



## **Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Schedule VIII B Potential Reductions 2018 Legislative Session**

*Agenda Item 4 B – December 5, 2017*

In preparation for the 2018 Legislative Session, the Governor, House, and Senate instructed state agencies to prepare a list of potential reductions equal to 10% of the adjusted recurring budget for next year. The following list contains the options for the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The 10% list totals \$26,679,732 of which \$2,944,880 is from General Revenue Funds and \$23,734,852 is from Trust Funds.

### **Reduce Lake Restoration Funding: (\$1,711,539) LATF**

This proposal would decrease funding for aquatic habitat management and restoration projects. A reduction in budget authority would limit maintenance operations on completed lake restoration projects. Reduced funding would also result in fewer aquatic habitat enhancement projects in public waterways, and limit maintenance or repair of water management infrastructure on state owned lands. Engineering services for some lake and wetland projects would be delayed, as would start-up and planning for future restoration projects. Monitoring of aquatic plant and animal communities needed to evaluate present and future restoration activities would be reduced. A significant portion of the aquatic habitat enhancement projects are conducted by private sector contractors. (DHSC)

### **Reduce Non-CARL Land Management Funding: (\$4,519,076) LATF**

This proposal reduces FWC's ability to manage new and current lands. The impact would be moderate affecting funding directed to land management operations pursuant to s. 201.15(5), F.S. A reduction would diminish wildlife protection, public recreational opportunities, and land management programs on private, state or federally owned lands within the Wildlife Management Area (WMA) system where FWC is either a designated lead manager or a secondary cooperator. Staffing on some land units within the WMA system would possibly have to be reduced resulting in the reduction of land management activities and maintenance of infrastructure for public access and recreational activities. Reduced funding will affect long-term resource protection programs such as community restoration and imperiled species recovery. In some cases such as exotic plant control, recent accomplishments may be compromised or negated if funding is inadequate to support necessary maintenance treatments. (DHSC)

### **Reduce Public-Information Related to Public Hunting and Game Wildlife: (\$60,000) TF**

This reduction would eliminate informational materials that describe public hunting opportunities as well as public service announcements pertaining to alligator safety and mallard/mottled duck hybridization. These materials summarize public hunting opportunities on commission-managed lands. The televised public service announcements are designed to (1) increase public awareness and cooperation to conserve Florida's unique duck species, Florida's mottled duck, and (2) promote public safety and increase awareness concerning Florida's alligator population. The proposed reduction in outreach would decrease our efforts to inform the public, potentially would reduce public safety related to alligators, would compromise

conservation efforts for Florida's mottled duck, and may result in lowered public satisfaction. (DHGM)

**Reduction of Boat Ramp: (\$44,830) MRCTF**

Boat ramp funding is used as match to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service boating access coordination grant. A reduction in funding would reduce the agency's ability to take full advantage of available federal dollars and would reduce the ability of the agency to maintain and repair the 240 state maintained boat ramps. (DLE)

**Reduce Red Tide Research & Monitoring: (\$192,540) GR**

This reduction would further curtail collaborative research and monitoring efforts between Mote Marine Laboratory and FWC to monitor waters for red tide in support of shellfish safety regulations initiated by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. FWC's red tide monitoring and research program has been reduced by more than 60% in recent years. The formerly statewide red tide response capability is now focused only on Southwest Florida. Red tide response to red tides in the panhandle, such as those that have caused prolonged closure of oyster beds in Apalachicola Bay in the past, is currently a major challenge and will be increasingly difficult with additional loss of funds. Further budget cuts will also curtail red tide information available to state and local agencies responsible for reporting on beach conditions for visitors. Economic impacts of red tides in Florida have been estimated to exceed \$20 million annually for past blooms. (FWRI)

**Reduce Invasive Plant Management Funding: (\$9,119,506) LATF**

This proposal would reduce the agency's ability to manage aquatic and terrestrial invasive plants. A reduction in funding would result in fewer invasive aquatic plant control projects in public waterways and upland invasive plant control projects on public conservation lands. Delays or cancellation of plant control projects can cause geometric increases in growth of invasive plants. This would result in fewer project sites being funded, ultimately resulting in additional sites becoming re-infested after having spent state dollars getting the invasive plants under control. Increasing invasive plant populations can have adverse impacts on recreational activities such as fishing, hunting, boating, swimming, and ecotourism, as well as adversely impacting beneficial native habitat that is critical for the management of fish and wildlife. In addition, excessive invasive plant populations in public waterways can restrict water flow and cause flooding during critical periods resulting in danger to human health and safety. A significant portion of the invasive plant control projects are conducted by contractors in the private sector. (DHSC)

**Reduce Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network (FYCCN) Operations, Education and Outreach: (\$188,800) TF**

