

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Thomas Eason, Director, Habitat and Species Conservation
Date: December 6, 2017
Subject: Historical Perspectives and A Look to the Future

Purpose:

Staff and guest speakers Dr. Steve Willams (President, Wildlife Management Institute) and Collin O'Mara (President and CEO of National Wildlife Foundation) will present information about the foundations of fish and wildlife management and how state fish and wildlife conservation agencies are adapting to changing ecological and social conditions. The speakers will describe how management approaches have evolved over time and how the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is a leader in transforming itself to better understand the interests and concerns of citizens and provide many programs, products and services to all citizens.

Summary:

The FWC has diverse programming that covers a wide array of conservation topics. This agenda item will provide an overview of current FWC programming in the context of how state conservation agencies are continuing to evolve to serve the interests and address concerns of an increasingly diverse citizenry.

Citizen's understanding of, and their relationship to wildlife and wild places changes and evolves over time. At one time, natural resources like forests, water, fish and wildlife seemed so plentiful and boundless that conservation was not a concern. This led to massive deforestation, and complete extinction (passenger pigeon) or near extinction (bison) of some iconic American wildlife. In the late 1800s and throughout the 20th century, conservation initiatives began to take hold, including hunting, as a significant management tool for conservation (North American Model of Wildlife Conservation). Other efforts led to a more preservationist approach (prohibition of plume hunting, National Parks, Marine Mammal Protection Act). As views, desires, and environmental ethics continue to change and evolve, State Wildlife Agencies must work to adapt so that they provide benefits from fish and wildlife conservation to all citizens.

The Public Trust Doctrine (PTD) is the concept of government management of all fish and wildlife on behalf of all citizens. Though its historical origins are in Greek and Roman law, it provides a framework for contemporary and flexible conservation approaches to address modern conservation issues. The PTD establishes the authority for state conservation agencies and outlines the trust relationship between trustees (Commissioners), trust managers (FWC staff) and beneficiaries (current and future citizens). In addition to applying principles of public trust, conservation agencies also address present-day expectations for wildlife management that include incorporating the principles of good governance which seeks to establish fairness and transparency in decision-making, policy-formation and implementation processes.

The changing ecological and social conditions in the United States and across the globe continue to impact fish, wildlife and habitats. Perhaps nowhere are these changes more evident, or future changes more likely, than Florida. While our challenges are great, we are fortunate to have broad and diverse funding sources that complement traditional fishing and hunting licenses and matching federal funding. This diversification provides opportunity and capacity to provide a broad suite of programming and services to all citizens. FWC continues to look for ways to improve decision and management structure and processes to adapt and

implement contemporary conservation policies and programs, fully considering the concerns and interests of all citizens. This focus on continuous improvement, coupled with excellent conservation delivery, has led to Florida being recognized as a national leader in fish and wildlife conservation.

Staff Contacts and/or Presenter:

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