bay County Shooting Range near Panama City Beach and Triple N Ranch Shooting Range in Osceola County.*



*The Youth Hunting Program of Florida is designed to introduce more young people to hunting and conservation by offering safe, educational, mentored hunts. Youth between the ages of 12 and 17 who are accompanied by a parent or guardian can learn about conservation and outdoor skills from an experienced mentor during organized hunts. The FWC and its partners and volunteers are passionate about connecting youth to the outdoors and creating the next generation of natural resource stewards. Learn more at [MyFWC.com/YHPF](http://MyFWC.com/YHPF).*

## HGM budget summary

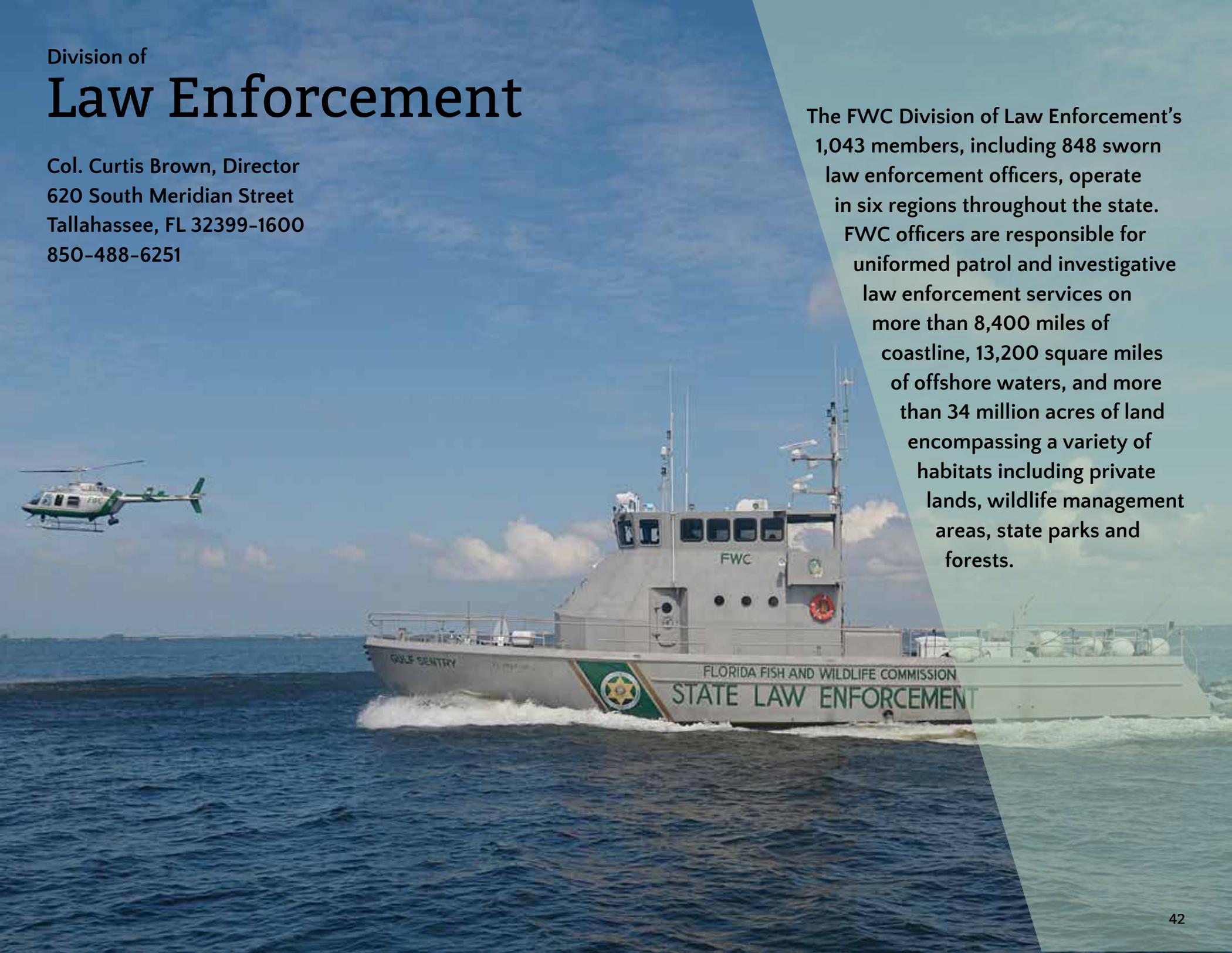
Funding Source	#FTE	FTE Salaries	Other Costs	Total Budget
Federal Grant Trust Fund		\$722,256	\$1,676,384	\$2,398,640
Grants and Donations Trust Fund		\$0	\$288,017	\$288,017
Land Acquisition Trust Fund		\$523,278	\$113,126	\$636,404
State Game Trust Fund		\$1,731,993	\$2,452,208	\$4,184,201
<b>Total Operating</b>		<b>\$2,977,527</b>	<b>\$4,529,735</b>	<b>\$7,507,262</b>
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>45.0</b>	<b>\$2,977,527</b>	<b>\$4,529,735</b>	<b>\$7,507,262</b>

Division of

# Law Enforcement

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The FWC Division of Law Enforcement's 1,043 members, including 848 sworn law enforcement officers, operate in six regions throughout the state. FWC officers are responsible for uniformed patrol and investigative law enforcement services on more than 8,400 miles of coastline, 13,200 square miles of offshore waters, and more than 34 million acres of land encompassing a variety of habitats including private lands, wildlife management areas, state parks and forests.





*FWC officers have full police powers and statewide jurisdiction. They patrol rural, wilderness and inshore and offshore areas and are often the sole law enforcement presence in many remote parts of the state.*



FWC officers stand as sentinels for the conservation of Florida's natural resources and the public who utilize these resources. FWC officers are highly trained, versatile law enforcement officers with full police powers and statewide jurisdiction. Cooperative agreements with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service cross-deputize FWC officers to enforce federal marine fisheries and wildlife laws, thus ensuring state and federal consistency in resource protection.

FWC officers are an effective model of modern law enforcement multi-tasking – providing law enforcement that:

- ◆ Protects Florida's fish, wildlife and habitats to ensure their long-term well-being and continued viability for educational, recreational and commercial activities.
- ◆ Safeguards public safety and enriches the outdoor experience of residents and visitors.
- ◆ Conducts search-and-rescue to protect the public statewide – performing hundreds of missions each year on land, sea and in the air.
- ◆ Utilize specialized training, capabilities and equipment that enables officers to respond to emergencies, natural disasters and other critical incidents through coordinated efforts with local, state and federal mutual-aid partners.



- ◆ Enforces laws to protect the resources of Florida and the safety of people using these resources when hunting, boating, freshwater and saltwater fishing, visiting state parks, viewing wildlife, fishing commercially or processing seafood.
- ◆ Provides for public safety and law enforcement services in Florida's 175 state parks and nine state trails covering 800,000 acres.
- ◆ Enforces boating and waterways laws and promotes educational activities to enhance boating safety for residents and visitors – an economic value of approximately \$17 billion.
- ◆ Enhances boating safety and waterway experiences through maintenance and repair of 244 boat ramps, construction of new boat ramps and placement and maintenance of waterway markers.
- ◆ Protects the public in rural, semi-wilderness, wilderness and offshore areas where no other law enforcement agencies routinely patrol.
- ◆ Provides for public safety and the well-being of animals at captive wildlife facilities throughout the state.
- ◆ Investigates and monitors the illegal shipping of protected and regulated wildlife into and out of Florida.
- ◆ Supports domestic and homeland security initiatives in Florida's ports.

*FWC officers are not only trained in standard police practices, but undergo rigorous training in conservation law enforcement methodology as well.*

- ◆ Encourages the next generation of conservationists and enhances outdoor experiences through education, public outreach partnerships and youth-oriented programs.

