

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Agency Strategic Plan
2014–2019



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Introduction

Commissioners and the staff of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) developed this strategic plan to focus the strength of the agency on the most essential conservation challenges while ensuring safe and enjoyable public access to Florida's fish and wildlife resources. Fundamental to the success of this plan are the principles that conservation is a public-trust responsibility and that FWC, more than ever, will need and seek the active involvement of Floridians. This plan addresses 1) Commission Policy Focal Areas 2) Strategic Initiatives, and 3) Themes, Goals, and Strategies. It also considers work that is under way and planned projects.

Commissioners identified Policy Focal Areas to serve as a framework for adapting to changing conditions in Florida over the next 20 years. In reviewing and discussing these areas, commissioners and the staff assessed current conditions, and commissioners provided long-range policy guidance for high-priority needs and opportunities. The staff used the Policy Focal Area guidance, along with elements from other planning efforts, to develop the Strategic Initiatives. These initiatives emphasize areas in which FWC needs to make significant progress over the next 5–10 years. The Themes, Goals, and Strategies define the work that will be required if we are to achieve our mission, and they provide the context in which the Strategic Initiatives will be realized.

The collaborative journey in the creation of this plan has involved the commissioners, stakeholders, and staff from across the agency. To achieve our long-term vision, we will continue to work collaboratively within the agency and with our partners and stakeholders.



Commission Policy Focal Areas

The future of fish and wildlife conservation

Continued support of fish and wildlife conservation is crucial to the long-term well-being and availability of these resources for public enjoyment. Looking forward, two areas stand out for priority attention: managing adverse human–wildlife impacts and keeping people connected to Florida’s natural environment.

Expanding participation in conservation.—Connecting people with positive fish- and wildlife-oriented outdoor experiences lays the foundation for a lifetime of enjoyment and of support for conservation.

Wildlife conflict.—Successful conservation of wildlife species and enhancement of populations can put humans and wildlife in conflict. Addressing such situations and ensuring that the public’s experiences with wildlife remain positive will help maintain support for conservation.

Habitat conservation and management

The future of fish and wildlife resources depends on the quality and quantity of habitat available for maintenance of species populations and on the public’s access to those resources.

Priorities for habitat conservation.—Given limited resources, it is important first to focus conservation measures on habitats that are the most critical to sustaining healthy and diverse fish and wildlife populations.

Management, public/private.—To ensure the long-term sustainability of fish and wildlife resources, FWC must actively engage on public and private lands to help adapt habitat-management practices to addressing the new and dynamic challenges facing Florida’s fish and wildlife species.

Sustainable access to fish and wildlife resources and public lands.—Providing public access to fish and wildlife resources is a crucial component of the public-trust responsibilities of FWC. To accomplish this responsibility, FWC will continue to work with other public land-management organizations to encourage safe and sustainable public access.

Innovative management tools

Developing new and innovative ways to manage fish and wildlife resources is vital to effective conservation in Florida as pressures, threats, and opportunities change here. Given the pressures on marine fisheries and the importance of private lands to conservation, the following two areas were chosen as priorities.

Marine fish management.—Size limits, bag limits, and seasons are the tools traditionally used to manage marine species. Working with partners and stakeholders, FWC will seek innovative ways to apply those traditional tools and develop new tools and techniques that will achieve conservation more efficiently and effectively with less complexity and less regulatory burden for those who utilize and enjoy these resources.

Incentives for private lands.—A significant portion of Florida’s undeveloped land is privately owned. Many private landowners have successfully managed their lands for generations in ways that support fish and wildlife and the habitat they depend on. Development of effective conservation partnerships with and creative conservation incentives for private landowners will be essential to maintaining the state’s fish and wildlife diversity.

Strategic Initiatives

Running the business

An internal infrastructure (team and process) must be established that identifies the areas of business operations and practices that represent high risk and that prioritizes them and modifies them to address such risk.

Imperiled Species Management Plan

The Imperiled Species Management Plan must be completed, prioritized species actions implemented, and conservation strategies integrated by the end of 2015.

Expand participation in conservation

Increase participation in conservation among youth and families representing Florida's diverse population by expanding partnerships to implement FYCCN and other programs that promote fishing, hunting, boating, wildlife viewing, shooting sports, and appreciation of the importance of conservation.

Conservation through innovation

Implement a comprehensive approach, using innovative conservation tools and strategies, focusing on incentives for private lands and marine fisheries management. Strategies may include enhancing partnerships, incentives, and streamlining regulations.

Conflict wildlife

Ensure continued support for and appreciation of fish and wildlife by implementing an integrated programmatic approach across all branches of FWC to minimize adverse impacts associated with native and nonnative fish, wildlife, and plant species. Successful efforts should minimize threats to human health and safety and pose minimal impacts to the environment, society, and economy.

Boating as a gateway to conservation and the outdoors

Strengthen and promote the conservation connections of boating while protecting people and natural resources and improving boating opportunities.



Themes, Goals, and Strategies

Theme 1. Florida’s fish and wildlife populations and their habitats

Goal 1.—Ensure the sustainability of Florida’s fish and wildlife populations.

Strategies

1. Manage listed species such that they no longer meet Florida’s listing criteria for endangered and threatened species.
2. Manage nonlisted species to prevent them from meeting Florida’s listing criteria for endangered and threatened species.
3. Anticipate and address the conservation needs of fish and wildlife species so that they may adapt to long-term environmental changes.
4. Develop, acquire, and apply the appropriate biological and sociological science to inform fish and wildlife conservation decisions.
5. Inform and guide partners as to how their regulations, policies, procedures, and actions affect conservation of fish and wildlife.
6. Enhance protection of fish and wildlife species through effective outreach and enforcement.

