From the Executive Director

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

The FWC’s mission is to manage 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.

Florida remains one of the country’s top destinations for world-class fishing, unique hunting opportunities and recreation. Our goal is to ensure that residents and visitors benefit from and enjoy our wildlife and natural resources for generations to come. Accomplishing our mission requires teamwork among policymakers, conservation professionals, and highly trained law enforcement. Our policy is guided by Commissioners, appointed by the Governor, who serve as volunteers to be the trustees of fish and wildlife resources. We work closely with a diverse group of public and private partners and consider the public part of our team.

Maintaining our fish and wildlife resources can help sustain a healthy way of life and a robust economy. We help conserve
and manage the natural areas that not only offer residents and visitors outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities but also provide tens of thousands of jobs. So many of the activities we support - fishing, hunting, boating, wildlife viewing - are critical economic pillars for our state and for our ability to accomplish our mission.

Sportsmen and women and other outdoor enthusiasts are the cornerstone of our mission and history. 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 participate in 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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The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) consists of 2,148.5 full-time-equivalent employees, including 861 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 population of 21.7 million people and nearly 118 million visitors 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.
FWC Core Values

Resource Stewardship
We are passionate about Florida’s natural resources and use our expertise to manage and conserve fish and wildlife.

Service Excellence
We are solution-oriented and committed to achieving wildlife and fisheries conservation results, and efficiently meeting the needs of the public and stakeholders.

Teamwork and Collaboration
We communicate openly and work together effectively to achieve our common goals. We appreciate the value of diverse backgrounds, expertise, and ideas, and incorporate multiple perspectives into decision making.

Professional Integrity
We operate honestly and ethically, and apply our processes, rules, and regulations in a consistent manner that engenders a climate of trust and fairness.

Scientific and Technical Excellence
We use our science-based expert knowledge, technology, and other available resources to achieve high-quality work.

Accountability
We set challenging goals for our achievement and hold ourselves accountable for the results.
Economic Contributions

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Economic Contribution</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hunting*</td>
<td>$1.6 billion</td>
<td>14,673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational freshwater fishing*</td>
<td>$1.7 billion</td>
<td>14,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational saltwater fishing**</td>
<td>$6.6 billion</td>
<td>96,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife viewing*</td>
<td>$4.9 billion</td>
<td>44,623</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


Economic impacts of boating industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Economic contribution</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boating Industry</td>
<td>$23.3 billion</td>
<td>92,211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Marine Manufacturers Association: 2018 Economic Impact Study

Economic impacts of the seafood industry

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

### Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Divisions</th>
<th>FTE</th>
<th>FTE salaries</th>
<th>Other costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshwater Fish</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>$3,830,411</td>
<td>$3,999,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat and Species</td>
<td>385.5</td>
<td>$26,502,788</td>
<td>$107,321,962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting and Game</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>$3,241,749</td>
<td>$7,032,973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement</td>
<td>1,055.0</td>
<td>$89,612,255</td>
<td>$73,268,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Fisheries</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>$2,603,373</td>
<td>$10,724,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWRI</td>
<td>353.0</td>
<td>$25,053,465</td>
<td>$114,046,847</td>
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</table>

### Offices

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Relations</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>$729,662</td>
<td>$407,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensing and Permitting</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>$933,896</td>
<td>$3,571,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep Water Horizon</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>$146,258</td>
<td>$1,339,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FYCCN</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>$950,690</td>
<td>$1,524,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Offices:*</td>
<td>173.0</td>
<td>$13,207,799</td>
<td>$11,332,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,148.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>$166,812,346</strong></td>
<td><strong>$309,516,974</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Support Offices provide central administrative support for the agency. The agency’s overhead from these offices is $24,540,451 or only 5.15% of the total agency budget.*
FWC Funding Sources Fiscal Year 2022-23

- $107,627,747 - 23%
  Land Acquisition Trust Fund
- $103,766,736 - 22%
  General Revenue
- $82,946,130 - 17%
  Federal Grant Trust Fund
- $82,102,687 - 17%
  Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund
- $30,755,744 - 6%
  State Game Trust Fund
- $28,549,130 - 6%
  Grants and Donations Trust Fund
- $19,828,963 - 4%
  Administrative Trust Fund
- $8,651,167 - 2%
  Nongame Wildlife Trust Fund
- $7,637,796 - 2%
  Invasive Plant Control Trust Fund
- $1,011,269 - <1%
  Florida Panther Research and Management Trust Fund
- $3,451,951 - <1%
  Save the Manatee Trust Fund

Total: $345,195,107
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.”
The Executive Office provides day-to-day administrative leadership for the 2,100+ full-time and 840+ OPS employees of the FWC. The Executive Director serves at the pleasure of the Commissioners and any new appointee the Commissioners select must also be confirmed by the Florida Senate.

Eric Sutton
Executive Director

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

Jessica Crawford
Chief of Staff

Sarah Barrett
Chief Operations Officer

Hunter Jones
Acting Chief Financial Officer

Tindl Rainey
Chief Communications Officer

Executive Officers are responsible for various offices and divisions within the FWC. The Division of Law Enforcement, the Legal Office and Office of Inspector General report directly to the Executive Director as do the Assistant Executive Director and Chief of Staff.

The Assistant Executive Director oversees the divisions of Marine Fisheries Management, Freshwater Fisheries Management, Hunting and Game Management, Habitat and Species Conservation, the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, and Regional Operations.