## Division of Law Enforcement Sections

FWC officers and investigators protect fish, wildlife and their habitats as well as Florida's residents and visitors. They provide service on Florida's waters and state-owned lands, including wildlife management areas, state parks and state forests. FWC officers patrol more than 34 million acres of state and private lands, protecting game and non-game wildlife, as well as endangered species, like the Florida panther. FWC officers are responsible for patrolling all of Florida's woods, including public and private lands, as well as its waters, so they must be well versed on a wide variety of topics and information. It is this blend of resource protection and law enforcement that makes the FWC Division of Law Enforcement unique.

### Law Enforcement North Operations

This section oversees law enforcement services throughout the FWC's three northern regions, as well as the Training section.

The FWC's Northwest Region encompasses 16 counties from Escambia to Jefferson.

The North Central Region includes 17 counties - from Taylor, south to



*The Division of Law Enforcement prides itself on professionalism in all aspects. It is an accredited law enforcement agency, achieving its initial accreditation from the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation (CFA) in 2009 and was reaccredited in 2018. There are approximately 240 prescribed standards reflecting best management practices that a law enforcement agency must consistently meet or exceed over a three-year period in order to achieve this status.*



Citrus on the west coast and over to Nassau and Duval on the east coast.

The Northeast Region's 12 counties include St. Johns on the north end, down to Indian River on the east coast and west over to Sumter.

### **Training**

This section manages officer recruitment and provides professional basic recruit instruction, advanced training and career development programs for approximately 848 sworn law enforcement officers statewide. Six recruiters located throughout the state work to fill open positions with the most qualified applicants. Staff trains FWC officers in conservation law enforcement methodology as well as standard police practices. Approximately 80 officers are hired, trained and assigned throughout the state following graduation every year. This section also provides extensive ongoing instruction to maintain mandatory certifications for all sworn law enforcement officers.

### **Law Enforcement South Operations**

This section oversees law enforcement services throughout the FWC's three southern regions, as well as the Operational Support section.

The Southwest Region contains 12 counties – from Hernando to the north end down to Lee in the south and east to Polk and Highlands counties.

*FWC K-9 teams are specially trained in tracking and wildlife detection. The K-9s receive no aggression training and are very "user-friendly." In addition to their law enforcement functions, they have proved to be a great community-oriented policing relations tool.*



*FWC dispatchers use a computer-aided dispatch system to stay in contact with officers in the field, whether those officers are on land, at sea or in the air.*



The South “A” Region includes the counties of Okeechobee (including Lake Okeechobee), St. Lucie, Martin, Palm Beach, Broward, Glades, and Hendry.

The South “B” Region includes Miami-Dade, Collier and Monroe counties.

### **Operational Support**

This section coordinates all aviation assets (assisting in the hundreds of search-and-rescue missions conducted each year), offshore federal Joint Enforcement Agreement and state fisheries enforcement, state Emergency Operations Center activities and readiness for natural disasters, mutual aid requests, K-9 operations, multiple dive teams and Special Operations Group activities, including dignitary protection details. Staff also provides proactive solutions for situations within the Division of Law Enforcement and FWC to increase employee effectiveness and efficiency through strategic and operational planning, policy development, accreditation and communication.

### **Investigations and Intelligence**

This section provides direction and oversight to investigators in each of the six regions for long-term undercover and commercial resource investigations, protecting legal businesses from unfair competition by unlicensed, illegal entities. It also coordinates agency law enforcement



involvement in the Homeland Security and USCG Fusion Centers, the FBI terrorism task force and the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact.

Investigations/Intelligence staff oversees the Internet Crimes Unit, forensics program and the Wildlife Alert program, as well as provides intelligence information to officers in the field and coordinates with other agencies and entities. It uses the division's unique capabilities to further the agency's mission and assists with coordination of mutual-aid efforts with local, state and federal partners.

## Boating and Waterways

Enhances boating safety and waterway experiences through maintenance and repair of more than 244 boat ramps, construction of new boat ramps and placement and maintenance of waterway markers. They coordinate the removal of derelict vessels and the development of boating infrastructure. They promote boating safety through education and outreach, and investigation and analysis of boating accident data. Staff also improves and increases boating access to Florida's waters through the management of two grant programs that enhance boating access and maintain public boating facilities.

## Captive Wildlife

The FWC promotes responsible ownership of captive wildlife, from zoos to private individuals, and strives to develop the best framework

*FWC officers are often the first to be able to respond to boating accidents, missing boaters and lost campers, hikers and hunters. Each year, they perform around 1,000 search-and-rescue missions. Learning how to search for signs of lost or fleeing people is only one of many lessons recruits must pass before becoming an FWC officer.*



possible that provides for public safety, animal welfare and the legitimate use of wildlife for educational, exhibition or personal purposes. Florida's captive wildlife regulations are among the most stringent in the nation. Nearly 6,000 captive wildlife licensees who possess wildlife in Florida must be licensed and meet all safe housing and humane treatment standards. This section also responds during critical emergencies, including environmental and natural disasters.

### **Office of Deputy Chief**

This section is responsible for managing the finances for the division, assisting legislative affairs, negotiations with the law enforcement labor union, performance-based budgeting, rules review, staff inspections and disciplinary management to ensure that the agency has the most professional, courteous and knowledgeable staff possible.

### **Fleet and Technical Services**

Staff members support the officers in the field by ensuring they have the best operating patrol fleet and technological equipment available to law enforcement. Dedicated support personnel install and maintain vital communications equipment, vehicles and patrol vessels. They also manage data entry of arrest and warning citations, a computer-aided dispatch system and the Statewide Law Enforcement Radio System.

*Captive Wildlife oversees nearly 6,000 permits designed to protect the well-being of the animals as well as ensuring public safety. Those holding permits must meet all safe housing and humane treatment standards.*



## LE budget summary

Funding Source	#FTE	FTE Salaries	Other Costs	Total Budget
General Revenue		\$28,257,006	\$6,268,345	\$34,525,351
Federal Grant Trust Fund		\$4,176,524	\$15,374,960	\$19,551,484
Florida Panther Research and Management Trust Fund		\$26,686	\$0	\$26,686
Land Acquisition Trust Fund		\$16,383,207	\$940,480	\$17,323,687
Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund		\$32,894,851	\$10,745,400	\$43,640,251
Nongame Wildlife Trust Fund		\$733,668	\$1,388,021	\$2,121,689
State Game Trust Fund		\$1,016,420	\$6,897,674	\$7,914,094
Total Operating		\$83,488,362	\$41,614,880	\$125,103,242
Fixed Capital Outlay :				
Boating Infrastructure			\$3,900,000	
Derelict Vessel Removal			\$1,000,000	
Derelict Vessel Removal			\$3,000,000	
Boating Improvement			\$592,600	
Boating Improvement			\$1,250,000	
Boating Improvement			\$1,250,000-	
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>1,043.0</b>	<b>\$83,488,362</b>	<b>\$51,357,480</b>	<b>\$134,845,842</b>

*As part of a boating safety check, the importance of wearing life jackets is reconfirmed.*

## Protecting our Resources



During patrol, Officer Southwest Region officers Scott Smith and Reece Alvis notice something suspicious while observing the offloading of a newly arrived vessel. They would find that among the items on board were 39 undersize red grouper. Those responsible were cited accordingly.

Working together with NOAA law enforcement, FWC Officers Jason Richards, Jeremy Foell, and Jessica Sutter approached a commercial shrimp vessel. The inspection revealed multiple violations. The officers located 101 spiny lobster, 33 of which were undersized. In addition, the officers discovered Marine Sanitation Device and Turtle Excluder Device violations.



The Jacksonville Port Investigations team was busy looking for smugglers in November. Investigator Chris Holleman, K-9 Officer Robby Hoover and CBP Officer Eric Blair stopped an attempt to sidestep the law. They intercepted undeclared, falsely labeled conch meat and octopus that a business was attempting to smuggle into Bermuda through the Port of Fernandina.



