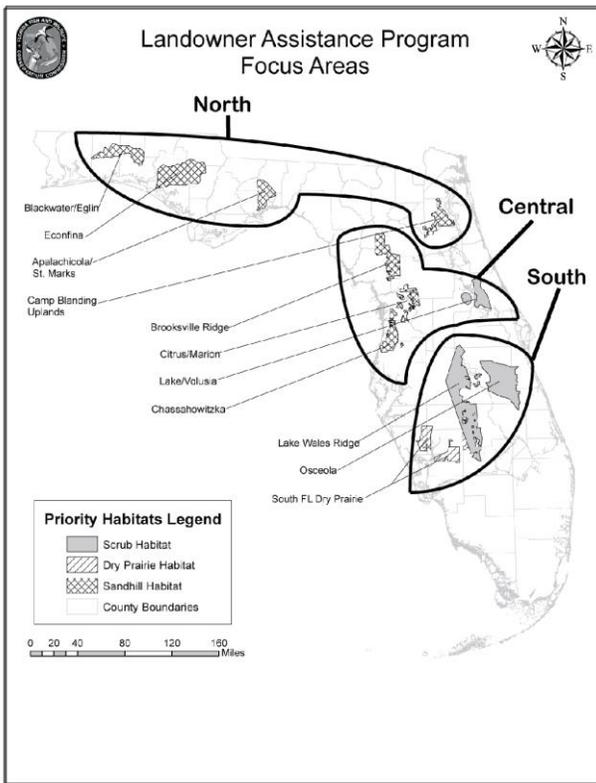




Florida Private Landowner Wildlife Habitat Monitoring Survey

In 2015, the third round of the Florida Private Landowner Wildlife Habitat Monitoring Survey was sent to private landowners in three Landowner Assistance Program Focus Areas in Florida (see map below). A total of 608 surveys were returned by private landowners.

This brochure contains summary results from the survey. A full report of survey findings is available online at: <http://myfwc.com/lap>. Alternatively, you can obtain a copy of the report by contacting Dr. Joe Prenger at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (850-727-3637; Joseph.Prenger@MyFWC.com) or Dr. Elizabeth Pienaar at the University of Florida (352-846-0630; efpienaar@ufl.edu).



Land Stewardship and Habitat

The majority of private landowners who returned the survey (survey respondents) manage their land for wildlife. In total, 412 respondents (68%) stated that they engage in land stewardship practices that likely benefit wildlife. A total of 290 respondents (48%) engage in land stewardship practices that are specifically intended to benefit wildlife. Based on survey results, the two most common stewardship practices in which landowners engage are actively managing or protecting areas of native habitat, and controlling exotic plant species (Table 1).

Table 1: Percent of Survey Respondents Who Engage in Land Stewardship Practices

Stewardship Practice	Percent
Actively manage/protect native habitat	51
Exotics control	36
Prescribed fire	32
Plant native grasses and plant species	27
Restore habitat for threatened or endangered species	16
<u>Livestock production:</u>	
Prescribed/rotational grazing	30
Roller chopping/brush management	19
Exclude livestock from streams, wetlands or natural waterbodies	14
<u>Silviculture (forestry):</u>	
Understory/brush management	33
Thinning	26
Longer rotation (saw/pole production)	18
<u>Row crops/sod production:</u>	
Cover crops	12
Wildlife plantings in pivot corners	12
Water conservation	12
Field borders	6
Other land stewardship activities	10
No land stewardship	9

Financial and Technical Assistance Programs

284 survey respondents (47%) were aware that government agencies provide financial assistance for wildlife habitat improvement. However, only 14% of respondents participated in these programs in the last 5 years. Most of these respondents received financial assistance from the United States Department of Agriculture (9% of respondents) or the Florida Forest Service (6%).

286 respondents (47%) were aware that government agencies provide technical workshops on wildlife habitat improvement. The highest share wanted the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to run workshops.

Respondents are most interested in obtaining information on how to integrate wildlife into their land management. They prefer to receive technical assistance in the form of information brochures (39% of respondents), magazine articles (36%), and field days or property visits (30%).