The Chief of Staff directs the Legislative Affairs Office, the Chief Operations Officer (offices of Information Technology, Human Resources and General Services), the Chief Financial Officer (Accounting Services and Budget & Revenue) and the Chief Communications Officer (offices of Community Relations, Licensing and Permitting and Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network).
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 support offices budget summary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>#FTE</th>
<th>FTE Salaries</th>
<th>Other Costs</th>
<th>Total Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Trust Fund</td>
<td>173.0</td>
<td>$13,207,799</td>
<td>$11,332,652</td>
<td>$24,540,451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Acquisition Trust Fund</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund</td>
<td></td>
<td>$6,178</td>
<td></td>
<td>$6,178</td>
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</table>

*These support offices provide central administrative support to all agency programs. The following offices are included in this group: OED, CFO, Legislative, IG, SI, Legal, HR, IT, FBO, Regions. Several of the service offices are highlighted on the following page.
### Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network budget summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>#FTE</th>
<th>FTE Salaries</th>
<th>Other Costs</th>
<th>Total Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Trust Fund</td>
<td></td>
<td>$822,690</td>
<td>$27,655</td>
<td>$850,345</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nongame Wildlife Trust Fund</td>
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<td>$128,000</td>
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<td>$172,307</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund</td>
<td></td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$159,000</td>
<td>$159,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Grant Trust Fund</td>
<td></td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$18,168</td>
<td>$18,168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Game Trust Fund</td>
<td></td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$1,275,238</td>
<td>$1,275,238</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Budget</strong></td>
<td><strong>14.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>$950,690</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,524,368</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,475,058</strong></td>
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### Deepwater Horizon budget summary

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<thead>
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<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>#FTE</th>
<th>FTE Salaries</th>
<th>Other Costs</th>
<th>Total Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Trust Fund</td>
<td></td>
<td>$146,258</td>
<td>$45,088</td>
<td>$191,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Grant Trust Fund</td>
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<td>$0</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants and Donations Trust Fund</td>
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<td>$0</td>
<td>$1,290,510</td>
<td>$1,290,510</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Budget</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$146,258</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,399,598</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,485,856</strong></td>
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### Licensing and Permitting budget summary

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<th>Funding Source</th>
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<th>FTE Salaries</th>
<th>Other Costs</th>
<th>Total Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Trust Fund</td>
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<td>State Game Trust Fund</td>
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<td>$2,754,188</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund</td>
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<td>$737,131</td>
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<td><strong>Total Budget</strong></td>
<td><strong>17.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>$933,896</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,571,900</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4,505,796</strong></td>
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### Community Relations budget summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>#FTE</th>
<th>FTE Salaries</th>
<th>Other Costs</th>
<th>Total Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Trust Fund</td>
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<td>$446,339</td>
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<td>$755,144</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund</td>
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<td>$283,323</td>
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<td>$382,122</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Budget</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>$729,662</strong></td>
<td><strong>$407,604</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,137,266</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Relations Office

Carol Lyn Parrish, Director
1875 Orange Avenue East
Tallahassee, FL 32301
850-488-4676

The Community Relations Office informs the public about fish and wildlife resources and encourages responsible behavior and safety while promoting outdoor recreational activities. CRO’s goal is to raise awareness of conservation issues and the agency’s strategic initiatives. CRO coordinates agency connections with the public through mass media by issuing news releases via GovDelivery, conducting press conferences, providing interviews, writing articles, editing and communicating with the media. CRO manages the FWC’s social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Flickr, and updates MyFWC.com to instantly deliver news and resources. CRO is home to Media Services, which provides AV support to the agency as well as photography, video and graphic arts services. Another part of CRO is the FWC’s Statewide Call Center, comprised of 10 information specialists distributed within the five Regional Offices across the state. The Statewide Call Center is FWC’s front line customer service section and very often the first interaction that stakeholders have with the agency.

CRO’s Media Services team provides audio-visual services for the agency.

The number of people subscribed to the FWC’s GovDelivery system is now more than 3.5 million and continues to increase each year!

The Statewide Call Center’s information specialists answer 400-700 calls from the public per day. They also stay abreast of any developing issues and provide official agency responses to these hot topics through constant review of new information.

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

@MyFWC (main pages):
♦ Facebook – over 335,000 followers
♦ Instagram – over 97,000 followers
♦ Twitter – over 37,000 followers
♦ Flickr – over 30 million views
♦ YouTube – over 6 million views

Additional FWC Facebook accounts include:
♦ FWRI – over 100,600 followers
♦ HuntFlorida – over 21,000 followers
♦ Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail – over 21,000 followers
Office of Florida Youth Conservation Centers

Daniel Parker, Director
620 South Meridian Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600
850-404-6125

The Office of Florida Youth Conservation Centers houses the Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network, which supports youth conservation programming and education in the FWC. Through a network of partners and conservation centers, FYCCN provides opportunities for youth and families to explore the outdoors via FYCCN’s “pillars” of shooting sports, boating, fishing and wildlife exploration. By way of these efforts the program strives to inspire lifelong passion for conservation and nature-based recreation.

In early May of 2022, FYCCN hosted a week-long statewide event to encourage families to turn off devices in favor of connection, reflection and quality time outdoors. Families were able to visit fyccn.org/screenfreeweek to find a list of outdoor events around the state, free resources, social media badges, printables and more.

After a successful launch of FYCCN’s new Partner Recognition Program, seven partners won grand prizes to help expand or add value to their youth conservation and recreation programs. Key Biscayne was FYCCN’s South B region grand prize winner. Owner and director David Patlan is pictured here with the park’s chosen prize: a waterproof GoPro camera with all the accessories.
Office of Licensing and Permitting

Brenda Brand, Director
1875 Orange Avenue East
Tallahassee, FL 32311
850-488-3641

OLP issues more than 3.2 million recreational fishing and hunting licenses and permits annually through GoOutdoorsFlorida.com, the Fish|Hunt FL mobile app, telephone sales, interactive voice response sales and through sales at more than 700 agent and tax collector locations. Additionally, more than 1.9 million licenses, endorsements and tags for commercial saltwater and freshwater harvesting are processed annually through OLP.

Recreational license purchasers donated over $440,000 last year to support youth hunting and fishing programs.