As the statewide alligator season opened in 2018, law enforcement was on the lookout for those flouting the rules. Officers Casey Phillips, James Presser, Brandon Scrambling, and William Teal spotted several individuals hunting in a restricted area. Those individuals were cited and two trophy sized alligators were seized.

## After the storm - Hurricane Michael

*One of the strongest storms to ever hit the United States struck the Panama City area on Oct. 10, 2018. Hurricane Michael left several dead, tens of thousands homeless and others trapped. FWC officers were prepared and in place before the storm hit and were able to join with other first responders to provide critical assistance to those in need.*



Division of

# Marine Fisheries Management

Jessica McCawley, Director

Russell Building

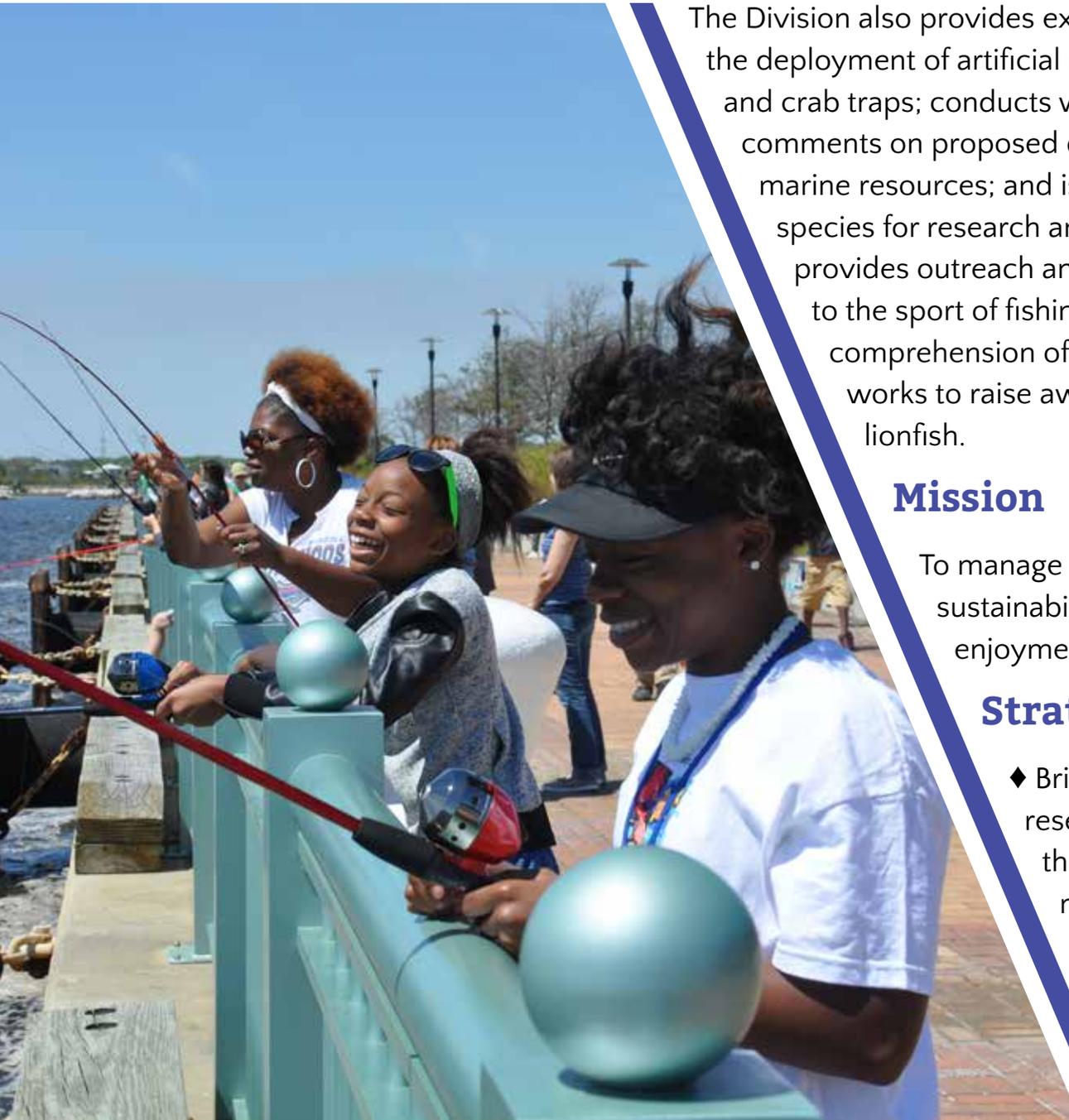
1875 Orange Avenue East

Tallahassee, FL 32301

850-487-0554



The Division of Marine Fisheries Management works with stakeholders, federal agencies, other states and regional councils to manage and provide outreach on more than 500 marine fish and invertebrates.



The Division also provides expertise, monitoring and grant funding for the deployment of artificial reefs; recovers lost or abandoned lobster and crab traps; conducts wholesale-dealer audits; provides agency comments on proposed development projects that may affect marine resources; and issues special activity licenses for harvest of species for research and educational purposes. This division also provides outreach and education in an effort to introduce people to the sport of fishing, instill ethical angling values, and ensure comprehension of marine fisheries regulations. And finally, staff works to raise awareness and encourage removal of invasive lionfish.

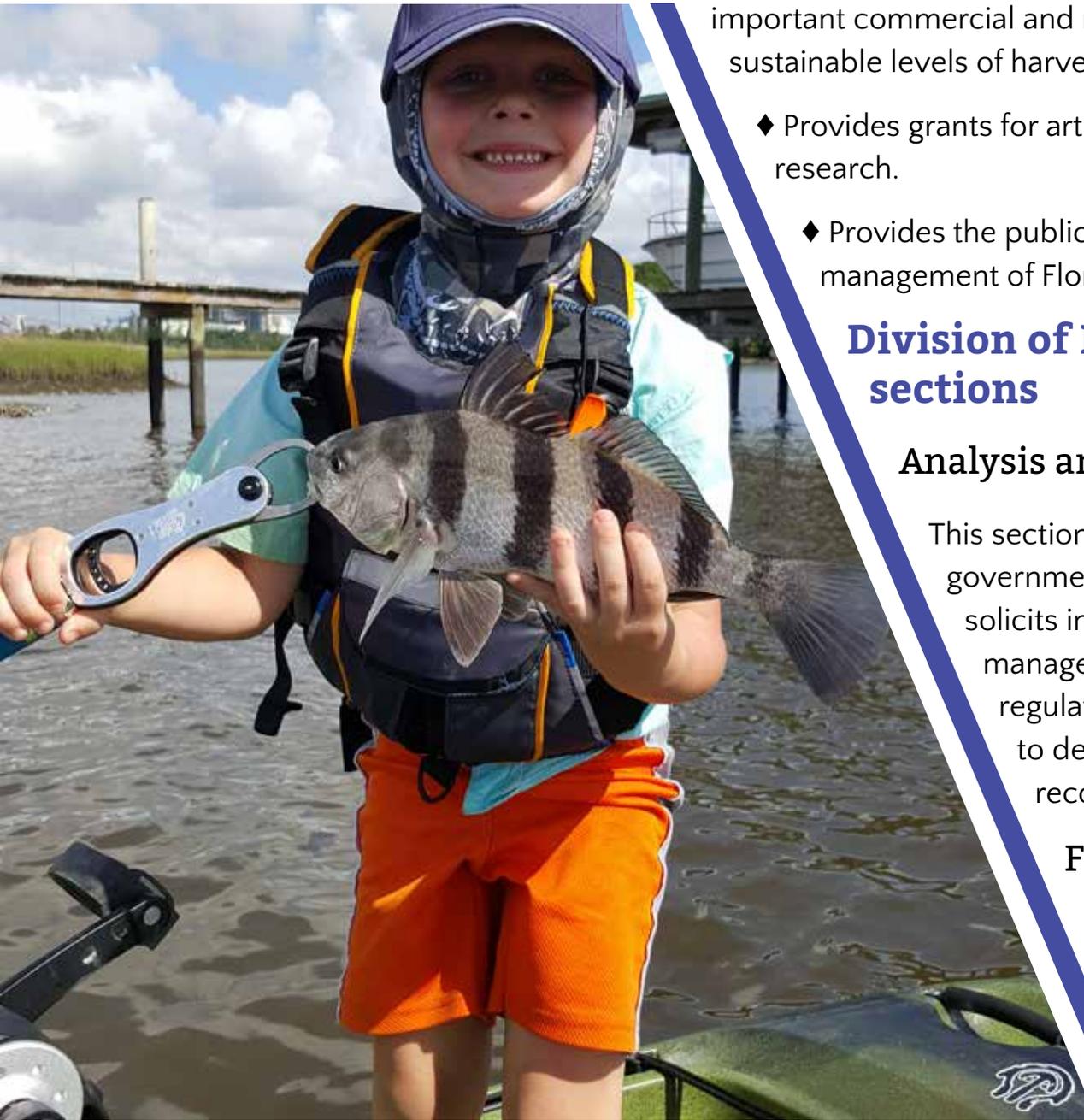
## Mission

To manage Florida's marine fisheries for their long-term sustainability, their economic benefits and for the enjoyment of the public.

