

**STATEWIDE NUISANCE ALLIGATOR PROGRAM (SNAP)
VISION STATEMENT**

February 12, 2007

INTRODUCTION

The American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) is an important and high profile wildlife resource and plays an integral role in Florida's landscape. Due to illegal overexploitation, the American alligator was thought to be on the verge of extinction by the 1960's, and as a consequence, was included on the first Endangered Species List. After the enactment of strong and effective federal regulations barring interstate commerce of endangered animals, the alligator made an impressive comeback. By the late 1970's, alligator populations in Florida had rebounded to a level that significant numbers of negative human-alligator interactions were being documented. From this point, thorough and comprehensive management of the species was pursued. By the late 1980's, alligator populations were considered fully recovered in all of its native range states and an official alligator management program, recognizing the alligator for their important economic, aesthetic, and ecological values, was deployed in Florida implementing sustainable-use harvest strategies for all components of this resource. The Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program (SNAP) is one of five different components of Florida's comprehensive Alligator Management Program. SNAP is designed to address threats by alligators to public safety, pets, or property. Other essential management goals and objectives to maintain Florida's alligators and their habitat are addressed through the remaining four program components (statewide alligator harvest program, private lands alligator management program, alligator egg and hatchling collection program, and alligator farming program). The following describes the vision and operations of SNAP to effectively manage and minimize threats by alligators to public safety, pets, and property.

SNAP VISION

- Make customer satisfaction a major component of program operations.
- Broaden existing program measures and devise innovative solutions to reduce nuisance alligator complaints in highly developed and high public use areas.
- Partner with county and municipal animal control agencies to assist with abatement of nuisance alligators less than four feet in length, or otherwise bolster the program's ability to be responsive.
- Increase efforts of contracted trappers on nuisance alligators in areas where the greatest public safety threat exists.
- Reinforce the understanding that public safety is the paramount consideration in managing nuisance alligators and that the monetary aspect of the program, while valuable to the success of the program, is not the primary driving factor.

SNAP GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Maintain the highest level of communication possible with internal and external stakeholders.
- Provide exceptional customer service at all stages of complaint action.
- Utilize the latest available technologies to achieve superior program functionality.
- Strive to be open, fair, straight forward, and engaging with internal and external stakeholders regarding program management.
- Make decisions based upon the best available information.

SNAP RELATIONSHIP WITH NUISANCE ALLIGATOR TRAPPERS (NATs)

- Private individuals are contracted by the Commission to remove nuisance alligators, and this method has proven to be a valuable component of the program.
- The role of the contracted trapper is to aid SNAP administration in accomplishing stated program objectives consistent with contract provisions and program policies and procedures.
- SNAP administration shall work closely with contracted trappers to ensure they are able to successfully achieve program objectives efficiently and cost effectively while meeting performance standards/expectations.
- SNAP administration shall develop performance standards which trappers will be expected to achieve in aid of accomplishing program objectives. Key performance measures may include how quickly trappers contact complainants, how well trappers keep complainants informed of actions on their complaint, how satisfied complainants were with the trapper, average time taken to harvest nuisance alligators, percent of complaints resulting in harvested nuisance alligators, and others to be developed with input from the contracted trappers.
- Annual reviews of trapper performance relative to program objectives will be conducted, and if necessary, guidelines for improvement shall be outlined by SNAP administration with input from the NAT and implemented.

SNAP STATEWIDE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES: (1) To significantly reduce the threat to the public, pets, or property from alligators in developed and public use areas by achieving at least a 60 percent fill rate of nuisance alligator permits; and (2) To achieve a 95 percent satisfaction rating from complainants.

STRATEGIES/OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES ADDRESSING OBJECTIVE 1

Complaint Driven Methods

On privately owned lands, hereinafter referred to as “Category I areas,” a complaint received by the SNAP call center that meets the nuisance alligator criteria (an alligator four feet or larger in length that is a real or perceived threat to people, pets, or property):

1. Shall result in immediate issuance of a harvest permit.
2. No additional review by SNAP administration is required.
3. Additionally, once the trapper is on the scene, he/she may remove additional alligators in the immediate vicinity, if requested by the complainant. These additional alligators are called “add-ons.”

