



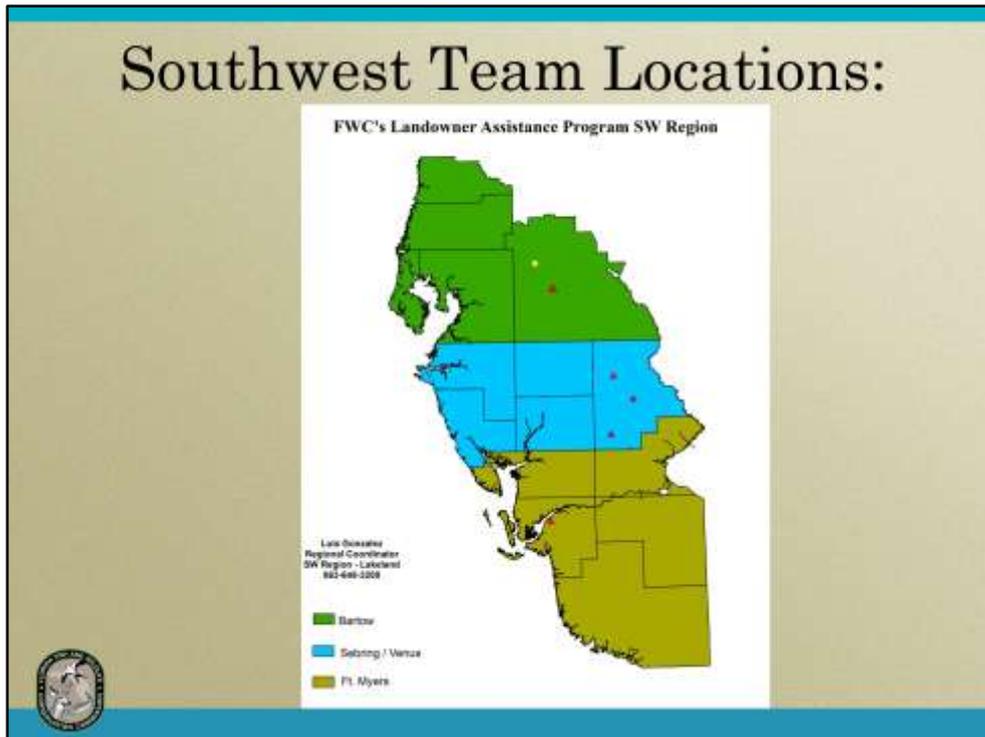
- Mr. Chairman, Commissioners, Executive Director Wiley – thank you, for having us here today as we are excited that the Commission is discussing private lands as a strategic initiative of the agency.
- I am here to present a brief overview of some of the efforts of FWC's Landowner Assistance Program (LAP) while giving you a glimpse at the local level from my perspective of managing the program here in Southwest Florida.

Landowner Assistance Program:



- We are currently organized into four teams statewide and I represent the Southwest team.

Southwest Team Locations:



- We cover 15 counties and our workforce consists of five biologists and one administrator. We are located in Lakeland, Bartow, Sebring, Lake Placid, Venus, and Ft. Myers.
- Approximately 25% of this region's conservation lands are in private ownership.
- We have assisted over 100 landowners consisting of well over 100,000 acres in conservation planning efforts in Southwest Florida.

We Work Cooperatively with the Following Agencies & Entities:



- We have strong partnerships with NRCS, USFWS, FDACS, IFAS, Macarthur Agro-Ecology Research Center and other agencies and research groups.
- Our strong working relationships have allowed us to leverage staff resources in order to get more work done on the ground and to avoid providing landowners conflicting information.

SW Team Activities

- Land Management Planning & Technical Assistance
- Assistance with Cost Share & Easement Programs
- Workshops & Outreach



- Our team mainly focuses on land management planning and technical assistance...which include: Wildlife and habitat inventories and fish and wildlife technical assistance.
- Assistance with cost share and easement programs such as agricultural conservation easement programs and environmental quality incentive programs.

Land Management Planning



- The LAP addresses conservation planning at the landscape level and works cooperatively with other landscape-level programs such as the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint.
- We are involved in a pilot study that identifies and prioritizes areas of high resource value that can serve as possible wildlife corridors in Southwest Florida; such as Fisheating Creek-Babcock-Avon Park, Ok Slough-crew, and Peace River-Myakka-Babcock linkages using GIS software and other data managing systems.

Private Lands Deer Management



- Evaluate habitat management plans submitted by applicants
- Provide technical assistance
- Assist with preparation of management plans



We always manage for the landowners needs and wants while developing a conservation plan that benefits a larger scope of wildlife species.

In particular, LAP assists with delivery of the Private Lands Deer Management Program (PLDMP), by evaluating the habitat management plans submitted with applications, or by providing technical assistance or developing plans for landowners in some cases.