## Strategies

- ◆ Brings together fisheries interest groups, research institutions, government agencies and the public to consider ways to manage Florida's marine fisheries effectively.
- ◆ Supports Commission efforts to make informed management decisions based on the best available scientific data and public input.
- ◆ Develops fisheries management plans to prevent overfishing of

*The FWC offers several programs that teach youth saltwater fishing skills and marine resource stewardship, including Saltwater Fish Camps, Kids' Fishing Clinics, Nature Coast Fishing for Youth and the High School Fishing program.*



important commercial and recreational marine species while allowing for sustainable levels of harvest to benefit people.

- ◆ Provides grants for artificial reef construction, monitoring and research.
- ◆ Provides the public with information regarding conservation and management of Florida's valuable marine fisheries.

## **Division of Marine Fisheries Management sections**

### **Analysis and Rulemaking**

This section compiles fishery data, coordinates with other government agencies and research institutions, and solicits information from the public regarding fishery management strategies for state saltwater fisheries regulations. Section employees use this information to develop management and rulemaking recommendations for Commission consideration.

### **Federal Fisheries**

This section serves as liaison between the FWC Commissioners and federal councils, including the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

These federal councils manage marine fish species such as snapper and grouper in federal waters. Staff

*The FWC's Catch a Florida Memory program promotes conservation-minded fishing practices while providing rewards and recognition to new and experienced saltwater anglers. The website, [CatchaFloridaMemory.com](http://CatchaFloridaMemory.com), was newly-remodeled to engage even more anglers with upgraded customer service features.*



members in this section serve on these regional fishery councils and coordinate with stakeholders on federal fisheries issues.

## Fisheries Services

This section works as a liaison between the marine fishing community and the FWC, promoting responsible recreational and commercial fishing activities. The Marine Fisheries Services section also works to resolve issues related to proposed regulations, commercial license applications and wholesaler-compliance; promotes lionfish removal; conducts educational activities such as saltwater fishing clinics for women and children; creates partnerships for youth fishing camps; provides outreach on regulatory changes, responsible angling, marine conservation and the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program; coordinates with the industry to document fisheries disasters, seeks fisheries disaster-relief financial assistance and distributes funding; operates a trap-retrieval program; administers the statewide artificial reef programs; comments on environmental projects; and issues special activity licenses for harvest of species for research and educational purposes.

*Approximately 70-100 public artificial reefs are constructed annually off Florida using a combination of federal, state and local government, and private funds. These reefs increase reef fish habitats and enhance recreational and charter fishing and diving opportunities.*



## MFM budget summary

Funding Source	#FTE	FTE Salaries	Other Costs	Total Budget
Federal Grant Trust Fund		\$623,600	\$23,631,130	\$24,254,730
Grants and Donations Trust Fund		\$0	\$188,362	\$188,362
Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund	\$1,821,806	\$2,182,617	\$4,004,423	
General Revenue		\$0	\$586,605	\$586,605
<b>Total Operating</b>		\$2,445,406	\$26,588,714	\$29,034,120
Fixed Capital Outlay:				
Artificial Reef			\$600,000	
NRDA Rest - Deepwater Horizon	\$664,995			
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>\$2,445,406</b>	<b>\$27,853,709</b>	<b>\$30,299,115</b>

*The fifth annual Lionfish Removal and Awareness Festival was held in Destin and kicked off the fourth annual Lionfish Challenge, a lionfish removal incentive program. The Challenge runs through Labor Day and winners are crowned the recreational Lion King/Queen or the Commercial Champion.*

# Offices

A group of people are in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. One man in a dark blue shirt and a brown cap is standing and gesturing with his right arm towards a group of people sitting on the ground. The group includes a woman in a green shirt and a black hat, a man in a maroon shirt with a backpack, a man in a black shirt and a brown hat, and a man in a black shirt and a grey cap. The background shows a line of trees under a clear sky.

Within the Office of the  
Executive Director are:

**Community Relations Office**

**Finance and Budget Office**

**Legal Office**

**Legislative Affairs Office**

**Office of Human Resources**

**Office of Information Technology**

**Office of the Inspector General**

**Office of Licensing and Permitting**

**Office of Strategic Initiatives**

**Regional Operations**

# Office of the Executive Director

The executive director provides day-to-day administrative leadership for the 2,100+ full-time and 840+ OPS employees of the FWC. The director serves at the pleasure of the Commissioners, and any new appointee the Commissioners select must also be confirmed by the Senate.

**Eric Sutton**  
Executive Director

**Thomas H. Eason, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Executive Director

**Jennifer Fitzwater**  
Chief of Staff

**David Rathke**  
Chief Operations  
Officer

**Charlotte Jerrett**  
Chief Financial  
Officer

Office of the

# Executive Director

Eric Sutton, Executive Director  
620 South Meridian Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600  
850-487-3796



The Office of the Executive Director provides coordination, oversight and support for FWC operations. It provides policy guidance, fosters accountability and promotes continual improvement among the agency's divisions and offices. The office coordinates and supports strong engagement of commissioners and facilitates effective interaction with agency customers, stakeholders, the Florida Legislature, federal and state agencies and FWC staff to address important conservation issues. Further responsibilities include maintaining facilities and infrastructure and leading efforts to strategically focus agency staff and resources on conservation priorities. OED staff work closely with the agency's Senior Leadership Team to ensure effective integration of agency activities and programs across all divisions and offices.

## OED budget summary

Funding Source	#FTE	FTE Salaries	Other Costs	Total Budget
Administrative Trust Fund		\$5,812,875	\$8,612,197	\$13,758,525
Land Acquisition Trust Fund		\$6,283,141	\$5,315	\$6,288,456
Grants and Donations Trust Fund		\$0	\$18,168	\$18,168
State Game Trust Fund		\$329	\$1,497	\$1,826
<b>Total Operating</b>		<b>\$12,096,345</b>	<b>\$8,637,177</b>	<b>\$20,066,975</b>
Fixed Capital Outlay:				
Facilities Repair & Maintenance			\$1,166,383	
Roof Replacement			\$162,000	
SW Regional Office Parking Lot Repair			\$618,000	
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>170.5</b>	<b>\$12,096,345</b>	<b>\$10,583,560</b>	<b>\$22,679,905</b>

# Community Relations Office

Susan Neel, Director  
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1875 Orange Avenue East  
Tallahassee, FL 32301  
850-488-4676

The Community Relations Office informs residents and visitors about fish and wildlife resources and encourages responsible behavior and safety while enjoying outdoor recreational activities, with the goal of raising awareness of conservation issues and the agency's strategic initiatives. CR coordinates agency connections with the public through mass media by issuing news releases, conducting press conferences, providing interviews, writing articles and communicating with both the mainstream and outdoor press. The FWC's social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Periscope and Flickr, as well as the FWC website, deliver news and resources instantly to the public and media. This office keeps abreast of important conservation issues facing Florida, and informs FWC employees, who then can communicate effectively about relevant issues. It has established a database of thousands of FWC photos in Flickr, which is accessible to anyone online.