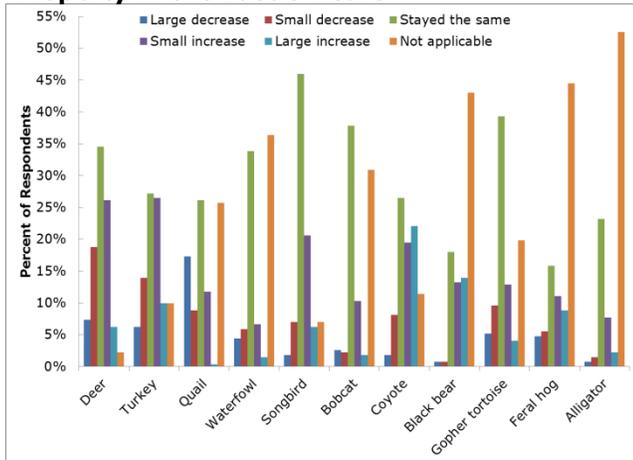
Only 194 respondents (32%) had heard of the Florida Land Steward Partnership, a collaborative effort of the FWC, Florida Forest Service (FFS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and UF-IFAS that is intended to help landowners manage their lands for long-term environmental, economic and social benefits. Information on programs offered by these and other agencies is included in this mail packet for landowners who are interested in obtaining financial and technical assistance for wildlife habitat improvement.

Northern Focus Area – Survey Results

Wildlife Management by Landowners from the Northern Focus Area

A total of 272 landowners from the northern focus area returned the survey. When asked how wildlife populations have changed on their property in the past 5 years, the most common response was that populations stayed the same (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Change in Wildlife Populations on Property in the Last 5 Years



The largest share of landowners who returned the survey said that they would like populations of deer (45% of respondents), turkey (58%) and quail (52%) on their land to increase (see Table 2 for wildlife stewardship practices by respondents from the northern focus area). The greatest benefits that survey respondents derive from wildlife are family wildlife watching, helping to maintain healthy land, and family hunting.

Table 2: Wildlife Stewardship by Landowners in Northern Focus Area in Last 5 Years

	Owners	Conservation
Plant wildlife food plots	156 (58%)	3,430 acres 22 acres/owner
Maintain wildlife feeders	130 (48%)	758 feeders 6 feeders/owner
Maintain bird feeders	127 (47%)	628 feeders 5 feeders/owner
Maintain nest boxes or birdhouses	120 (44%)	1,097 boxes 9 boxes/owner
Plant native trees	79 (29%)	3,447 acres 44 acres/owner
Plant native groundcover	38 (14%)	326 acres 9 acres/owner

Respondents want the populations of coyotes (57%) and feral hogs (26%) on their land to decrease. Overall, respondents stated that coyotes and feral hogs have caused slight problems on their property in the last 5 years.

43% of respondents attempted to control problem wildlife on their land. 9% contacted the FWC to assist them with managing problem

wildlife. 2% contacted a commercial nuisance wildlife operator. 3% contacted University of Florida county extension agents. 7% contacted another organization. 21% didn't contact anyone to assist them in controlling problem wildlife. On average, respondents said that their attempts to control problem wildlife were slightly successful.

59% of respondents were aware that government agencies provide land management plans to landowners. However, only 28% of respondents had a written land management plan for their property. Respondents from the northern focus area were most interested in land management plans that focus on timber production, habitat management and restoration, and game management.

Interactions with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

26% of respondents from the northern focus area interacted with FWC biologists in the past 5 years. 29% of respondents interacted with FWC law enforcement in the past 5 years. 15% of respondents interacted with both FWC biologists and law enforcement in the past 5 years. The majority of these respondents either contacted the FWC with a concern or had the FWC visit their property.

Respondents who had interacted with the FWC more strongly agreed that the FWC provides useful financial assistance and technical assistance programs to landowners. These individuals also more strongly agreed that:

- FWC biologists are highly knowledgeable about stewardship;
- FWC biologists share their values regarding land stewardship for wildlife;
- FWC biologists have the expertise to advise landowners about land stewardship;
- They would be willing to advise the FWC on how to design private landowner assistance programs; and
- The difference between the FWC and other government agencies is clear.

35% of respondents stated that they are willing to share their knowledge of threatened and endangered species on their property with the FWC. 47% of respondents stated that they would be willing to allow the FWC to visit their property to more accurately estimate populations of threatened and endangered species.

Those respondents who were unwilling to share information about threatened and endangered species with the FWC were most concerned that helping the FWC to conserve threatened and endangered species would result in restrictions on agricultural and forestry activities.