The FWC’s Fish|Hunt FL app provides options to renew, purchase, and store licenses and permits, report harvests, locate boat ramps, access sunrise / sunset and feed times, check seas and tides, access current regulations, connect with recognition programs, and more!
Finance and Budget Office

Hunter Jones, Acting Chief Financial Officer
1875 Orange Avenue East
Tallahassee, FL 32301
850-617-9600

The Finance and Budget Office is responsible for providing oversight for the Commission’s administrative functions such as disbursements, financial management, budget and grants administration. The office has two sections: Accounting Services, and Budget & Revenue Services.

During the past fiscal year, FBO:
- Provided support for state and federal audits.
- Updated the Purchasing Card (PCard) Agency Plan and improved PCard training resources.
- Streamlined the invoice and travel reimbursement submittal process.
- Worked with OIT to develop more effective, electronic data storage procedures and mechanisms.
- Reduced taxpayer requirements through the sale of more than $1 million of surplus equipment.
- Gained efficiencies by reorganizing the staffing structure and realigning workflows.
The Office of Human Resources provides personal service and support to all FWC employees and stakeholders. This office advises agency personnel on federal employment laws and state personnel rules, and diversity engagement. HR assists staff with recruitment and selection, attendance and leave, discipline, workers’ compensation, unemployment compensation, classification and pay, retirement, state insurance benefits, performance evaluations and collective bargaining.

The Office of Human Resources also creates and coordinates all staff training and development programs.

- Achieved almost 90% goal of Paperless Personnel Document Storage System.
- Working to automate public record requests to a paperless electronic system in coordination with the agency records custodian and legal department.
- Completed more than 200 verifications of employment, over 100 public student loan forgiveness forms and more than 200 public record requests.
- Assists more than 3,000 staff.
- Assists with internal and external ADA accommodation requests.
- Represents Minorities in Natural Resources Conservation Program at SEAFWA Conference.
The Office of Information Technology supports the program areas of the FWC by managing an information technology environment that is reliable, secure, cost-effective and responsive. This office works closely with divisions and offices to provide technology tools, services and infrastructure that enhance information accessibility and quality. The OIT supports system development and maintenance, statewide network management, information security administration, and support for business processes automation. OIT’s principle focus is to provide exceptional technology support services.

OIT Sections
- Application Services
- Network Services
- Project Management
- Desktop Services
- Portal Services
- Web Services
- Data Automation and Modernization

• Web Services migrated FWC websites to the cloud to increase uptime and availability, along with updating and modernizing websites.
• Desktop Services implemented several systems to speed computer deployment and increase security including Microsoft Intune and Windows Hello.
• Portal Services migrated mission critical systems to SharePoint online while modernizing our SharePoint environment, automating manual processes, streamlining electronic storage and reducing entry of redundant information.
• Data Automation and Modernization created a Center of Excellence for Microsoft Power Platform. They also integrated our Enterprise Document Management System with custom applications to improve efficiencies and automate processes.
• Network Services implemented a new phone system that is fully mobile ready, with improved uptime, voice quality and reporting. In addition, multiple servers and systems were migrated to the cloud, improving security, scalability and reducing costs.
• Application Services completed migration of FWC’s application environment to the cloud. They developed and deployed an online registration system for the FWC Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network for Summer Camps Registration and a new Revenue Management System, among others.
• The Project Management Office managed OIT’s project portfolio of over 20 projects. They activated six new projects and completed seven, including coral rescue, WMA planning and structural asset management projects.
Office of Inspector General

Percy Griffin, Interim 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.
In-house attorneys provide a wide range of legal services for all the Divisions and Offices of the FWC. 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 also provides legal support for the FWCs five annually held public Commission Meetings.
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 the FWC’s Chief Financial Officer, also works with the Legislature as it develops the agency’s budget.

During the 2022 Legislative Session, FWC staff worked closely with the bill sponsors for the FWC agency bill that passed the Legislature and was signed into law by the Governor. SB 494, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (Chapter No. 2022-142), contains numerous changes to existing laws administered by the FWC and is aimed at overall boating improvements to ensure that Florida’s waters are accessible, safe and enjoyable for the public. Additionally, the bill included changes to the gopher tortoise program, including the creation of an online dashboard for available tortoise relocation reservations.
The FWC is divided into five administrative regions, each staffed with representatives of the divisions and headed by a regional director.
The FWC is comprised of six divisions and nine 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 the management efforts of other FWC divisions.

FWRI avian biologists participated in the release of the 501st Florida grasshopper sparrow -- a milestone for one of North America’s most endangered birds. The conservation-recovery and release program for Florida grasshopper sparrows is part of a multipronged strategy to bring the species back from the brink of potential extinction, which couldn’t be done without the collaboration and hard work of our staff and partners.
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 the enhancement of terrestrial, freshwater and coastal habitats and wildlife communities.

♦ Responds to and provides technical support for catastrophe response, including oil spills, ship groundings, die-offs, major chemical spills and natural disasters.

♦ Provides cause-of-death determination for 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.

This longnose gar was encountered on the Choctawhatchee River while freshwater fisheries biologists were performing routine long-term monitoring. Melanism is an abnormal extent of dark coloration in the skin, scales, fur or feathers of animals and is characterized by excessive deposits of melanin. It’s relatively rare in animals and is not often seen by biologists.
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 FWRI’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 and economic research geared toward better understanding human attitudes and behaviors associated with the natural environment and informed decision making. It has a twofold mission. First, a core group of social scientists conduct independent social science research as well as provide consulting services for FWC programs. This includes advisement and consultation for biologists and

*Biologists from FWRI’s Fisheries-Independent Monitoring program using a seine net to monitor juvenile sport fish abundance in an experimental salt marsh pond. FIM is wrapping up a 3-year post-restoration monitoring study on juvenile snook and tarpon habitats in Charlotte Harbor.*
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 and topics, science communication, and stakeholder outreach and education.