*The number of people subscribed to the FWC's GovDelivery system is now more than 2.25 million and continues to increase each year!.*

*FWC's use of social media and its social media audiences continue to grow.*

*@MyFWC (main pages):*

- ◆ Facebook – over 185,000 followers
- ◆ Instagram – over 65,000 followers
- ◆ Twitter – over 45,000 followers
- ◆ Flickr – over 21.5 million views
- ◆ YouTube – over 3.9 million views

*Additional FWC Facebook accounts include:*

- ◆ FWRI – over 53,300 followers
- ◆ HuntFlorida – over 18,500 followers
- ◆ Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail – over 18,700 followers

Office of

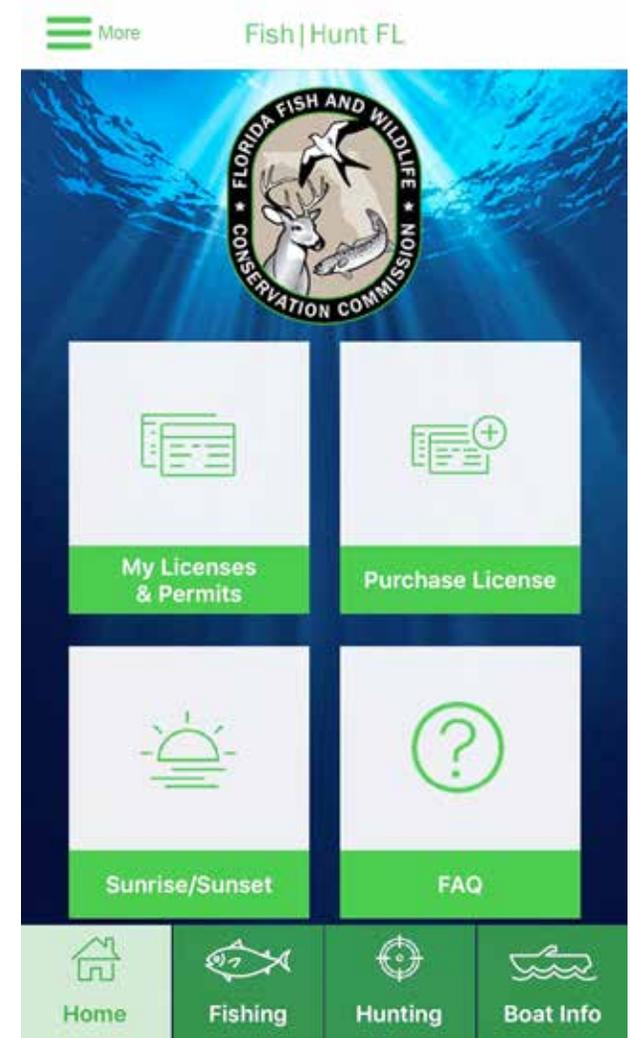
# Licensing and Permitting

Brenda Brand, Director  
Russell Building  
1875 Orange Avenue East  
Tallahassee, FL 32301  
850-488-3641

The Office of Licensing and Permitting is the central point in the FWC for customers to quickly and efficiently obtain licenses and permits. OLP issues more than 3 million recreational fishing and hunting licenses and permits annually through the licensing systems online, by telephone and interactive voice response options, and at more than 800 agent and tax collector locations. Additionally, more than 2 million licenses, permits and tags for commercial saltwater and freshwater fishing are processed through OLP.



*License purchasers donated over \$356,000 last year to support youth hunting and fishing programs*



*The FWC's Fish|Hunt app provides options to renew, purchase and store licenses; access sunrise/sunset and feed times; locate boat ramps; check seas and tide stations; access current regulations; connect with recognition programs; and more!*

# Finance and Budget Office

Kurt Fritsch, Director  
Russell Building  
1875 Orange Avenue East  
Tallahassee, FL 32301  
850-488-6551

The Finance and Budget Office is responsible for providing oversight for the Commission's administrative functions such as disbursements, financial management, procurement, leasing and property. The office has two sections: Accounting and General Services.



*During the past fiscal year, FBO:*

- ◆ *Assisted with state and federal audits.*
- ◆ *Assisted FWC Contract Managers with obtaining the required Florida Certified Contract Manager training/certification.*
- ◆ *Significantly reduced paper costs to the public by changing invoicing requirements.*
- ◆ *Improved financial and private data security by completing the People First Employee ID Conversion project.*
- ◆ *Enhanced vendor selection impartiality through uniform requirements for advance payment approval requests.*
- ◆ *Simplified monthly license and permit fee distributions to the 67 tax collectors in collaboration with the Office of Licensing and Permitting.*
- ◆ *Saved public taxpayer dollars by developing more effective, electronic data storage procedures.*
- ◆ *Reduced taxpayer requirements through the sale of more than \$1 million of surplus equipment.*
- ◆ *Protected taxpayer investment with new solicitation documents and contracting documents for construction services.*

# Legal Office

Emily Norton, General Counsel  
620 South Meridian Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600  
850-921-5461

In-house attorneys provide legal services for the FWC or coordinate through the Attorney General's Office or the Florida Division of Risk Management. The Legal Office represents the FWC in litigation, prepares legal opinions, develops and reviews contracts and other legal instruments, drafts and reviews legislation and rules, and provides general legal counsel relating to FWC operations. The general counsel is a liaison between the FWC and stakeholders, partners and federal, state and local agencies.



# Legislative Affairs Office

Jessica Crawford, Director  
620 South Meridian Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600  
850-487-3795

The Legislative Affairs Office develops and coordinates state and federal legislative activities for FWC and serves as the central point of contact for legislators and their staff for information about FWC's programs and activities. This office works with the Florida Senate and the Florida House of Representatives as they consider the agency's legislative proposals; and provides necessary information to both chambers, the U.S. Congress and legislative staff about legislation under consideration that might affect Florida's fish and wildlife resources. This information helps the Legislature, Governor's Office and the public understand FWC's legislative proposals and other legislation that will impact the agency. The Legislative Affairs Office, in conjunction with FWC's Chief Financial Officer, also works with the Legislature as it develops the agency's budget.



Photo by Sean Paone/Shutterstock.com

*During the 2019 Legislative Session, FWC staff worked closely with the bill sponsors for SB 320 and HB 377, Residential Conservation Programs, to create section 379.107, Florida Statutes, to allow FWC to organize and operate residential programs to provide fish and wildlife conservation education and training programs to the public, commission employees, and volunteers. It provides explicit statutory authorization to FWC to support its long history of providing these programs. SB 320 passed the Legislature and was signed into law by the Governor, Chapter 2019-20, Laws of Florida.*

*In addition, FWC staff worked closely with the bill sponsors for SB 7022 and HB 1121, Citizen Support Organizations, to amend section 379.223, Florida Statutes, removing the scheduled repeal of provisions governing citizen support organizations established under the FWC. The bill authorizes a court to order persons convicted of certain violations to pay an additional assessment directly to Wildlife Alert Reward Association and authorizes Wildlife Alert Reward Association to pay rewards from assessments collected by court order to persons who provide information leading to the arrest of a person for a violation of FWC rules or orders. HB 1121 passed the Legislature and was signed into law by the Governor, Chapter 2019-93, Laws of Florida.*

Office of

# Human Resources

Jennifer Larson, Director  
620 South Meridian Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600  
850-488-6411

The Office of Human Resources provides services and support to all FWC employees. This office advises agency personnel on employment law and state personnel rules and assists managers with recruitment and selection, attendance and leave, discipline, workers' compensation, unemployment compensation, classification and pay, retirement, state insurance benefits, and collective bargaining. Human Resources also coordinates training and develops diversity programs for the agency.