On sovereign waters, hereinafter referred to as “Category II areas,” a complaint received by the SNAP call center that meets the nuisance alligator criteria:

1. Shall result in immediate issuance of a harvest permit (unless something unusual is apparent, like requesting a large number of alligators for removal—this will trigger immediate review by SNAP Administration).
2. No additional review by SNAP administration is required.
3. “Add-ons” have to be approved by SNAP administration in advance.

On all publicly owned lands where county, state, or federal entities are the lead managing authorities (e.g., national forests, wildlife management or environmental areas, state parks, municipal or county parks, wildlife refuges, or university campuses) or any area where SNAP administration otherwise knows that the removal of nuisance alligators has been controversial or the managing authority has requested that SNAP administration consult with them prior to

issuing harvest authorizations, hereinafter referred to as “Category III areas,” a complaint received by the SNAP call center that meets the nuisance alligator criteria:

1. Shall be immediately referred to SNAP administration for additional review and subsequent action.
2. Review shall occur the same day if received during normal business hours on weekdays and the next business day if received on a weekend. Weekend complaints reflecting an imminent threat to humans, pets, or property, or otherwise necessitating an urgent action, shall be immediately provided to “on call” SNAP administration staff to ensure a timely response.
3. “Add-ons” have to be approved by SNAP administration in advance.

Proactive Methods

In certain areas, the removal of nuisance alligators by the use of our complaint-driven system may not be the most efficient or effective method of handling nuisance alligators. This may be because the area is one in which complaints about nuisance alligators are common and the circumstances are usually the same; such as at fish cleaning stations and public boat ramps. It may also be because the area has its own management staff who have expressed the desire to be directly involved in deciding when specific nuisance alligators need removal; such as at picnic areas on State Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, or National Forests.

There is a need to work cooperatively with communities and municipalities that wish to take an active role in determining nuisance alligator policy within their jurisdiction. These entities often wish to determine internally whether their citizens prefer to remove nuisance alligators liberally or whether they prefer to coexist with alligators whenever possible. For example, in the wake of several alligator related fatalities, a city requested that all alligators four feet or greater inside the city limits be removed. SNAP provides for the harvest of alligators that meet agency policy, but this policy of removal is often cause for conflict between residents who believe the alligator is a nuisance and neighbors who do not. There is a need, therefore, for communities that wish to coexist with alligators, as well as for communities that wish to liberally remove nuisance alligators, to both have a method to accommodate the desires of their residents.

The Targeted Harvest Area (THA) is the mechanism to accommodate all of these situations. A THA is an area in which the local NAT has been granted permission to harvest nuisance alligators under a blanket permit established in advance for that area, rather than through our existing complaint-driven system. THAs are established by letter signed by the SNAP Coordinator, and are accompanied by a harvest permit and area map. The establishing letter identifies the specific area that the THA encompasses, outlines any restrictions that might be warranted, and, if appropriate, identifies the personnel who may contact the trapper to initiate the removal of nuisance alligators from the THA. THAs will be established by the SNAP Coordinator in consultation with appropriate stakeholders. SNAP will also utilize the knowledge of any FWC biological staff, FWC Law Enforcement Officers, and the NAT in the area when a local perspective is needed. There are at least seven types of areas that are candidates for becoming THAs. These areas are examples only, and are not meant to be an all inclusive list.

POINT SPECIFIC - These areas are locations such as public boat ramps where human activity in the water is concentrated in a small zone, and these areas often exist within water bodies that harbor substantial alligator populations.

1. **Public Boat Ramps** - Designated public boat ramps will be established by SNAP at the request of the managing authority. If the boat ramp occurs on sovereign

waters, SNAP, with input from the local FWC Law Enforcement Lieutenant and the local NAT, will determine if there is a need for a THA in that location. These THAs will extend 100 feet from the boat ramp, unless the situation warrants another distance, in which case that distance will be noted in the permit.