**Ecosystem Assessment and Restoration**

The Ecosystem Assessment and Restoration Section is responsible for monitoring and investigating harmful algal blooms, such as Florida red tide; collecting and analyzing habitat and species data for freshwater, marine and upland habitats; and monitoring for and responding to fish and wildlife disease outbreaks. This section assesses seagrass, oyster reefs and coastal wetlands statewide; monitors coral reefs; and conducts freshwater plant and upland research to support habitat management actions. Researchers respond to fish and wildlife mortality events and stony coral tissue loss disease; study the unknown neurological disorder impacting the endangered Florida panther; conduct surveillance for wildlife diseases, such as chronic wasting disease in deer; and provide technical assistance to partners.

**Freshwater Fisheries Research**

To ensure the health and sustainability of Florida’s aquatic resources, the Freshwater Fisheries Research section provides
freshwater fishery, invertebrate and habitat information 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. Researchers in this section address complex natural resource issues by integrating ecological, cultural and socioeconomic information using statistical and spatial analysis techniques. Staff develop maps and model distribution patterns of fish and wildlife to identify lands and waters that are conservation priorities. The section’s database experts, statisticians, research librarians, specimen collection managers, scientific editors and scientific editor provide additional support to FWC scientists and managers.

**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

*Pyrodinium bahamense* is a dinoflagellate that blooms regularly in Florida coastal waters, including Tampa Bay, Florida Bay and the Indian River Lagoon. Because toxic *Pyrodinium* blooms can contaminate fish and shellfish and threaten public health, the FWC leads routine monitoring programs for *P. bahamense* in Tampa Bay and the Indian River Lagoon, the systems in which annual blooms occur. Scientists at the FWC are also working to identify the environmental factors that trigger blooms in Florida and influence their duration, intensity and toxicity. A better understanding of blooms will help scientists develop models to predict future blooms.
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 oversee 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 access, 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 for conserving these resources to federal, state and local managers and the public.

*FWRI’s Biodiversity Collection has more than 7 million ichthyoplankton (larval fish) specimens. This larval telescope fish is a deep-sea species that will grow tube shaped eyes. As an adult they are a relatively small fish having an elongated tail fin that can be over half their body length.*
### FWRI budget summary

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Florida has 23 different types of terrestrial habitat. FWRI’s Terrestrial Habitat research team studies the ecology and management of Florida’s forest, savanna and ephemeral wetland ecosystems. Fire features prominently in nearly everything these scientists do, as many of Florida’s most diverse terrestrial ecosystems are fire-dependent.
Division of
Freshwater Fisheries
Management

Tom Graef, Director
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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 School Fishing Club 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.

*The TrophyCatch citizen-science program rewards anglers for documenting and releasing largemouth bass weighing 8 pounds or heavier in Florida. To celebrate the program’s tenth season, FWC biologists tagged and released 10 largemouth bass with bright pink tags in 10 different locations across the state. Each tag was worth $5,000 in Bass Pro Shops gift cards and $1,000 to shop at AFTCO with a chance to win an additional $10,000.*
♦ 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.

♦ 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.

♦ Produces, documents and promotes trophy bass fishing through the Florida Trophy Bass Project and leverages data gained from TrophyCatch to improve bass management strategies and novel regulations on targeted waters.

♦ 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.

*The Florida Trophy Bass Project synchronizes with TrophyCatch to merge angler-submitted data with innovative trophy bass management strategies.*
Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management sections

Fisheries Management

The Fisheries Management section ensures outstanding freshwater fishing opportunities in Florida’s lakes, rivers and streams through stocking desirable sport fish, 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 2.5-3 million freshwater fish annually, which are stocked in more than 100 Florida lakes, rivers and community-managed waters.

*Freshwater fisheries researchers and managers with the FWC successfully released 3,300 hatchery-raised shoal bass into the Chipola River in May 2022. Raising and releasing these fish can enhance the wild population of shoal bass to help keep the population's genetic purity intact and aid in the long-term conservation of the species.*
One method our biologists use to assess fish populations across the state is by boat-operated electrofishing. An electrofishing boat has a generator that puts electrical currents into the water at varying voltages, amperages and pulses depending on the water chemistry. When fish are in that electrical field, they become temporarily stunned and often float to the surface, allowing biologists to net and transfer them to a livewell on the boat. Fish are then weighed and length is recorded before returning them back to the water alive.
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.
Accomplishing this mission requires extensive collaboration and partnering with local, state and federal agencies as well as nongovernmental organizations and stakeholders 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’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 continue to develop educational materials to share with the public.*
♦ 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 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 is planting more than 140,000 native aquatic plants on Lake Istokpoga, a 28,000-acre natural lake in Highlands County, to help restore this popular, shallow sportfishing lake. These native aquatic plants will serve as valuable food and nesting habitat for many fish and wildlife species, including the endangered Everglade snail kite, and sportfish including largemouth bass, crappie and panfish.
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 over 6.1 million acres. The Wildlife and Habitat Management section is the FWC’s lead manager on 1.5 million acres and assists cooperators with management on another 4.6 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 based on sound land management principles and practices. Habitat management practices include prescribed fire, mechanical and chemical control of invasive and exotic plants, 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.

At Everglades WMA, natural communities such as sawgrass marsh, wet prairies, sloughs and tree islands provide habitat for fish and wildlife. Each habitat within the WMA receives a unique management prescription. Prescribed fire is the most economical and effective tool for maintaining the function and wildlife habitat value of the marshes and wet prairie.
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.

Wildlife Diversity Conservation

The mission of this section is conserving Florida’s wildlife diversity and associated habitats. It develops and implements high priority conservation activities for native wildlife, with an emphasis on listed or protected species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Partnerships with other governmental agencies (local, state and federal), nongovernmental organizations and individuals help achieve conservation goals.

At their December 2021 meeting, Commissioners approved regulation changes that will help further diamondback terrapin conservation by preventing them from being collected from the wild. As of March 1, 2022, all collection and possession of diamondback terrapins is prohibited with the exception of scientific research with a valid permit.
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 could affect listed species, as well maintaining and revising the State Wildlife Action Plan. The SWAP is a comprehensive, statewide plan for conserving the state’s wildlife and vital natural areas, and outlines native wildlife and habitats in need, why they are in need and conservation actions for protecting them. The section is implementing the Imperiled Species Management Plan to conserve species currently listed as state-threatened or 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 developing, implementing and/or coordinating activities associated with the Gopher Tortoise Management Plan, the Florida Shorebird Alliance, wildlife permitting, incentive-based conservation, and regional wildlife diversity conservation operations and technical assistance.