*The Office of Human Resources continues to partner with the divisions to participate in numerous career fairs and events focused on minority groups, veterans and individuals with disabilities. This concerted effort will continue with the work of our OPS Diversity Officer who is dedicated to increasing the diversity of the FWC workforce and diversity among the stakeholders who participate in the agency's programs.*

Office of

# Information Technology

Glenda Atkinson, Chief Information Officer  
Russell Building  
1875 Orange Avenue East  
Tallahassee, FL 32301  
850-488-2393

This office supports the FWC's program areas by managing an information technology environment that is reliable, secure, cost-effective and responsive. The Office of Information Technology (OIT) partners with other FWC divisions and offices to provide tools and services enabling and maximizing Agency programs, objectives and resources. The office strives to enhance internal and external customer confidence and satisfaction by increasing the accessibility and quality of information through system development and maintenance, statewide computer network management, information security administration, the processing, storage and retrieval of data, automating business processes and general support services for the FWC.

## OIT Sections

Application Services	Network Services
Project Management	Desktop Services
Portal Services	Web Services



*During the past fiscal year, OIT:*

- ◆ *Increased mobility, accessibility and improved user satisfaction for many applications, including the upgraded and redesigned MyFWC.com*
- ◆ *Reengineered existing systems, built new applications, and migrated FWC offices to the new State of Florida network*
- ◆ *Implemented new security measures for staff and all office locations in order to be compliant with current security standards*
- ◆ *Assisted Law Enforcement with deploying Bodycams agency-wide*
- ◆ *Converted to a new Document Management System*
- ◆ *Created the OIT Project Management Section*

Office of

# Inspector General

Mike Troelstrup, Inspector General  
620 South Meridian Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600  
850-488-6068

As mandated by state law, this office is responsible for coordinating activities that promote accountability, integrity and efficiency in government and serves as the FWC's ombudsman. The Office of Inspector General conducts performance and compliance audits of agency programs and investigates allegations of fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement and employee misconduct. These complaints may include whistle-blower, criminal wrongdoing and administrative investigations.



*The Office of Inspector General continues to work closely with numerous Divisions/Offices on various projects including: strengthening and improving policies and procedures, program reviews, and employee misconduct investigations.*

Office of

# Strategic Initiatives

Tindl Rainey, Director  
620 South Meridian Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600  
850-488-9327

The Office of Strategic Initiatives coordinates FWC's strategic planning efforts and is home to several agency-wide collaborative programs and initiatives that span beyond the boundaries of a single division.

OSI coordinates FWC's efforts on Everglades restoration. By working across ecosystems and divisions, OSI ensures that the FWC is strategically positioned to support restoration of the South Florida ecosystem.

OSI houses the Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network, which coordinates youth conservation programming in the FWC. This program oversees a statewide network of partners who provide opportunities for youth and families to participate in outdoor activities, which inspires lifelong passion for nature-based recreation and conservation.

OSI leads FWC's participation with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection on Gulf restoration activities in response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. These restoration projects derive



*The Everglades Restoration Team increased communication and engagement with state and federal partners in Everglades restoration and has produced positive outcomes for managing high water events in the Everglades Complex of Wildlife Management Areas*

from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, the Natural Resource Damage Assessment process, and the RESTORE Act. OSI staff also provide technical assistance to other Gulf decision-makers and stakeholders.

OSI assists FWC staff with rulemaking and Commission meeting agenda item preparation and ensures effective stakeholder engagement by providing facilitation and training services.

Florida's Youth Conservation Centers Network is the foundation for achieving FWC's strategic initiative, "Expanding Participation in Conservation." This initiative is creating the next generation that cares by increasing opportunities for youth and families representing Florida's diverse population to participate in traditional outdoor recreation at youth conservation centers operated by FWC and at over 350 partner locations statewide. FWC and FYCCN partners provided conservation programs to over 200,000 youth last year.



# Regions

## Regional Directors

### Northwest

Billy Sermons  
3911 Hwy. 2321  
Panama City, FL 32409-1658  
850-265-3676

### North Central

Chris Wynn  
3377 E. U.S. Highway 90  
Lake City, FL 32055-8795  
386-758-0525

### Northeast

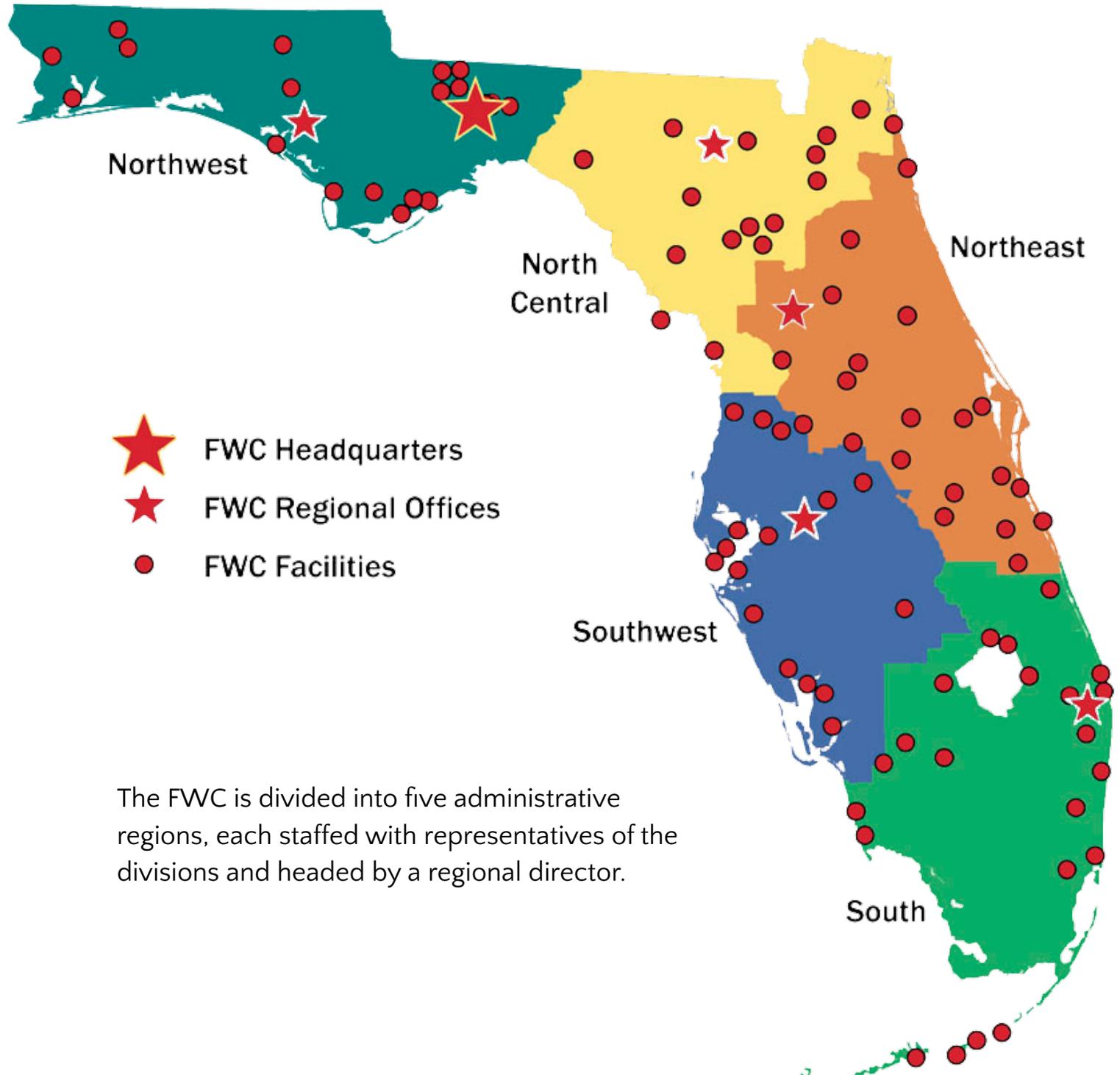
Shannon Wright  
1239 SW 10th Street  
Ocala, FL 34471  
352-732-1225