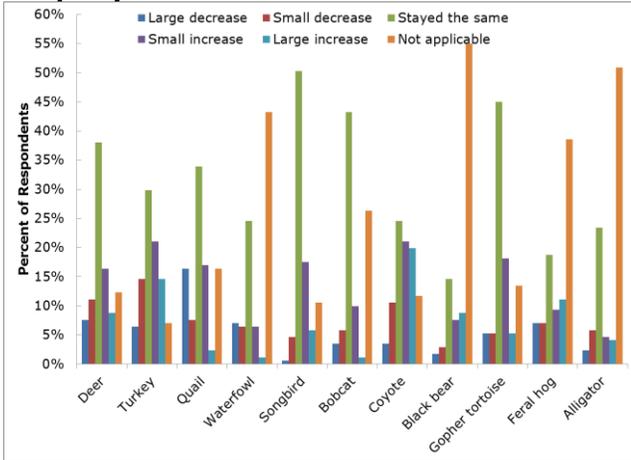
Respondents from the northern focus area who have interacted with the FWC rate the agency more highly on managing threatened and endangered species on public lands.

Central Focus Area – Survey Results

Wildlife Management by Landowners from the Central Focus Area

A total of 171 landowners from the central focus area returned the survey. When asked how wildlife populations have changed on their property in the past 5 years, the most common response was that populations stayed the same (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Change in Wildlife Populations on Property in the Last 5 Years



The largest share of landowners who returned the survey said that they would like populations of deer (39% of respondents), turkey (50%) and quail (52%) on their land to increase (see Table 2 for wildlife stewardship practices by respondents from the central focus area). The greatest benefits that survey respondents derive from wildlife are family wildlife watching, helping to maintain healthy land, and family hunting.

Table 2: Wildlife Stewardship by Landowners in Central Focus Area in Last 5 Years

	Owners	Conservation
Plant wildlife food plots	56 (33%)	1,234 acres 22 acres/owner
Maintain wildlife feeders	60 (35%)	226 feeders 4 feeders/owner
Maintain bird feeders	62 (36%)	256 feeders 4 feeders/owner
Maintain nest boxes or birdhouses	70 (41%)	540 boxes 8 boxes/owner
Plant native trees	41 (24%)	2,824 acres 69 acres/owner
Plant native groundcover	15 (9%)	216 acres 14 acres/owner

Respondents want the populations of coyotes (51%) and feral hogs (29%) on their land to decrease. Overall, respondents stated that coyotes and feral hogs have caused slight problems on their property in the last 5 years.

43% of respondents attempted to control problem wildlife on their land. 11% contacted the FWC to assist them with managing problem

wildlife. 2% contacted a commercial nuisance wildlife operator. 2% contacted University of Florida county extension agents. 6% contacted another organization. 19% didn't contact anyone to assist them in controlling problem wildlife. On average, respondents said that their attempts to control problem wildlife were slightly successful.

61% of respondents were aware that government agencies provide land management plans to landowners. However, only 26% of respondents had a written land management plan for their property. Respondents from the central focus area were most interested in land management plans that focus on agriculture and livestock production, habitat management and restoration, and fish pond management.

Interactions with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

27% of respondents from the central focus area interacted with FWC biologists in the past 5 years. 31% of respondents interacted with FWC law enforcement in the past 5 years. 16% of respondents interacted with both FWC biologists and law enforcement in the past 5 years. The majority of these respondents contacted the FWC with a concern or had the FWC visit their property.

Respondents from the central focus area who had interacted with the FWC more strongly agreed that the FWC provides useful technical assistance programs to landowners. These individuals also rated the FWC more highly in terms of:

- Explaining the reasoning behind land stewardship programs;
- Showing the link between the FWC's land stewardship programs and the FWC's wildlife management goals;
- Using good science to develop land stewardship programs;
- Treating all landowners equally;
- Dealing honestly with private landowners;
- Communicating how it will manage threatened and endangered species to private landowners;
- Explaining decisions to list species as threatened or endangered;
- Providing landowners with updates on threatened or endangered species; and
- Incorporating input from landowners into the management of threatened or endangered species.