**Imperiled Species Management**

This section is responsible for conservation of Florida’s 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

*Imperiled Species Management staff work closely with FWRI staff toward the long-term conservation of the Florida panther through many projects, including monitoring their movements via tracking collars.*
management and recovery tasks. All four programs have seen significant conservation gains for the species they manage, including population increases. The Manatee Management Program staff, along with staff from across the FWC and partners, have been highly engaged in the response to the ongoing Atlantic Coast Manatee Unusual Mortality Event. This includes messaging to the public, a supplemental feeding trial and aiding in habitat restoration project prioritization. Other key section tasks include development of rules and conservation measures 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 inform ISM when 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

*The WIM section’s Wildlife Assistance program received over 14,000 inquiries from the public in FY 21-22 and provided technical assistance on a variety of species. Senior Wildlife Assistance Biologist Jayne Johnston provided guidance on methods to prevent bats from entering a gym facility and was able to remove a bat that had flown into the inside of a vending machine.*
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 works 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

Seven years ago, the FWC’s IPM Uplands staff began work on the newly acquired Babcock Ranch Preserve. An average of 5,500 acres have been treated annually in that time with an overall total cost of just over $3.8 million. This area provides habitat for the imperiled red-cockaded woodpecker and is also the location of Telegraph Swamp, a vital component of the Caloosahatchee River Watershed and Everglades restoration efforts.
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 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

The office’s two programs utilize a science-based, proactive approach to inform and influence land and water use decisions to build public-private conservation partnerships with Florida landowners. The Land Use Planning Program 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.

The Landowner Assistance Program works with private landowners to develop and implement comprehensive habitat-based management plans and incentive programs for private landowners. This program has also worked with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to establish

The Landowner Assistance Program assists partners with providing educational workshops and field experiences that guide the safe and effective use of prescribed fire for managing wildlife habitat on private lands. LAP offers two prescribed fire equipment trailers that are stocked with personal safety gear, shovels, rakes, drip torches and sprayers that can be requested for use during these training events or on private land burns.
best management practices for conserving wildlife on working lands used for agriculture or forestry. Conservation Planning Services also provides managers of publicly owned lands with technical 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.
# HSC Budget Summary

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Fixed Capital Outlay:

- Levy City Bird Creek Ramp: $464,080
- Land Acquisition: $1,000,000

**Total Budget**: 385.5 FTE $26,502,788 $107,321,962 $133,824,750
The Division of Hunting and Game Management uses scientifically proven strategies and professional expertise to manage and conserve game wildlife and perpetuate safe, sustainable hunting opportunities statewide.
HGM achieves its mission through a variety of programs, initiatives and partnerships. Science-based professionals within HGM collaborate with conservation organizations, other government agencies, universities, hunters and other stakeholders to manage and conserve game wildlife; provide hunting opportunities with an emphasis on waterfowl, small game, deer, wild turkey and alligators; and implement outreach and education programs to foster safe, responsible hunting and create awareness of research, regulations, safety, conservation, access and opportunity.

The Division develops rules and recommends wildlife management policies on more than 6 million acres of public hunting lands, which provide a variety of hunting opportunities.

HGM staff also manages public shooting sports facilities throughout the state and offers hunter safety courses to help students become safe, responsible and conservation-minded hunters.

In addition, the Division oversees initiatives to increase participation in hunting, the shooting sports and conservation. FWC staff coordinates with partners and volunteers to reach new audiences and identify what participants need to become or remain involved.

The FWC, in cooperation with the area’s lead land manager, the Florida Forest Service, is offering hunting opportunities at a new wildlife management area: Tate’s Hell – St. James Island Unit. This 8,182-acre area in northwest Florida is another example of the FWC and its cooperators increasing access to public hunting throughout the state. Including St. James Island Unit, Florida’s WMA system has grown by about 90,000 acres in just the past five years by establishing eight new WMAs and expanding huntable acres at existing areas.
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.

Since the Wild Turkey Cost Share Program began in 1994, it has contributed over $6 million to improve wild turkey habitat on wildlife management areas across the state that are open to turkey hunting. These public land habitat improvements – prescribed fire, roller chopping, mulching and planting – benefit wild turkeys and other wildlife including red-cockaded woodpeckers, gopher tortoises and indigo snakes. This innovative program provides the framework for the FWC, the Florida Forest Service and NWTF - Florida to put their collective resources to work along with grant funding from the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida.
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 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 game wildlife 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 over 6 million public acres in Florida. Section

The FWC’s Youth Hunting Program and the South Florida Water Management District teamed up to host two supervised python hunts for youth in 2022 at Everglades and Francis S. Taylor Wildlife Management Area. Before the hunt, participants learned about the negative impacts of invasive species in Florida. Pre-hunt training also included information about distinguishing nonnative Burmese pythons from native snakes; how to safely and responsibly catch and remove invasive pythons from the environment; and the rules and regulations for python removal. Youth participants also got a chance to use their new skills with oversight by mentors from the FWC’s Python Action Team and the South Florida Water Management District’s Python Elimination Program. Since this initiative was launched in 2019, the FWC and SFWMD have conducted six youth python hunts that resulted in 32 pythons being removed.
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.

**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 complete hunter safety training. 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 Hunting 101 workshops for college-aged students, 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 Palm Beach County Shooting Sports Complex is the newest FWC-managed facility and one of the largest ranges in Florida. It’s also poised to become one of the premiere Olympic shooting sports facilities in the U.S. with its international trap and skeet fields.

