

# A Conceptual Framework for Florida's Imperiled Species



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Meeting  
September 5, 2012  
Division of Habitat and Species Conservation



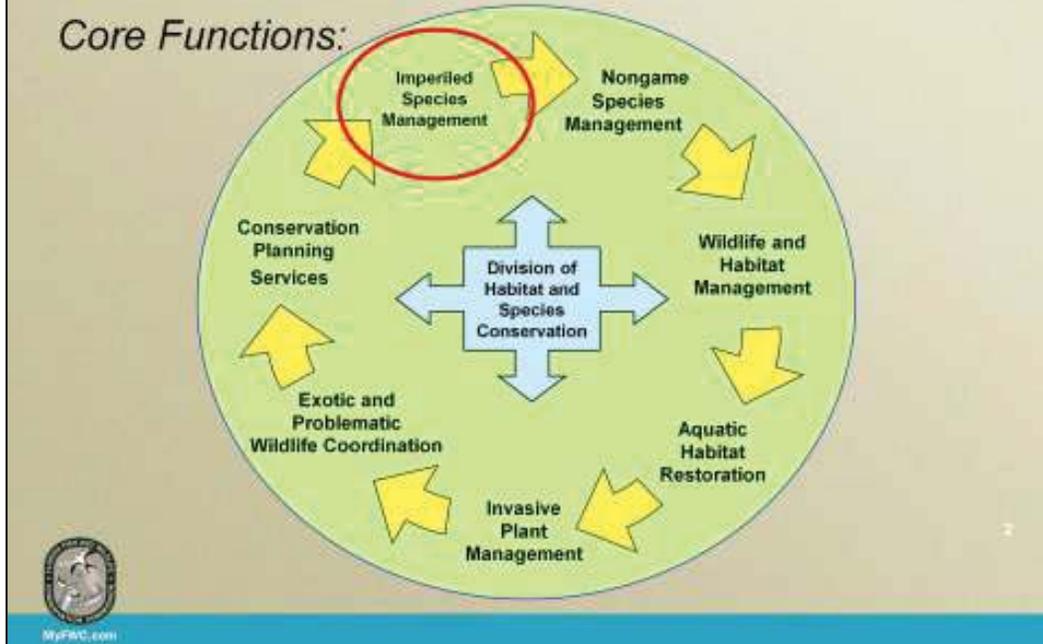
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The intent of this presentation is to describe a conceptual framework for organizing our collective thoughts and actions for Florida's imperiled species – species that are listed as either state threatened or federally listed as threatened or endangered.

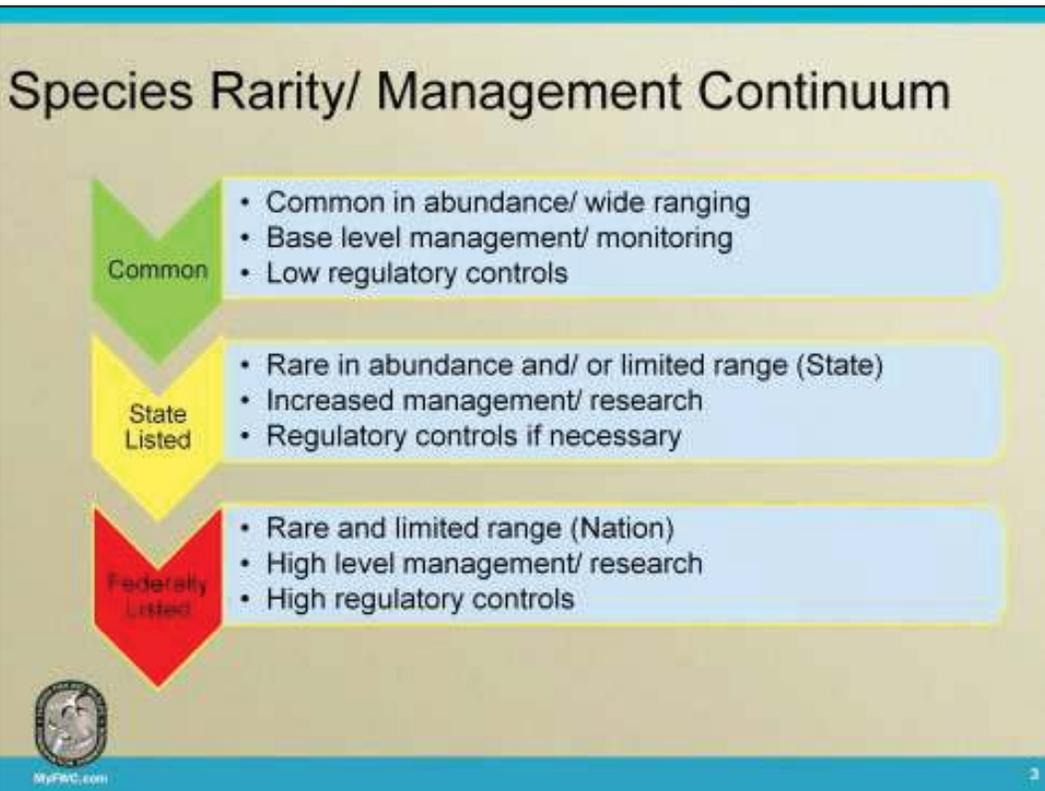
## Division of Habitat and Species Conservation