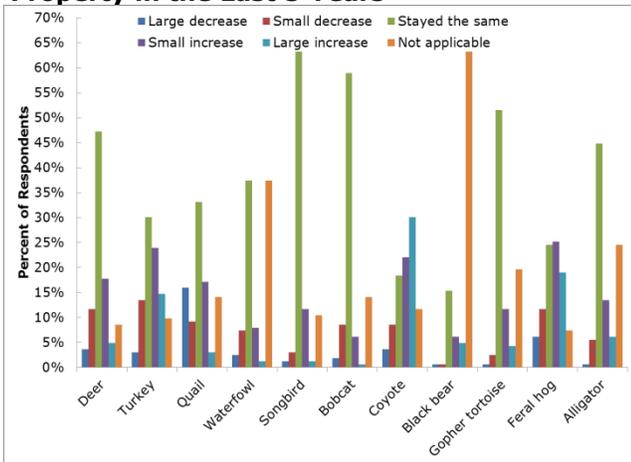
40% of respondents were willing to share their knowledge of threatened and endangered species on their property with the FWC. 44% of respondents were willing to allow the FWC to visit their property to more accurately estimate populations of threatened and endangered species. Respondents who were unwilling to share information about threatened and endangered species were most concerned that helping the FWC to conserve these species would result in restrictions on agricultural and forestry activities.

Southern Focus Area – Survey Results

Wildlife Management by Landowners from the Southern Focus Area

A total of 163 landowners from the southern focus area returned the survey. When asked how wildlife populations have changed on their property in the past 5 years, the most common response was that the populations of deer, turkey, quail, waterfowl, songbirds, bobcats, black bears, gopher tortoises, and alligators have stayed the same. However, coyote and feral hog populations have increased (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Change in Wildlife Populations on Property in the Last 5 Years



The largest share of landowners who returned the survey said that they would like populations of deer (42% of respondents), turkey (45%) and quail (53%) on their land to increase (see Table 2 for wildlife stewardship practices by respondents from the southern focus area). The greatest benefits that survey respondents derive from wildlife are family wildlife watching, helping to maintain healthy land, and family hunting.

Table 2: Wildlife Stewardship by Landowners in Southern Focus Area in Last 5 Years

	Owners	Conservation
Plant wildlife food plots	59 (36%)	1,946 acres 33 acres/owner
Maintain wildlife feeders	86 (53%)	405 feeders 5 feeders/owner
Maintain bird feeders	38 (23%)	121 feeders 3 feeders/owner
Maintain nest boxes or birdhouses	35 (21%)	169 boxes 5 boxes/owner
Plant native trees	32 (20%)	625 acres 20 acres/owner
Plant native groundcover	12 (7%)	1,032 acres 86 acres/owner

Respondents want the populations of coyotes (58%) and feral hogs (44%) on their land to decrease. Overall, respondents stated that coyotes have caused slight problems on their

property in the last 5 years. Feral hogs have caused moderate problems.

56% of respondents attempted to control problem wildlife on their land. 8% contacted the FWC to assist them with managing problem wildlife. 4% contacted a commercial nuisance wildlife operator. 1% contacted University of Florida county extension agents. 7% contacted another organization. 34% didn't contact anyone to assist them in controlling problem wildlife. On average, respondents said that their attempts to control problem wildlife were slightly successful.

61% of respondents were aware that government agencies provide land management plans to landowners. However, only 25% of respondents had a written land management plan for their property. Respondents from the southern focus area were most interested in land management plans that focus on agriculture and livestock production, game management, and fish pond management.

Interactions with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

23% of respondents from the southern focus area interacted with FWC biologists in the past 5 years. 29% of respondents interacted with FWC law enforcement in the past 5 years. 12% of respondents interacted with both FWC biologists and law enforcement in the past 5 years. The majority of these respondents either contacted the FWC with a concern or had the FWC visit their property.

Respondents from the southern focus area who had interacted with the FWC in the past 5 years rated the FWC more highly in terms of:

- Treating all landowners equally;
- Dealing honestly with private landowners; and
- Communicating how it will manage threatened and endangered species to private landowners.

42% of respondents stated that they are willing to share their knowledge of threatened and endangered species on their property with the FWC. 37% of respondents stated that they would be willing to allow the FWC to visit their property to more accurately estimate populations of threatened and endangered species.

Those respondents who were unwilling to share information about threatened and endangered species with the FWC were most concerned that helping the FWC to conserve threatened and endangered species would result in restrictions on ranching activities or agricultural and forestry activities.