*The Palm Beach County Shooting Sports Complex is the newest FWC-managed facility and one of the largest ranges in Florida. It’s also poised to become one of the premiere Olympic shooting sports facilities in the U.S. with its international trap and skeet fields. This state-of-the-art facility was developed to meet the growing demand for safe, clean and family friendly public shooting sports facilities. It was built by the FWC in partnership with Palm Beach County and received additional support from the South Florida Water Management District and the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida.*
As part of an ongoing comprehensive campaign to reduce the risk of chronic wasting disease, a contagious disease that is always fatal to members of the deer family, the FWC rolled out new initiatives this year. The FWC produced a new, educational “About Chronic Wasting Disease” video in partnership with Wildlife Alert and the Fish & Wildlife Foundation. In addition, the FWC coordinated CWD Monitoring Sweepstakes with the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida and Woods ‘n Waters Magazine to encourage hunters to support CWD testing in specific counties. While deer in 30 states and four Canadian provinces have tested positive for CWD, this disease has not been detected in Florida.
The FWC Division of Law Enforcement’s 1,055 members, including 861 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 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.

♦ Utilizes specialized training, capabilities and equipment to respond to emergencies, natural disasters and other critical incidents through coordinated efforts with local, state and federal mutual-aid partners.

♦ Provides for public safety and law enforcement services in Florida's 175 state parks and nine state trails covering 800,000 acres.

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.
♦ 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.

♦ 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 more than 300 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 ensures animal welfare at captive wildlife facilities throughout the state.

♦ Investigates the illegal shipping of protected and regulated wildlife into and out of Florida.

♦ Supports domestic and homeland security initiatives in Florida’s ports.

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

FWC officers are charged not only with enforcing state and federal laws but also with protecting Florida’s wildlife and habitats.
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 Citrus on the west coast and over to Nassau and Duval on the east coast.

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 2020. 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.
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 861 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 officers are not only trained in standard police practices but undergo rigorous training in conservation law enforcement methodology as well.*
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 state Emergency Operations Center activities and readiness for natural disasters, aviation assets (assisting in the hundreds of search-and-rescue missions conducted each year), offshore federal Joint Enforcement Agreement and state fisheries enforcement, 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

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.
and USCG Fusion Centers, the FBI terrorism task force and the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact.

Investigations/Intelligence staff oversee the Internet Crimes Unit, Forensics Program and the Wildlife Alert Program, provide intelligence information to officers in the field and coordinate 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 300 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 improve and increase boating access to Florida’s waters through the management of two grant programs that increase 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

*FWC officers enforce boating and waterways laws and promote educational activities to enhance boating safety for residents and visitors.*
framework 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.

Technology and Communication Services Section

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

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**Fixed Capital Outlay:**
- Derelict Vessel Removal Program: $6,240,127
- Derelict Vessel Removal Program: $2,001,873
- Boating Infrastructure: $5,200,000
- G/A Marine *Recovery Program: $2,500,000
- Florida Boating Improvement Program: $793,704
- Florida Boating Improvement Program: $1,250,000
- G/A Final NRDR - DWH: $1,148,210

**Total Budget**
- 1,055.0
- $89,612,255
- $73,268,941
- $162,881,196

Officers enforce 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.
Protecting our Resources: Case Highlights

Offshore Patrol

In February 2022, the crew of FWC OPV Trident was patrolling the Pompano Endorsement Zone in the Gulf of Mexico, Federal Waters, 22 nautical miles north of Big Pine Key. The officers were monitoring radar on a fishing vessel approximately 5.5 nautical miles south of the endorsement zone boundary. They observed the vessel operating in a manner consistent with working a runaround gillnet. The vessel then began a heading northbound toward the Pompano Endorsement Zone. The OPV Trident and crew waited at the zone boundary and stopped the 48-foot commercial vessel, Legacy, which possessed a gillnet with a substantial amount of pompano in the net and on the deck of the vessel.

The commercial captain claimed they were targeting Spanish mackerel with the gillnet. The officers began a fisheries inspection and quickly realized the vessel possessed well over the allowable by-catch limit of 100 pompano while fishing outside the endorsement zone. The officers escorted the Legacy back to Everglades City to conduct a further inspection. Once dockside, a total of 2,711 pompano were located onboard the vessel, weighing a total of 3,932 pounds. Also, a total of 76 pompano measured less than the minimum size limit. The pompano were seized, sold and a check was held pending trial. The fishing crew received a Notice to Appear citation for the criminal fisheries violations.

Intelligence

In 2021, FWC officers were conducting a vessel safety inspection when they noticed the vessel described on the registration card was not the boat they were inspecting. Further investigation found the vessel stopped was reported stolen out of Marion County. The vessel was seized and the operator was interviewed regarding how he gained possession of the boat. The operator claimed he recently purchased the vessel, which was listed on Facebook Marketplace. He provided the contact information he had for the seller and FWC investigators were able to contact that individual. After speaking with the seller, officers believed the individual had knowledge of the theft and he was charged with dealing in stolen property and his cell phone was seized. However, local attorneys thought to drop the charges because the evidence was not strong enough to prove knowledge. They did believe there was enough evidence for a warrant for the phone and a warrant was issued. After forensic examination of the seller’s cell phone, conversations leading up to the theft between the seller and another suspect were discovered on the phone. Photographs at the scene of the theft were also on the seller’s phone. Additionally, investigators obtained photographs captured on a License Plate Recognition program, which captured the seller’s truck pulling the stolen vessel after the theft. The suspects were eventually charged with stealing the boat.
Captive Wildlife

A well-known reptile trafficker was recently sentenced to a term of imprisonment of seven months, followed by a term of supervised release of three years, the first year of which will be served in home confinement. In addition, the Court ordered the suspect to immediately pay a $100,000 fine. The suspect’s business was also sentenced to a term of five years’ probation, a fine of $150,000, also payable immediately. FWC investigators conducted the investigation over a two-year period and used multiple different aspects of physical and technical surveillance. Investigators started with physical surveillance of the suspect to document the poaching activities. Once that was obtained, investigators used subpoenas to obtain data from the suspect’s toll records. Once the investigators received the data and the documentation from the physical manned surveillance, the investigators were able to obtain a warrant to attach a mobile tracking device to the suspect’s vehicle. After monitoring the suspect’s activities over time, it led investigators to a worldwide-known reptile dealer. As the investigation proceeded, several different techniques were used to conduct undercover sales to the dealer. Covert cameras and cell phone monitoring platforms were utilized to monitor the sales. All sales were documented for a successful prosecution of the suspects. This case was a success in part to the investigators who used a diverse approach to different aspects of technical surveillance techniques available to them during the time of the investigation.