This proposal would reduce funding for the Project WILD conservation education program. This program is dependent on volunteer facilitators who provide professional development trainings to elementary, middle and high school educators throughout Florida. This funding cut would reduce the amount of support available to this volunteer network and result in approximately four hundred fewer teachers trained in our conservation education curriculum. It would also reduce operational funds used to support youth saltwater fishing camps and marine education programming. Finally, it would reduce our ability to serve existing network partners and to recruit new partners. A variety of strategies would be implemented to reduce expenditures including reduced partnership coordinator travel to potential partner sites, reduced conference

attendance to promote FYCCN, reduction in promotional materials, and a reduction in partner recreational equipment such as kayaks, fishing gear, binoculars and archery supplies. This would result in a decrease in the number of conservation education and recreational opportunities for youth and families throughout Florida. (FYCCN)

**Reduce Game Management and Hunting Opportunity Development: (\$105,932) TF**

This reduction would decrease communication and coordination with hunters and other affected stakeholders concerning rule changes and other wildlife management decisions, reduce ability to assess hunter preferences and harvests, decrease ability to conduct economic analyses of proposed decisions, lessen the coordination with other agencies and partners to accomplish scientific management of the wildlife species that are hunted and trapped in Florida, reduce efforts to enhance public hunting opportunities, lessen ability to monitor populations of wildlife species that are hunted and trapped, and decrease technical assistance to public and organizations/agencies concerning game wildlife management. (DHGM)

**Reduce Operating Expenses and Contracted Services (\$355,001) TF**

This proposal would significantly reduce the operating budget of the Office of the Executive Director. This reduction would be achieved by reducing operating expenses, contract expenses and travel where possible, restricting collaboration between the Commission and other state and federal natural resources agencies that enhance the total conservation effort in Florida. (\$100,000 OED; \$26,501 OLA; \$72,000 OLP; \$156,500 CRO)

**Reduce Small-Game Management: (\$201,135) TF**

This proposal would nearly eliminate the agency's ability to provide small-game (i.e., quail, squirrel, rabbit, dove, rail, snipe, and woodcock) management, including technical assistance for small-game habitat management to federal, state, and private landowners. It would eliminate cooperative partnership efforts with other management agencies and organizations for mourning doves and bobwhite quail. The reduction would reduce the agency's ability to provide small-game hunting opportunities, including public dove fields, which would result in a decrease in agency revenues of about \$40,000 - \$60,000 from dove permits. The full time equivalent position currently dedicated to small-game management would be shifted to address other division or agency priorities. (DHGM)

**Reduce Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management Operations: (\$188,616) TF**

A reduction in \$4,612 of SGTF Land Use Proceeds Disbursements would eliminate the Division's ability to spend potential proceeds generated from the lands it manages at Tenoroc Fish Management Area. However, this would not result in a significant impact to operations. A reduction of \$15,914 of SGTF Operating Capital Outlay monies would eliminate the Division's allotment in SGTF OCO category, which would reduce our ability to replace equipment needed to manage public resources. A reduction of \$32,290 of SGTF Other Personal Services monies would eliminate the Division's SGTF OPS allotment, which would impact our ability to hire temporary staff to document fish populations and evaluate Division management projects (e.g. angler surveys). A reduction of \$40,800 of LATF Enhanced Wildlife Management monies would eliminate the Division's allotment within this category, which would impact our operating cost on such items as purchasing fish feed and maintenance of equipment at Blackwater Hatchery. A reduction of \$75,000 of SGTF Expense monies would reduce the Division's allotment within this

fund's category by 27%, which would impact regional fisheries operations by reducing our ability to purchase equipment, fuel, and supplies. A reduction of \$20,000 of LATF Expense monies would eliminate the Division's allotment within this category, which would impact operational costs at Blackwater Hatchery for purchase of fuel and supplies and repairing hatchery equipment. All categories except Land Use Proceeds Disbursements are used as State match for our Sport Fish Restoration federal grant. Eliminating these would reduce our potential to capture \$552,012 of future federal grant funding. (DFFM)

**Eliminate Transfer to Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services/IFAS/Invasive Exotic Plant Research funding: (\$633,128) IPCTF**

This proposal would eliminate the transfer to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to fund invasive exotic plant research at the quarantine lab in Ft. Pierce for insects that must be quarantined before being released. Currently, the agency pays \$633,128 on a recurring basis to help support this program. This reduction is 100% of the total program funding. (DHSC)

**Eliminate Oceanaria Reimbursements for Manatee Rehabilitation and Support for the University of Florida Marine Mammal Veterinary Program: (\$2,104,000) MRCTF**

FWC has managed the Oceanaria Reimbursement Assistance Program for rescued, rehabilitated, and released Florida manatees since 1991. Since July, 2000, these funds have been available to reimburse the three contracted and federally permitted manatee rehabilitation facilities in Florida: Lowry Park Zoo, Miami Seaquarium, and Sea World Florida. These specialized, federally permitted, facilities are the only institutions available for acute-care, veterinarian-based rehabilitation of manatees. This reduction would reduce or eliminate this service to the state of Florida at a time when the number of manatees killed and injured annually is at record levels. Presently, the oceanaria are reimbursed for only about 50% of qualified expenses.