### *Core Functions:*



The Division of Habitat and Species Conservation within the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is tasked with seven core functions that cut across all species, habitats, and areas of the state. These core functions are: 1) imperiled species management, 2) nongame species management (sometimes called wildlife diversity management), 3) wildlife and habitat management, 4) aquatic habitat restoration, 5) invasive plant management, 6) exotic and problematic wildlife coordination, and 7) conservation planning services.

This presentation will focus on the core function of imperiled species management.



We can describe fish and wildlife species in three general categories: those that are or potentially will be federally listed, those that are or potentially will be state listed, and species that are more common and are not listed.

Each of these increasing effort levels has a simple, but certainly not easy, goal of decreasing the rarity of the species – to ultimately recover populations to the point where they no longer need to be listed. The FWC plays a significant role in the management, research, and regulation of imperiled species. Our allocation of resources towards management and research has to be strategic and efficient to reach success. The FWC way of doing business also means our strategies are collaboratively derived with our stakeholders and with our partners.

# State Threatened Species Management System

- To conserve or improve the status of endangered and threatened species
- Accurately identifies priority species and associated actions
- Identifies a framework for developing management strategies
- Prevent federal listing



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With regards to State Threatened species, in September 2010 after three years of staff and stakeholders working together, the Commission passed rules for Florida's new Threatened Species Management System that sets forward the policy level framework.

The system includes federally listed and state listed species. Florida Threatened species are defined as species at risk of extinction in Florida as determined through the scientific process described in rule. Federally endangered species are species at risk of extinction through all or part of its range and federally threatened species are those at risk of becoming endangered through all or part of its range.

The purpose of Florida's new Threatened Species Management System as described in Ch. 68A-27, F.A.C., is:

To conserve or improve the status of endangered and threatened species in Florida to effectively reduce the risk of extinction through the use of a science-informed process that is objective and quantifiable, accurately identifies endangered and threatened species that are in need of special actions to prevent further imperilment, identifies a framework for developing management strategies and interventions to reduce threats causing imperilment, and prevent species from being threatened to such an extent that they become regulated and managed under the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, 16 U.S.C. §1531 et seq.

The last statement of working to prevent federal listing is the subject of some efforts currently underway. Our work in the imperiled species listing, however goes beyond preventing listing, but also working collaboratively on those that are currently listed.

Much work has been underway under this system since the Commission approved it in 2010. New issues have emerged federally that relate to our management system and we wanted to take some time

today to identify those and provide a big picture view of what is going on and how the efforts between state listing and federal listing are connected through the system.

## Current Focus

1. Listing recommendations based on best available science
2. Adaptive and progressive state programs to manage state threatened species
3. Leveraging existing programs and funding for regulatory certainty/ relief for Florida citizens
4. Improved policy and action coordination at the State level