Internet Crimes

Internet Crime Investigators received information about an individual harvesting wild Florida mussels and selling them through common online businesses including eBay, Amazon and Facebook. Investigators found that the suspect did not possess any aquaculture permits to allow for the collection and sale of shellfish, and the Florida mussels being sold were prohibited from sale. After examining accounts owned by the suspect, investigators found this illegal activity had been occurring for the past five years and the individual had made several thousand dollars from eBay alone. The suspect was subsequently charged for the violations.
Port Investigations

The week of March 7, the Port Investigations unit worked a detail with Georgia Department of Natural Resources. During this operation K-9 Stryker alerted on a box labeled “MEAT” at an air cargo facility. During the operation, investigators seized 268 undersize mutton snapper from a Florida wholesale dealer. The violation was addressed with the appropriate citations.

Captive Wildlife

Southwest Region captive wildlife investigators, with support from investigators from around the state, executed a search warrant and seized more than 200 animals from a captive wildlife facility in Fort Myers. Some of the animals seized included venomous reptiles, crocodiles, alligators, porcupine, kinkajous and ring-tailed lemurs. The seized animals were rehomed at properly-licensed captive wildlife facilities pending adjudication of the case. The person responsible was the subject of an FWC investigation concerning multiple captive wildlife violations involving Class I, II and III species and was cited for over 160 criminal violations.
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.

In June, more than 200 stakeholders attended a series of public workshops throughout the state to learn more about FWC’s new adaptive management approach and regulation changes for the redfish fishery. At each workshop, FWC staff highlighted the flexibility of the new management approach for addressing localized fishery issues and gathered valuable feedback from stakeholders. The Commission passed the new management approach, which is the first of its kind in the nation.
The Division of Marine Fisheries Management is divided into three sections that work together to manage Florida’s marine fisheries, coordinate with other state and federal agencies, and provide outreach and education on over 500 marine fish and invertebrates. These three sections, including Analysis and Rulemaking, Federal Fisheries and Fisheries Services, collaborate to develop management strategy recommendations; compile and analyze fishery data and public input; deploy artificial reefs; recover lost or abandoned lobster and crab traps; conduct wholesale-dealer audits; work to raise awareness and encourage removal of invasive lionfish; provide outreach and education on best fishing practices and regulations; provide agency comments on proposed development projects that could affect marine resources; and issue special activity licenses for harvest of species for research and educational purposes.

**Mission**

Lead the nation in the management of marine fisheries resources and maintain Florida as the Fishing Capital of the World through the conservation of fisheries for their long-term sustainability, economic benefits and enjoyment of the public.

The FWC offers several programs, publications and online resources to teach stakeholders about best fishing practices and marine fisheries conservation with the goal to instill stewardship of Florida’s marine resources. Highlighted programs include the School Fishing Club and Florida Friendly Angler course, and the saltwater angler recognition program Catch a Florida Memory.
Strategies

♦ Bring 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.

♦ Develop fisheries management plans to prevent overfishing of important commercial and recreational marine species while allowing for sustainable levels of harvest to benefit people.

♦ Provide grants for artificial reef construction, monitoring and research.

♦ Provide the public with information regarding conservation and management of Florida’s valuable marine fisheries.

*The FWC’s saltwater angler recognition program, Catch a Florida Memory, encourages anglers to target a diversity of species while using best fishing practices, and provides recognition and rewards for fishing achievements. This program enhances stewardship of Florida’s marine fisheries and increases stakeholder engagement with FWC. For the 2021-2022 fiscal year, 930 anglers submitted 5,396 photos of their catches, and reached 977 achievements.*
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, and invertebrates in federal waters. Staff members in this section serve on these regional fishery management councils, provide the Commission with sound basis for the conservation and management of Florida's federal waters fish and invertebrate marine resources, advocate for Florida's interests at the federal level in the conservation of fish and invertebrate

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.
marine resources and their habitats, 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 wholesale dealer compliance; promotes lionfish removal; conducts outreach and education activities including Saltwater Fishing Clinics, Saltwater Fishing Camps, the High School Fishing Program and Catch a Florida Memory; 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.

*The Lionfish Challenge is a summer-long lionfish tournament hosted by the FWC that encourages recreational and commercial divers to remove invasive lionfish from Florida waters to help limit negative impacts to native marine life and ecosystems. Each year, hundreds of participants compete for the title of Lionfish King or Queen or Commercial Champion. Since 2010, more than 1 million lionfish have been removed from Florida waters.*
## MFM budget summary

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Recognitions

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

Officer Specialist Matt Rubenstein was awarded Officer of the Year for the Coastal Conservation Association - Collier County Chapter. His tenacity and dedication to protecting Florida’s natural resources is unparalleled, and he is an asset and an Ambassador for FWC and DLE in all his endeavors. (Officer Rubenstein is second from the left)

On Sept. 10, Officer Guillermo Cartaya was recognized with a Certificate of Merit for consistent efforts and contributions that have assisted and furthered the aims and missions of the U.S. Coast Guard. He continues to be a positive role model for excellence and goes above and beyond to strengthen our relationship with local and federal partners.