This reduction would also eliminate the University of Florida Marine Mammal Veterinary Program. This program is a joint endeavor of the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine and FWC. This program was developed to promote the health and understanding of marine mammals in Florida and is one of the few initiatives in the country training veterinarians, veterinary medical students, and related professionals in the care of marine mammals. This program provides much needed expertise to FWC externships and specialized pathology services which are critical in determine cause of death for manatee carcasses. This reduction would eliminate at least 3 positions at the University of Florida. (FWRI)

**Reduce Florida Bass Conservation Center Operations: (\$79,539) LATF**

A reduction of \$79,539 of LATF Special Category monies would reduce the operating budget of the \$15 million state-of-the-art hatchery facility by 11%. This reduction severely restricts the possibility for the Center to achieve its maximum design capability to produce 3.6 – 6.75 million fish annually. (DFFM)

**Eliminate Marine Habitat Monitoring and Mapping Programs: (7.0 FTE, \$794,482) MRCTF**

Affected activities related to FWC marine habitat research and management are described below. Program components include research and management of corals, seagrasses, and marine habitat mapping. The proposed reduction would eliminate FWC's participation in coral reef monitoring

that provides long-term coral health and population trends in the Florida Keys. The proposed reduction would eliminate FWC's capability to participate in health assessments of the Florida reef tract, which currently does not have a positive trend. We would lose our ability to directly participate in research that provides information necessary for coral management. We will no longer participate in resource damage assessments associated with vessel groundings or oil spills that result in monetary awards to the State of Florida for resource damages. FWC would no longer have staff to conduct seagrass research and would end its ongoing pre- and post-surveys of the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program on improving the marine habitats of Florida Bay and Biscayne Bay. FWC would no longer have the resources to address habitat loss due to algal blooms in the Indian River Lagoon. Geographic Information System (GIS) support will end for marine habitat mapping. This support is used in multiple ways by scientists, resources managers and the public for developing strategies to improve marine habitat quality and management. Uses of GIS range from helping to locate optimal artificial-reef placement, aquaculture permit assessment, predicting distribution of commercially important fish, location of seagrass beds and coral reefs for inclusion in boater guides, and generally transferring geographic information to the public about the marine ecosystem. FWC and FWRI's ability to execute statutorily-mandated scientific work would be reduced or eliminated and \$8.9 million in grant revenue would be turned away. (FWRI)

**Reduce Hunting-Related Marketing and Education Efforts: (1.0 FTE, \$68,674) TF**

This reduction would decrease dissemination of public information related to hunting and the conservation and management of game wildlife species. The effect would be that the public would receive less information about hunting and its role in wildlife management as well as reduced communications concerning regulations and public hunting opportunities, which in turn would reduce hunter satisfaction and decrease the ability to retain and recruit hunters. (DHGM)

**Reduce Public Hunting Areas Coordination: (1.0 FTE, \$80,081) LATF**

Reduction of 1 FTE would reduce the potential for new public hunting opportunities and decrease communication with hunters and other public-lands users. This communication and coordination with the public helps ensure that decisions about recreational use of public lands are made with input from affected users. This also would reduce the ability to coordinate with other land-management agencies to optimize public hunting opportunities and ensure that resource management and recreational use opportunities are compatible. (DHGM)

**Eliminate Senior Attorney Position: (1.0 FTE, \$140,639) ATF**

This reduction would eliminate one Senior Attorney position, reducing the quality and breadth of consultation available to the Executive Director and Commission staff on matters relating to the legal requirements for program development, implementation, strategic planning, and internal management activities. Without this position, the Agency would no longer benefit from advocacy related to development, negotiations, contract and procurement reviews, and litigation support. An additional loss would be realized in the form of decreased response to public, law enforcement, and judicial inquiries pertaining to the Commission's powers and duties and public records. (OED)

**Eliminate the Improvement & Planning Section: (4.0 FTE, \$314,444) TF**

This proposal would eliminate the Improvement & Planning Section (IPS) which was designed to lead and support the Agency Strategic Planning and implementation, the facilitation program and continuous improvement projects within the agency. There are currently four (4) positions assigned to this unit (1-Senior Management Analyst II-SES, 2-Government Analyst II and 1-Government Operations Consultant I). The elimination of this unit would require continuous improvement processes to be outsourced; and, facilitation and strategic planning to be coordinated by perspective Divisions and Offices. (FBO)