2. **Public Swim Areas** - Designated public swimming areas will be established as THAs by request of the county or other managing authority.
3. **Local Swimming Areas** - Local swimming areas will be established as THAs by request of the property owner or in consultation with the managing authority or local authorities.
4. **Fish Camps** – Designated areas at marinas and fish camps where fish are routinely cleaned and alligators are present due to the fish cleaning activities will be established by request of the property owner or managing authority.

NON-POINT SPECIFIC - These areas are locations where the intended THA is not limited to a small area, but are much broader areas where the property owner or managing authority has expressed the desire to establish the area as an THA, either for the purpose of regulating the harvest of nuisance alligators within the area boundaries or to facilitate the removal of nuisance alligators at the discretion of the NAT.

5. **Private Property**- THAs on private property will be established at the request of the property owner or managing authority with the expressed intent to address nuisance alligators that meet the established nuisance alligator policy. The private lands alligator management program will remain the primary means to provide for sustainable harvests of alligators and alligator eggs and hatchlings on private lands. Examples of these types of areas include aquaculture operations with contained ponds, ranches, and housing developments with homeowners associations or other organized management.
6. **Public Property**- THAs on public property will be established at the request of the managing authority. The entire property, or any portion thereof, will be considered for establishment, depending on the desires of the managing authority. Additional restrictions (size of alligators that may be removed, for example) will be defined by SNAP administrative staff in conjunction with the managing authority.
7. **Incorporated Areas**- An entire incorporated area, or portion thereof, may be considered for an THA at the request of the governing officials. For example, a municipality may request to designate all city parks and public areas or all urban canals within city limits as a THA. The THA designation would not allow the NAT to go onto private property or other areas not under the requesting authority's jurisdiction that lie within the incorporated area to remove nuisance alligators without the permission of the property owner or managing authority.

STRATEGIES/OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES ADDRESSING OBJECTIVE 2

Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) – A CSS shall be initiated periodically, which will include contacting an appropriate number of complainants to assess the performance/satisfaction of the SNAP call center and the contracted trappers in achieving the program's objectives. The results of the CSS, in part, shall assist SNAP administration with evaluating program objectives and ensuring a high level of program performance.

Response Time – SNAP administration shall employ measures to deliver harvest permits to the contracted trappers immediately upon approval of an incoming complaint. This ensures as little

impedance to response times as possible. Calls received during non-business hours that are non-emergencies are returned at the beginning of the next morning, and a permit issued immediately afterwards for those that are valid complaints. This measure is an integral part of the program and its stated goals by facilitating the contracted trappers' ability to quickly resolve a complaint.

Customer Service – To achieve a high level of customer satisfaction, SNAP administration shall work closely with contracted trappers to help them achieve performance standards and shall regularly evaluate call center staff to ensure consistent adherence to procedures and quality interactions with complainants.

Partnering – SNAP administration shall work closely with county and municipal animal control agencies to help provide program support outside of the duties and expectations of the contracted trappers. Notably, the handling of alligators less than four feet in length by these agencies will be extremely beneficial to improving trapper efficiencies in high complaint areas and improving customer satisfaction with problematic alligators.

Emergency Alligators – Bona fide emergency alligators are those that pose an immediate threat to human safety, pets, or property; those that are affecting traffic; or those that are in someone's carport or garage, under a car, in a swimming pool, etc.

During regular business hours (8:00am until 5:00pm, seven days a week and holidays), the SNAP coordinator, or his/her designee, handles calls regarding emergency alligators, and coordinates an immediate response by a contracted trapper or LE officer, whichever is most appropriate or expeditious. During non-business hours, callers reporting emergency alligators are advised to contact the Wildlife Alert number (1-888-404-3922). The LE dispatchers receiving those calls coordinate an immediate response by a contracted trapper or LE officer, as outlined by protocols provided by the SNAP coordinator.