The Rodney Barreto Employee of the Year Award is named for Miami native and entrepreneur Rodney Barreto, who began his own career as a law enforcement officer and is currently Chairman of the FWC Commission. It honors an FWC employee for their dedication and service to the protection and preservation of Florida’s fish and wildlife resources over the course of a calendar year. The 2021 award was presented to Dr. Kate Hubbard, FWRI.
This year FWRI’s top Excellence in Science recipient is Karl Miller, an Avian Associate Research Scientist at our Gainesville field lab. During the nearly 20 years Karl has been with FWC, his research has contributed to the conservation of several of Florida’s most imperiled birds. His foundational work on methods for translocating federally threatened Florida scrub jays created an important conservation tool that will likely be this species’ ticket to carry on for decades to come. Showing no signs of slowing down, last year Karl published eight manuscripts while submitting two more. Karl frequently collaborates with other state agencies, serves as editor for Southeastern Naturalist and is a courtesy professor at University of Florida.

Southwest Region officers attended the Charlotte County Public Safety Appreciation Night banquet in support of local agencies whose employees have displayed exceptional work in the county over the past year. Officer Specialist Jeremy Birchfield was FWC’s recipient of the award this year for his efforts. Officer Specialist Birchfield has worked for FWC for nine years and is an active Field Training Officer and a Lead Firearms Instructor in our Training Unit. He has taken a very proactive approach in locating and working to remove derelict vessels in Charlotte County, as well as coordinating efforts with partner agencies to target illegal dumping in rural parts of the county.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks, recognized Senior Officer Brian Ferguson as FWC Officer of the year. Brian has taken the lead by setting the standard of professionalism and customer service focus for the Honeymoon Island State Park staff and patrons.

As part of his duties, Officer Ferguson is primarily tasked with monitoring the safety of the lands and waters of the park, conducting investigations, and patrolling. He has fostered trust throughout the staff due to his consistent and rapid response over the years. He works with the FDEP on varying issues, from trespassing and vandalism to lost patrons but his efforts in having a law enforcement presence and engagement have been exceptional. Officer Ferguson never misses his patrol rounds; he is knowledgeable about the state laws and statutes and has the skills to handle the varying challenges that arise.
Retired Investigator Steve Wayne was inducted into the 2022 Florida Law Enforcement Officers’ Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame recognizes and honors law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line for the safety and protection of Florida’s residents and visitors through their works, service and exemplary accomplishments.

Investigator Wayne began his law enforcement career with the FWC in 1991 and by the time he retired in 2021, had established the FWC within Florida’s ports, creating one of the most successful port investigations units in the nation focusing on the illegal sale, import, export and commercialization of fish and wildlife resources.

Throughout his career, Investigator Wayne was involved in multiple high-profile cases including a multi-agency investigation involving the U.S. Secret Service spanning more than four years, uncovering illegal wildlife trafficking, fraud and identity theft involving a commercial pet dealer. He received numerous awards, including FWC Officer of the Year, FWC Investigator of the Year and The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Conservation Law Enforcement Award. His investigative efforts were featured in Law Enforcement Magazine, Florida Times-Union and National Geographic.

The Gulf Council awarded the FWC’s southwest offshore patrol crew the 2022 Team of the Year award. This award recognizes a team that has exemplified professionalism while enforcing fisheries regulations in the federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico through public outreach, partnerships and leadership.

The Gulf Sentry crew consists of Lt. George Wells, Officer Specialists Reece Alvis and Tom Godfrey, and Officer Ed Prouty. This past year, the squad patrolled from Panama City all the way to Key West and participated in several details including mini lobster season. The team has proven highly efficient and consistently visits fish houses and works with industry representatives to improve compliance and conservation of marine resources. The officers consistently demonstrate a great commitment to Florida and are a leader among other FWC teams through their positive attitude, expertise and work ethic.
FWC Executive Director Eric Sutton was elected as the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies President on March 10 at the SEAFWA Spring Directors meeting in Athens, Texas. SEAFWA is an organization whose members are the state agencies with primary responsibility for the management and protection of the fish and wildlife resources in 15 states and two territories. SEAFWA participates with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, other regional associations, other governmental agencies and citizens’ organizations in pursuing mutual goals benefiting fish and wildlife resources and maintaining a variety of committees consisting of fish and wildlife professionals who explore and analyze a wide range of issues and factors affecting fish and wildlife resources and make recommendations as appropriate.

The Louise Ireland Humphrey Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes FWC employees for outstanding service over their entire careers. The Louise Ireland Humphrey Achievement Award is named after the first woman appointed to serve on the board of the then-Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission in 1984. A Leon County resident and owner of Woodfield Springs Plantation, Humphrey served until 1999 and was widely lauded as a conservationist for her love of the land, particularly the Red Hills area north of Tallahassee, and for her leadership on fish and wildlife issues. The award reflects dedication to the conservation mission that guided Mrs. Humphrey and now guides the FWC. The award was presented to John Hunt, FWRI.

Investigator Kevin Kleis was awarded the 2021 FWC Officer of the Year. He was also nominated for officer of the year for Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.
Crime Intelligence Analyst Supervisor Jessica Pfohl was honored with the Chris Connell Merit Award at the Tallahassee Community College Heroes in Public Safety Celebration. This award showcases unsung heroes who have demonstrated exemplary accomplishments in the past year. Jessica was joined by Lt. Colonel Brian Smith, Deputy Chief Rett Boyd, Majors Randy Bowlin, Bill Holcomb, Grant Burton, Captains Van Barrow, Scott Pearce, Patrick Walsh, Barry Shaw, and Budget Director Lisa Phillips.

Senior Officer Dan Hahr received a life saving award for his heroic efforts in rescuing a distressed and fatigued diver who got separated from his vessel while offshore in the Gulf.

The Southwest Region team took home the Outstanding Dedication to BUI Enforcement award at MADD’s Law Enforcement Recognition ceremony. This annual event honors the brave men and women who keep our roads and communities safe. Pictured are Capt. Thomas Van Trees, Florida State Executive Director-MADD Larry Coggins Jr., Maj. William Holcomb, and MADD National President Alex Otte.