**Reduce Marine Fisheries Assessment: (2.0 FTE, \$349,054) MRCTF**

This reduction will reduce marine fisheries monitoring and assessment efforts that support science-based management of valuable commercial and recreational fisheries. Saltwater fishing in Florida generates over \$5 billion in economic impact and supports over 50,000 jobs. Scientists in this program monitor the abundance of recreational and commercial fishes in six estuaries around the state and conduct detailed studies offshore which inform management actions such as size limits and closed seasons. This information is critical to evaluating the effects of current fishery regulations and predicting future stock levels. This reduction would result in the closure of the FWRI field lab on Apalachicola Bay and create a significant data gap for statewide fisheries assessments for species such as snook, seatrout, red drum, red snapper and gag grouper. State funds in this program are used as match for grants from federal, state and nonprofit sources. This reduction would require us to forego grant funded work in excess of \$2 million. (FWRI)

**Eliminate 30 Law Enforcement Officer Positions: (30.0 FTE, \$2,752,340) GR**

**Eliminate 31 Law Enforcement Officer Positions: (31.0 FTE, \$2,676,376) MRCTF**

This reduction would eliminate law enforcement officer positions. The calculation is based on the officer class (8515). The actual number of positions eliminated would vary as higher level positions are eliminated based on vacancies. The per officer savings is \$87,657, which includes salaries & benefits, incentives, human resource contract costs and operating expenses.

Of the agency's \$29.4 million recurring General Revenue (GR) budget, \$26.7 million (91%) supports the Division of Law Enforcement. It is unavoidable to include some portion of law enforcement in any significant reduction of agency GR appropriations. Because the Division of Law Enforcement's primary role is to provide uniformed patrol and investigative law enforcement services pertaining to fish and wildlife laws and boating and waterways safety on more than three million acres of fresh water lakes, 11,000 miles of rivers, streams and creeks, 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 wildlife management areas, state parks and forests, the vast majority of its appropriations are used for salaries of employees that provide or support those patrol and investigative functions. Reducing the number of employees is the only viable solution to achieve a large reduction in funding requirements.

A reduction of 61 sworn law enforcement officer positions would impede the ability of the Division of Law Enforcement to provide law enforcement services to the citizens of Florida, meet the constitutional charge to protect fish and wildlife resources, and provide disaster relief or homeland security services when necessary. The reduction would result in fewer high-visibility

patrols in manatee areas, panther areas, wildlife management areas, state parks, state forests and popular boating and fishing areas, currently serving as an effective deterrent to illegal activities. The agency's ability to respond rapidly to calls for service from the public would be reduced and remaining officers would have to cover larger patrol zones. Efforts to ensure public health and safety would be reduced if these positions were eliminated, as the agency's ability to adequately provide services that have a direct impact on the safety of Florida's residents and visitors such as boating safety patrol, boating accident investigations and critical incident response would be diminished. FWC's ability to respond to man-made and natural disasters would also be adversely impacted. Responding safely to major catastrophic events requires extensive training, preparation, logistics and scheduling. Having fewer people to respond to such events presents additional workload and risk to those who do respond.

While it is difficult to replace all patrol vehicles that currently meet the DMS criteria, a 10% reduction of the Acquisition and Replacement of Patrol Vehicles appropriation category would not affect the replacement need if the 61 officer positions offered are taken. (DLE)

**Abbreviations:**

(R) – Recurring Appropriation  
(NR) – Non-Recurring Appropriation  
DFFM – Divisions of Freshwater Fisheries Management  
DHGM – Division of Hunting & Game Management  
DHSC – Division of Habitat & Species Conservation  
DFFM – Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management  
DLE – Division of Law Enforcement  
DMFM – Division of Marine Fisheries Management  
FCO – Fixed Capital Outlay  
FGTF – Federal Grants Trust Fund  
FPRMTF – Florida Panther Research and Management Trust Fund  
FTE – Full Time Equivalent Employee Position  
FWRI – Fish and Wildlife Research Institute  
FWC – Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
FY – Fiscal Year  
FYCCN – Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network  
GDTF – Grants and Donations Trust Fund  
GR- General Revenue Fund  
IPCTF – Invasive Plant Control Trust Fund  
LATF – Land Acquisition Trust Fund  
Maint - Maintenance  
Mgmt – Management  
MRCTF – Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund  
OCR – Office of Community Relations  
OED – Office of the Executive Director  
OSI – Office of Strategic Initiatives  
NWTF – Nongame Wildlife Trust Fund  
OPAWVS – Office of Public Access and Wildlife Viewing Services  
OPS – Other Personal Services (part-time & temporary employment wages)

SGTF – State Game Trust Fund

TF –Trust Funds (various)

USFWS – United States Fish and Wildlife Service

WMA – Wildlife Management Area