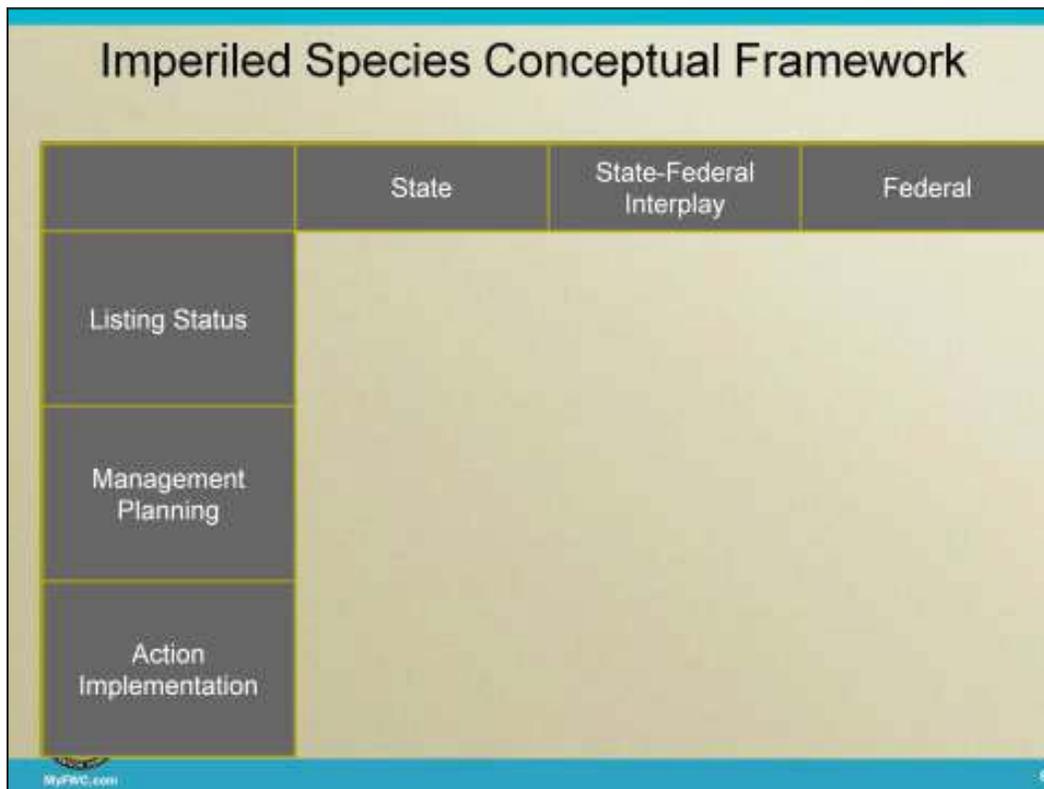


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In order to implement the policy, FWC management is working in four general areas of focus. First, given the regulatory implications, species listing decisions should be based on sound science and best available information. Second, we should have adaptive and progressive state programs to manage imperiled species. There is no one-size-fits-all approach and we will adapt and change our tactics as we learn from doing. Third, we should leverage existing programs and funding to minimize the need for regulatory action and provide incentives and certainty when regulations are warranted. Lastly, the state is the appropriate level for most policy and action coordination to occur. The federal system should be a backdrop and last option.

At the operational level, there is a bewildering array of current initiatives and efforts focused on imperiled species management. These range from state biological status reviews (BSRs) to federal rule promulgation and enforcement.



In an attempt to organize the policy, management, and operational functions, consider a framework made up of two primary aspects. The first aspect is which system we are talking about. This can be organized into state, federal, and the state-federal interplay. And the second aspect is the sequential business process which can also be broken into three components: listing status, management planning, and action implementation.

## Imperiled Species Conceptual Framework

	State	State-Federal Interplay	Federal
Listing Status	- Biological Status Reviews (BSRs)	- FWC adopts all federally listed species - MDL settlement	- Five factor listing process - Candidate species
Management Planning			
Action Implementation			

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Working across these aspects and business processes, we can fill in the matrix with specific programs and initiatives. For example, at the state level, species listing status is determined through a rigorous biological status review or BSR process. Under the ESA, federal biologists review a species against the five listing factors. Between state and federal listing, there are candidate species that meet federal listing criteria, but are awaiting final action. Currently, there are 251 species that fall into this category and there is intense effort at the state and federal levels to take proactive measures to prevent the need for listing them in the future. For example, the multi-district litigation (MDL) settlement requires the Service to move forward with listing actions within five years in all 251 species that were candidates as of fall 2010.

## Imperiled Species Conceptual Framework

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Management Planning	- Imperiled Species Management Plans	- Annual FWC/FWS meeting - Periodic regional meetings	- Species Recovery Plans - Critical Habitat Designation
Action Implementation			

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When it comes to management planning, our rules require that species management plans be developed for all state-listed species. Revisions to the gopher tortoise management plan are scheduled for discussion later today. This is a good example of a state imperiled species management plan. Additionally, staff is working on developing an overall approach and management plan for 60 state-listed species that currently do not have management plans in place. Staff plan to present more on this topic at the next Commission meeting. At the federal level, management planning takes the form of recovery plans. Critical habitat designation is required when species are federally listed. With few exceptions for newly listed species, there are recovery plans in place for all of the federally listed species in Florida. Between state and federal management planning efforts is a host of related joint work intended to help conserve listed species. These programs range from Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs) for federal candidate species to best management practices (BMPs) for state listed species. Coordination and state leadership is critical at this federal/state interface.

