

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jerrie Lindsey Director, Public Access Services Office
Date: February 9, 2017
Subject: 75th Anniversary of the Wildlife Management Area (WMA) System

Purpose:

Provide an update on the 75th Anniversary of the Wildlife Management Area System.

Summary:

Florida's WMAs are vital to our state's fish and wildlife. They secure habitat for species and provide beautiful expansive landscapes with recreational opportunities for Floridians to enjoy. In 1941, the recently formed Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission purchased 19,200 acres from Edward Babcock in Southwest Florida, providing Florida with its first WMA. Today, Florida is home to the country's largest WMA system, made up of 5 million acres in every corner of the state.

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of Florida's WMA system, FWC staff have planned a year-long celebration to promote the WMAs to the public and their important role in conservation. The 75th Anniversary will allow all Floridians to celebrate and reflect on the achievements of Florida's WMA system while providing more opportunities to discover and explore WMAs around the state. The celebration began at the original WMA – Babcock-Webb – in Charlotte County on January 21. To further promote WMAs and their importance, FWC staff will hold photo contests, tours, geocaching, bio-blitzes (a wildlife discovery event led by wildlife experts) and other public outreach efforts designed to encourage exploration and participation. FWC staff will also provide a resolution to the Florida Cabinet for their consideration during their March meeting. The year-long celebration will culminate with a closing event at the Tosohatchee WMA in Orange County on December 2. More information on 75th Anniversary events can be found at MyFWC.com/WMA75.

Staff will present a video and brief presentation including highlights of the year-long celebration. Commissioners will consider a resolution commemorating the important benefits and achievements of the WMA system.

Staff Recommendation:

This item is for informational purposes and any direction the Commission may want to give to staff.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Jerrie Lindsey, Public Access Services Office Director, OED