### Southwest

Thomas Graef  
3900 Drane Field Road  
Lakeland, FL 33811-1207  
863-648-3200

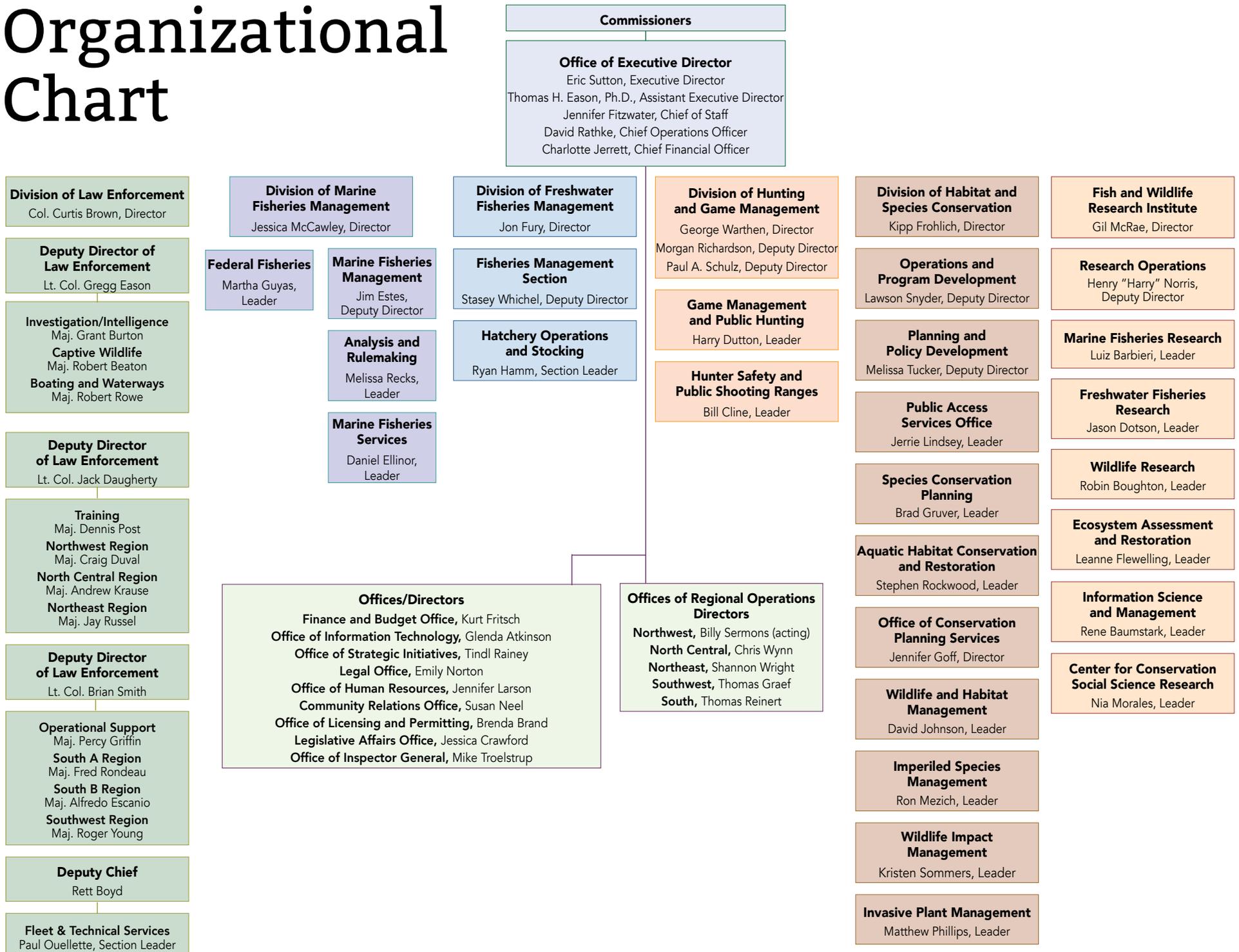
### South

Dr. Thomas Reinert  
8535 Northlake Boulevard  
West Palm Beach, FL 33412  
561-625-5122



The FWC is divided into five administrative regions, each staffed with representatives of the divisions and headed by a regional director.

# Organizational Chart



# Recognitions

Every year, FWC programs and employees are recognized for their excellence. Here are some of the awards they garnered last year.

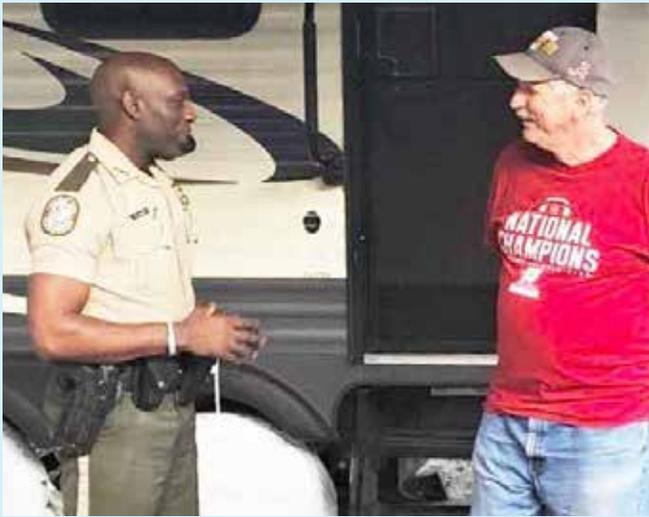


***Jessica McCawley**, director of FWC's Marine Fisheries Management Division, was named chair of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. She was elected by council members at a meeting in Charleston, South Carolina. McCawley has been the director of the FWC's Marine Fisheries Management Division since 2011. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is responsible for the conservation and management of fish stocks within federal waters of the Atlantic off the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and east Florida to Key West. The Council includes representatives in the fishing industry as well as state and federal leadership.*

***Multiple FWC staff**, including investigators, undercover officers, supervisors, intelligence personnel and staff from the Office of Licensing and Permitting, worked together to uncover criminal activity, protect one of our state's iconic species and eliminate unfair competition for law-abiding commercial fishermen. For their efforts, those involved with Operation Thimblereg were presented with the National Conservation Law Enforcement Award for 2018 from the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. Accepting the award on behalf of the entire team was Lt. Jose Escabi, Lt. Jeremy Munkelt, and Investigator Danielle Munkelt. Investigator Willie Almagro, Resource Protection Officer Adam Garrison, and Captains Jay Marvin, David Dipre, and Alberto Maza have also played major roles in this sweeping investigation.*



***Officer Jeff Babauta** (above with his wife) was awarded the 2018 Louise Humphrey Achievement Award by the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida for his outstanding contributions to the conservation of Florida's fish and wildlife. Babauta retired from the FWC on Feb. 28 with 35 years of outstanding service. Over the course of his career he has been involved in the early stages of many innovative FWC programs such as urban fishing programs. During his tenure, Babauta also patrolled the 85,000 acre Three Lakes and Bull Creek WMAs, which included the protection of the whooping crane, grasshopper sparrow, bald eagle, and red cockaded woodpecker. Babauta worked with hunter education classes, boating safety classes and youth events. As a member of the FWC's elite K-9 unit, he successfully apprehended resource violators, recovered evidence of crimes and conducted search-and-rescue missions for missing and endangered people. In his most demanding role, he was part of Operation Alligator Thief in which 14 suspects were arrested for various egregious violations.*



*Investigator Terrynce Bing was recognized as the Florida Park Service's FWC Officer of the Year for his outstanding service to state park visitors and staff. Bing has a personal connection to Florida State Parks. He began his career in public service as a park ranger 35 years ago. He went on to serve with the Department of Environmental Protection's Park Police and now with the FWC Division of Law Enforcement.*

*From the Florida State Park March newsletter.*



*Officer Kyle Yurewitch (SRB) was selected as the 2018 Coastal Conservation Association Officer of the Year for the Collier County region*

