

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

From: Thomas Eason, Ph.D., Director, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation

Date: April 19, 2017

Subject: Bald Eagle Status Update and Rule Revision

Purpose:

Staff will provide an update on the biological status of the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and propose changes to Florida's bald eagle rule (Rule 68A-16.002, F.A.C.) necessitated by recent changes in the Federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (Eagle Act), and recommend development of a new Species Action Plan.

Summary:

The FWC Bald Eagle Management Plan (BEMP) and the associated State eagle rule (Rule 68A-16.002, F.A.C.) were adopted in April 2008 as the species was removed from the State list of threatened species. The State eagle rule incorporated the BEMP and its permitting structure by reference, which FWC has been implementing consistent with Federal regulations in the Eagle Act. In January 2017, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service revised the permitting structure within the Eagle Act, and State permitting is no longer consistent with the new Federal process. The BEMP also is due for revision at this time. Staff will propose phasing out the need for an FWC permit and completing a new Species Action Plan to replace the BEMP.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval to revise Rule 68A-16.002, F.A.C. to remove references to the BEMP and FWC permitting requirements, sunsetting the BEMP, and to develop a non-regulatory Species Action Plan for the bald eagle.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Dr. Brad Gruver, Section Leader, Species Conservation Planning, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation