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Private Landowner Wildlife Habitat Monitoring Survey Results and Wildlife Assistance Resources

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Although Florida has the highest percentage of public conservation areas in the Southeast, it is unlikely these fragmented pockets of wildlife habitat will ever be able to provide enough high-quality connected land to support healthy wildlife populations.



Fortunately, the majority of private landowners in Florida value wildlife and native habitat, and many of them work to incorporate wildlife into their land management objectives. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) recognizes the importance of these landowners and supports their private land wildlife stewardship efforts through the Landowner Assistance Program (LAP) and participation in the Florida Land Steward Partnership.



LAP provides assistance to private landowners statewide through partnerships with The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Some assistance program funds are targeted to 11 focus areas, which also provide

a sampling frame to survey landowner perceptions of private lands wildlife conservation and wildlife assistance programs. These focus areas target high priority habitat, large blocks of private land adjacent to public lands, and clusters of landowners already working with FWC. These areas were grouped into three regions, North, Central, and South, based on previously collected sociodemographic and land use data.



MONITORING WILDLIFE HABITAT CONSERVATION EFFORTS AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS ON PRIVATE LANDS

In 2008, FWC and the University of Florida (UF) Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation initially partnered to collect baseline landowner socio-demographic and wildlife management data by mail survey. Those data allowed FWC to refine their programs to meet both landowner and wildlife objectives.

To ensure effective and efficient delivery of landowner assistance programs, FWC once again partnered with UF in 2011 to monitor private landowner wildlife

habitat management activities and the effectiveness of their assistance programs over time by mail survey. The 2011 survey was developed by six focus groups of private landowners and agency wildlife biologists across the state.



A random sample of landowners owning ≥ 20 acres in the focus areas were mailed surveys and 1,391 of them responded. This booklet highlights key survey findings. The complete technical report is freely available online (MyFWC.com).

2011 KEY SURVEY RESULTS

Wildlife management continues to be an important activity for most landowners in Florida with 86% of landowners indicating their routine land management practices benefitted wildlife, 57% actively managing for wildlife, and 40% having

land, and to a lesser degree, perceptions that wildlife provide crop and pasture pollination benefits.

Providing supplemental food for wildlife (62%) was the most common wildlife management activity with deer, turkey,

86% of landowners indicated their routine land management practices benefitted wildlife

57% actively managed for wildlife

40% had land set aside specifically for wildlife habitat or native ecosystems

land specifically set aside for wildlife habitat and native ecosystems.

The benefits landowners receive from having wildlife on their property focused on four aspects: providing the family with hunting and wildlife watching opportunities, perceptions that wildlife help maintain healthy

and songbirds being fed most frequently. Planting food plots (46%) and installing nest boxes (33%) were also common practices by landowners.

Landowners generally perceived that over the past five years, animals such as deer, turkeys, bears, and feral hogs have either stayed the same

2011 KEY SURVEY RESULTS

or increased; songbirds, panthers, alligators, bald eagles, gopher tortoises, and waterfowl have stayed the same; and quail have either stayed the same or decreased.

In the next five years, landowners generally wanted songbird, quail,

in Apalachicola/St.Marks and Lake/Volusia Scrub focus areas reporting increases in bears over the last five years and also desiring future bear populations to decrease. The South reported more increases in feral hogs than other regions and also indicated most

In the past 5 years, landowners perceived stable to increasing populations of deer, turkey, bear, and feral hogs on their land

In the next 5 years, most landowners desired increases in songbirds, quail, turkey, bald eagles, and waterfowl on their property

turkey, bald eagle, and waterfowl populations to increase; deer, panther, and gopher tortoise populations to stay the same or increase; bears to stay the same; alligators to stay the same or decrease; and feral hogs to decrease. Some regional and focus area specific trends were noted, with respondents

frequently that they desired feral hog future populations to decrease.

Considering prescribed fire, one of the most beneficial habitat management tools, one quarter of landowners applied an average of seven prescribed fires each in the last five years.

2011 KEY SURVEY RESULTS

These fires affected on average 1,019 acres per landowner. Landowners in the South and North regions most frequently used prescribed fire with the South burning the highest number of acres.

Landowners were burning to reduce wildfire risks and improve wildlife habitat, timber, and pastures. Overall, they were very satisfied with fire outcomes.

One-third of landowners had management plans that were predominantly prepared by themselves or a government agency. Three-quarters of plans included wildlife management objectives

and landowners perceived the plans were quite useful. The most desired plan topics were habitat, game, timber, agriculture, and fishpond management.

About one-third of respondents were aware of financial assistance programs and technical workshops for wildlife habitat management and were moderately interested in learning more about the programs.

Landowners who had participated in financial assistance programs or contacted FWC for technical advice were generally very satisfied.



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CONCLUSIONS AND CONTACTS

FWC is providing contemporary technical and financial assistance to landowners and land managers for wildlife habitat management, a very prominent, widespread, and desired land use in Florida.

By working with landowners to meet their production and wildlife management goals concurrently, LAP strives to help private landowners continue their stewardship of wildlife habitat in Florida.

As private lands wildlife habitat programs continue to grow over the years, this Florida Private Landowner Habitat Monitoring Survey will allow FWC to track wildlife habitat management trends, assess program effectiveness, and continue adapting programs to meet landowner and wildlife habitat objectives.

For the full technical report of this survey, please visit Landowner Assistance in the Wildlife & Habitats section of MyFWC.com:
<http://myfwc.com/conservation/special-initiatives/lap/landowner-survey/>

If you would like any information on FWC programs by phone, please call one of the regional offices:

Northwest Region
(850) 265-3676

North Central Region
(386) 758-0525

Northeast Region
(352) 732-1225

South Region
(561) 625-5122

Southwest Region
(863) 648-3200



Florida Land Steward

Have Land? Get a plan and stay connected.
Your source for assistance, information, events and resources

www.flsteward.org

In 2010, FWC initiated a cooperative effort with the Florida Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, and UF to consolidate conservation planning and coordinate outreach and education. In 2012, this group, along with a variety of other agencies and organizations, launched the Florida Land Steward Partnership.

The Florida Land Steward is a growing network of landowners, extension agents, public and private natural resource professionals, and others who have allied to provide consistent and effective information to a diversity of Florida landowners. The mission of the Florida Land Steward is to help and encourage private

landowners to manage their lands for long-term environmental, economic, and social benefits.

Products of this partnership include a quarterly newsletter, a yearly calendar, and other printed materials. Program partners are also working closely together to coordinate workshops, tours, field days, and other trainings.

The Florida Land Steward website is the centralized source of information about land management in Florida. Landowners seeking information on planning, technical papers, workshop announcements, and financial assistance programs should visit:

www.flsteward.org



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