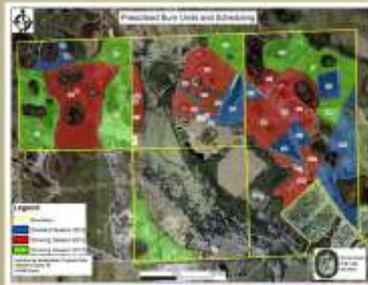
Natural Resources Conservation Service Partnership

Assistance with Farm Bill Conservation Programs

- *Agriculture Conservation Easement Program*
- *Environmental Quality Incentive Program*

Management recommendations to:

- Improve Habitat
- Provide Economic Opportunities



- Through a cooperative agreement with NRCS we help deliver programs such as ACEP & EQIP by providing landowners sound scientifically based land management recommendations, to improve habitat conditions on their property. These benefits are expected to not only benefit wildlife species but also may provide economic opportunities to the landowner.

Conservation Easement Programs

- NRCS Wetlands Reserve Program
- USFWS Everglades Headwaters NWR
- Evaluation / Prioritization
- Restoration Planning
- Monitoring



- While EQIPS are still important statewide, here in Southwest Florida, most of our partnership with NRCS is now focused on the wetlands reserve program. We are also providing technical assistance and stakeholder outreach support for the northern everglades NWR acquisition process in cooperation with the USFWS.
 - We assist NRCS with their due diligence process, restoration and habitat management planning, and monitoring on conservation easement sites; and help to evaluate the long-term success of these projects.

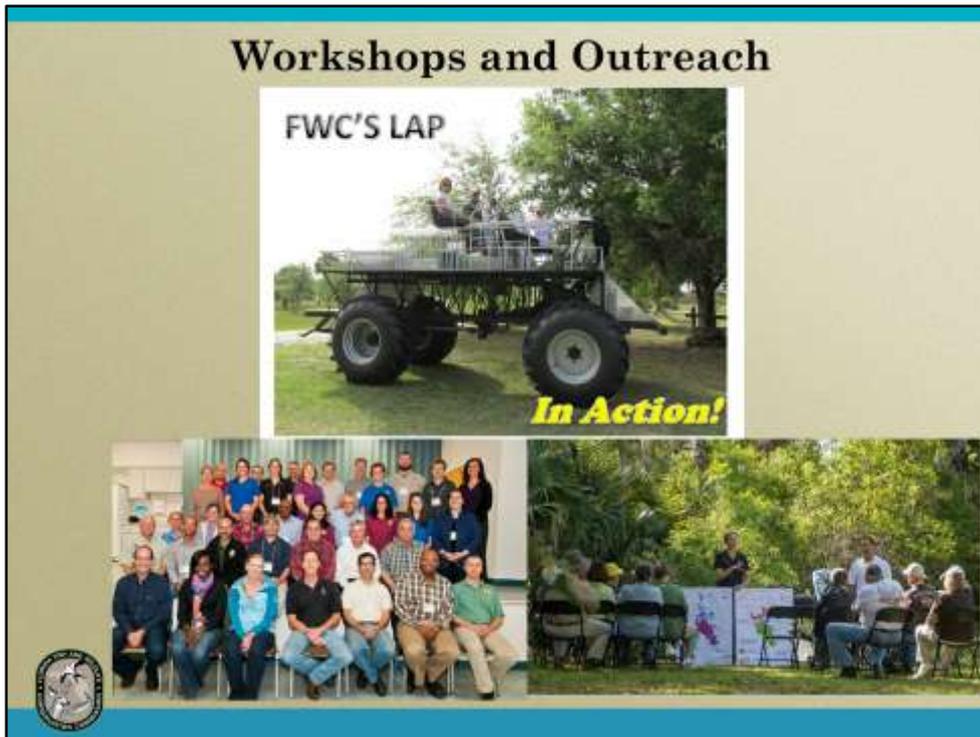
Environmental Quality Incentive Program

- Working Lands for Wildlife

- Managing native range



- In addition, through NRCS we provide ranchers technical assistance on how to best manage their native range with the use of mechanical treatment and prescribed fire to not only optimize their stocking rates but also improve wildlife habitat.



- We provide outreach and education opportunities for all those interested in conservation and are always willing participants in local events that focus on wildlife or habitat management.
 - As part of the outreach, we have developed a partnership with USFWS' partners for fish and wildlife program and FWC's Imperiled Species Management Section to provide outreach to ranchers in areas north of the Caloosahatchee River, particularly focusing on panther issues.
 - We have participated in events such as the panther festival at the panther refuge, earth day events at Edison College, ONAS landowner workshops, and FWC events at Tenoroc.