*FWC's Port Investigations Team is Florida's first line of defense against illegally trafficked resources such as endangered species, live rock, corals, internationally prohibited species and nonnatives. This group, made up of investigators, officers and K9s, inspect thousands of packages each year at Florida's 24 ports of entry. The illegal importation of nonnative species, particularly for the black-market pet trade, has been established as one of the top priorities of this team.*

*The FWC Port Investigations Team was chosen as the 2019 national winner of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Conservation Law Enforcement Award. They were presented with this prestigious honor at the 2019 AFWA meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota.*



*Officer Randall Bibler, Officer Specialist Alex Martinez, and Officer James Pettifer were awarded the MADD BUI Team of the Year Award for their excellence in BUI enforcement, training, and mentoring in the Tampa Bay area. The award recognizes them as the team of the year for the entire State of Florida. Pictured are Lt. Col. Eason, Officers Bibler, Martinez and Pettifer, and Maj. Young.*



**Kathleen Smith**, a biologist with the FWC, was honored with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Resource Manager of the Year award for her work at the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed Wildlife and Environmental Area in southwest Florida. The award recognizes outstanding resource management achievements by the hundreds of resource managers who protect state properties. Smith was recognized for her passion and commitment to conserving wildlife while working in partnership with the South Florida Water Management District that co-manages this WEA, which is in Lee and Collier counties. One focus has been work on the federally endangered Florida bonneted bat.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council presented the 2018 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award to **Lt. Jason Marlow**. Lt. Marlow has spent most of his 20-year career dedicated to working in the Gulf of Mexico. He is highly regarded for his mentorship and his passion for marine resource conservation. He continuously inspires others with his attitude, subject matter expertise and work ethic. Lt. Marlow is an exemplary squad leader who has prioritized federal fisheries enforcement with great success. From left: Doug Boyd; Lt. Marlow; and Dr. Tom Frazer.



The Florida Guides Association awarded **Officer Michael Bibeau** with the "Trained Eyes Coast Watchers" Officer of the Year Award. Bibeau patrols his home county of Pinellas where he maintains strong working relationships with local partner agencies in enforcing conservation rules and regulations, promoting education and conservation stewardship among those enjoying Florida's natural resources. Officer Bibeau's actions set an example whose reach is felt statewide through his leadership as a Field Training Officer and on FWC's Special Operations Group and Advanced Conservation Training Academy as well as participating in the Great American Teach-In program.

Three FWC employees were honored during the State Law Enforcement Chiefs Association meeting in Tallahassee. SLECA annually honors the best and brightest in Florida's law enforcement community. FWC business manager **John Fussell** was nominated for the Distinguished Civilian Support Member Award, **Lt. John Wilke** received the Outstanding Law Enforcement Trainer of the Year Award and **Investigator Rene Taboas** received the Investigator of the Year Award.





**Northeast Region officers** received the Central Florida MADD Excellence Award for BUI enforcement. From L-R: Lt. Dustin Lightsey, Officer Garret Mendelson, Officer Ryan Matthews, Officer Richard Marroquin and Officer Harry Balgo.

FWRI biologist **Pierson Hill** was awarded the Southeast Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation 2018 Conservation Hero Award. This award is given in recognition for making significant contributions to the conservation of amphibians and reptiles in the southeast region, and successfully achieving on-the-ground conservation for herpetofauna by preventing loss of species or their habitats. Pierson is working on several projects focused on recovering populations of the critically imperiled frosted flatwoods salamander. Over the past two winters, Pierson has led a team that collected and hatched salamander eggs that would have otherwise perished due to unusually dry conditions. The team has rescued over 2,000 eggs, donated more than 400 for captive breeding efforts, and released 1,300 metamorph salamanders back into the wild. His efforts have provided a critical boost to rapidly declining populations and made headway in the methodology of headstarting this fragile species.

**Investigator Danielle Munkelt** is presented with the CCA Officer of the Year for the Monroe County region by Capt. David Dipre.



Mr. Ignacio Pinochet, owner of Chalks Airlines, recognized **FWC SRB personnel** for their hard work and dedication in Miami-Dade County.



The American Camp Association presented its Hedley S. Dimock Award to the **Florida Youth Conservation Center Network staff** at ACA's national conference. The award recognizes contributions to camping through related fields including outdoor education, conservation, and recreation.



During the 11th Annual Black History Celebration held at the Florida Public Safety Institute **Lt. Adonious Duhart** was honored for his many contributions. Lt. Duhart is an invaluable part of the training team at the Law Enforcement Academy. Lt. Duhart was joined by Capt. Patrick Walsh, Maj. Dennis Post, Lt. Col. Jack Daugherty and Maj. Percy Griffin.



**FWC's Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program** received national recognition at the Keep America Beautiful National Conference. The program was given the State Agency Partnership Recognition Award for its work in encouraging local governments, businesses and private citizens to work together to make communities cleaner, greener, and more beautiful. The Monofilament Program is one of the FWC's many efforts related to our Boating as a Gateway to Conservation Initiative. As part of this initiative, the FWC rolled out a new campaign called "Stash the Trash," which encourages boaters and anglers to keep trash out of Florida's waters. Mary Jean Yon, Keep Florida Beautiful and Jerrie Lindsey.



**Officer Chris Schirbock** received the law enforcement commendation medal from the National Association of the Sons of the American Revolution

**Officer Erik Steinmetz** was recognized by Monroe County Sheriff's Office for his service to the citizens of Monroe County.



**Investigator Rene Taboas** was awarded the 2018 Rodney Barreto Employee of the Year by the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida. Taboas' enforcement and education work is making a difference for protected migratory songbirds. Investigator Taboas began working on Migratory Bird Treaty Act enforcement in April 2017. Since then, he has filed 214 charges, released 272 protected birds back into the wild and 110 illegal bird traps have been seized. His efforts have significantly increased the cases being made against violators of the MBTA and are a tremendous contribution to saving and returning hundreds of birds to the wild.



Two FWC officers from the Southwest Region were recognized during the President's Roundtable Awards Banquet, a ceremony honoring first responders in Polk County. **Officer Jeremy DeWeese** received the Distinguished Service Award and **Officer Sean Karr** received the Wildlife Officer of the Year Award for 2018-2019. From left: Officer Sean Karr, Maj. Roger Young and Officer Jeremy DeWeese. Photo by Janel Vasallo/Lakeland Fire Department.



**Lt. Dustin Lightsey** from Northeast Region received the Meritorious Act Award from the United States Lifesaving Association. The award was presented at an Indian River County Commission meeting. In attendance were his wife, son, and Captain Travis Franklin.



**Officer Jacob Carter**, pictured with his wife Miranda, was presented with an award for Outstanding Dedication to BUI Enforcement. The award was presented at the Polk County MADD Law Enforcement and Prosecutor Awards Ceremony.



The methods used in the FWC's Gulf Reef Fish Survey data collection program have been officially certified by NOAA Fisheries. This is a big milestone for the FWC and will help us continue to achieve our agency priority of improving recreational data for several important reef fish species including red snapper and gag grouper. For the past several years, FWC has worked collaboratively with NOAA Fisheries' Marine Recreational Information Program, regional partners and academic experts from across the country to develop the new survey methods. The success of this effort is due in large part to the many anglers who participate in the survey.

The FWC brought home nine awards from The Association for Conservation Information. The awards were:

- First Place Awards:** Poster, Coyote-Pet Safety Infographic; Website, FloridaNatureTrackers.com; Graphics Advertising Display, MarineQuest Logo.
- Second Place Awards:** Video Long, FLOW: The Chipola River Story; Conservation Post of the Year, Big leap for panther conservation (2 panther kittens documented north of Caloosahatchee River).
- Third Place Awards:** Success on a Shoestring, Northern Bobwhite Quail Sightings Webpage; One-time Publication: Brochure, Reel in and Recycle!; Graphics: Advertising/Display, Manatee Decal 2017; External Newsletter, FWRI Monthly Highlights.