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Action Implementation	- Species/ habitat management - Research - Permitting	- Section 6 - HCPs - Safe Harbors - CCAAs - BMPs	- Recovery teams - Regulatory review - Species leads

For implementation, the state focuses on actions described in the state management plan, while actions for federal species draw from federal recovery plans. There are associated rules and permitting guidance at both the state and federal level. In between, there is much joint work done to coordinate imperiled species management action. Florida's newly revised Section 6 Agreement with the US Fish and Wildlife Service is an excellent example of moving such joint management efforts forward. Other federal conservation programs include habitat conservation plans (HCPs) and safe harbor agreements, both of which assist private landowners who encounter listed species on their properties.

# Role of FWC Leadership

	State	State-Federal Interplay	Federal
Listing Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Biological Status Reviews (BSRs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FWC adopts all federally listed species</li> <li>- MDL settlement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Five factor listing process</li> <li>- Candidate species</li> </ul>
Management Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Imperiled Species Management Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annual FWC/FWS meeting</li> <li>- Periodic regional meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Species Recovery Plans</li> <li>- Critical Habitat Designation</li> </ul>
Action Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Species/ habitat management</li> <li>- Research</li> <li>- Permitting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Section 6</li> <li>- HCPs</li> <li>- Safe Harbors</li> <li>- CCAAs</li> <li>- BMPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recovery teams</li> <li>- Regulatory review</li> <li>- Species leads</li> </ul>



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This framework is intended to organize all of the imperiled species work ongoing in Florida into commonly understood components. This is intended to help organize workload, priorities, and help focus many of the conversations that are occurring across a wide variety of audiences. It allows Florida to take a leadership role in conserving imperiled fish and wildlife in ways that best meet the needs of our citizens and natural resources.

# A Few Examples

	State	State-Federal Interplay	Federal
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- Panther Program
- Gopher Tortoise Plan
- Section 6 Agreement
- ESA Joint Taskforce



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Later today the commission is scheduled to hear presentations on the gopher tortoise management plan revision and the Florida panther conservation work done by FWC and partners. This framework may help organize these specific programs into a bigger picture view. Two additional examples at the state-federal interplay are the newly revised Section 6 Agreement mentioned earlier and the Joint Task Force on Endangered Species Act Policy that the Executive Director of FWC co-chairs with the Director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Through our proactive engagement, Florida is helping lead the way on national policy for state-led conservation of our valuable imperiled species.

## Our Goal

With broad public and partner support, conserve or improve the status of imperiled species to effectively reduce the risk of extinction.



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The ultimate aim or desired future condition of all this work is, “A Florida where no native species goes extinct due to human action or inaction; species declines are halted or reversed; species conservation is coordinated among partners; biodiversity is maintained; adequate funding is available for species conservation; and the importance of species conservation is understood and fully supported by the public.” By taking a measured and well conceptualized approach, like that outlined in this presentation, we can be effective in achieving this goal.

The following slide is intended  
for background only and will not  
be part of the formal presentation.



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When taken individually, there is a bewildering array of current initiatives and efforts focused on imperiled species management. These range from state biological status reviews (BSRs) to federal rule promulgation and enforcement.

# Glossary of Terms

Acronym	Full Title	Brief Explanation
BSR	Biological Status Review	Florida process of assessing the listing status of a species
BMP	Best Management Practices	Voluntary practices that landowners can employ in lieu of permitting for imperiled species
---	Candidate Species	Species under review for federal listing or proposed for federal listing but precluded by higher priority actions
CCA	Candidate Conservation Agreement	Federal agreement with private landowners to conserve candidate species
CCAA	Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances	Federal agreement with private landowners to conserve candidate species with regulatory assurances included
FWS	Fish and Wildlife Service	Federal agency with responsibility for threatened and endangered species
HCP	Habitat Conservation Plan	Federal planning documents required as part of an incidental take permit for listed species
MDL	Multi-District Litigation	Federal settlement agreement to address a backlog of hundreds of listing actions
SHA	Safe Harbor Agreement	Federal agreement with private landowners that contribute to the recovery of a listed species for regulatory assurances
---	Section 6 Agreement	Federal agreement with states to specify cooperation on the funding and management of listed species

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