Goal 2.—Ensure that sufficient habitat exists to support healthy populations of all native species of fish and wildlife.

Strategies

1. Use science to determine quantity, quality, and location of the habitats most critical to sustaining healthy and diverse populations of fish and wildlife species.
2. Use diverse incentive programs to protect lands and waters critical to sustaining healthy and diverse fish and wildlife populations.
3. Manage habitats to sustain healthy and diverse fish and wildlife populations.

Theme 2. Interactions with Fish and Wildlife, Including Fishing, Hunting, Boating, and Wildlife Viewing

Goal 1.—Provide residents and visitors with quality fishing, hunting, boating, and wildlife-viewing opportunities that meet their needs and expectations while providing for the sustainability of the natural resources involved.

Strategies

1. Develop, acquire, and use appropriate biological and sociological science to provide fishing, hunting, boating, and wildlife-viewing opportunities that meet the needs and expectations of user groups while ensuring sustainability of fish and wildlife resources.
2. Manage fish and wildlife populations to provide sustainable fishing, hunting, and wildlife-viewing opportunities.
3. Develop and maintain widely available, diverse, and accessible fishing, hunting, boating, and wildlife-viewing opportunities that meet the needs and expectations of residents and visitors, provide for the sustainability of those resources, and emphasize partnerships with both public and private landowners.
4. Recruit and manage sustainable levels of resident and visitor participation in fishing, hunting, boating, and wildlife viewing.
5. Provide targeted fishing, hunting, boating, and wildlife-viewing programs for youth, the disabled, and veterans.

Goal 2.—Enhance the safety and outdoor experiences of those who hunt, fish, boat, and view wildlife.

Strategies

- 1.** Provide and promote opportunities for residents and visitors to learn safety practices for fishing, hunting, boating, and wildlife viewing.
- 2.** Enhance residents' and visitors' boating safety and waterway experiences through improved access, management, education, and enforcement.
- 3.** Promote Florida's outdoor environment as a safe and healthy recreational destination for residents and visitors.
- 4.** Address the growing gap between people and nature by marketing and providing opportunities and education for the full population, irrespective of age, race, gender, ethnicity, etc.

Goal 3.—Minimize regulation in managing sustainable fish and wildlife populations, allowing access to fish and wildlife resources, and protecting public safety.

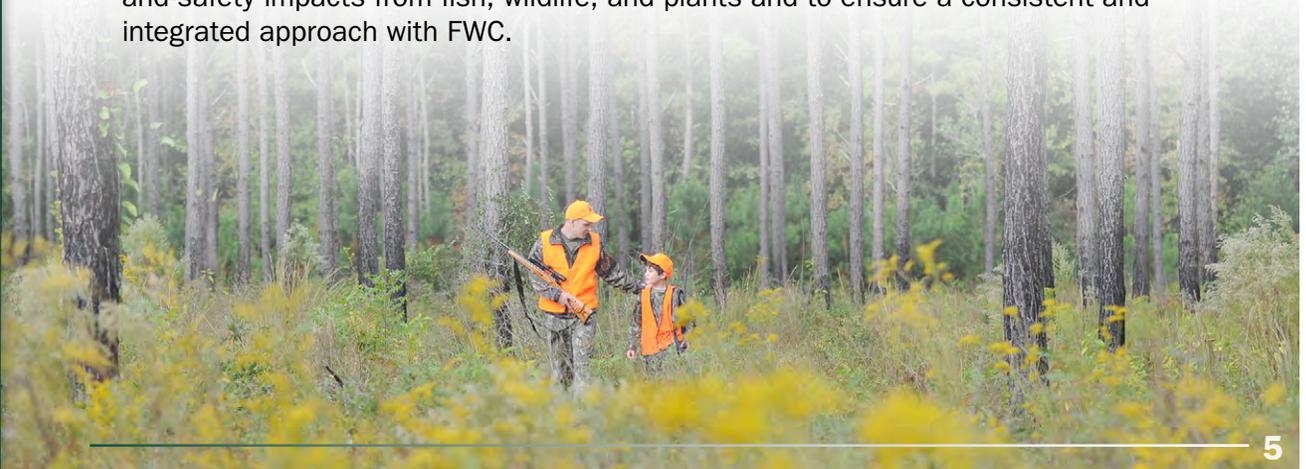
Strategies

- 1.** Continually evaluate proposed and existing regulations with regard to resource-management benefits, public-safety concerns, and economic and social impacts, improving or eliminating regulations as warranted.
- 2.** Coordinate with partners and stakeholders to ensure that appropriate authorities and regulations exist to maintain sustainable fish and wildlife populations.
- 3.** Clearly implement and enforce regulations to enrich residents' and visitors' outdoor experience, while safeguarding natural resources.

Goal 4.—Minimize adverse environmental, social, economic, and health-and-safety impacts from fish, wildlife, and plant species that are known to or that might have adverse impacts.

Strategies

- 1.** Manage fish, wildlife, and plant species, their habitats, and their interactions with humans to eliminate or reduce adverse environmental, social, economic, and health-and-safety impacts.
- 2.** Effectively communicate to residents, visitors, and businesses how to be safe and act responsibly when interacting with or possessing fish, wildlife, and plants.
- 3.** Manage transport and trade of captive and nonnative fish and wildlife species through proactive and responsive enforcement, regulation, and education, first focusing on species that pose a high risk to native species.
- 4.** Enhance partnerships to address adverse environmental, social, economic, and health-and-safety impacts from fish, wildlife, and plants and to ensure a consistent and integrated approach with FWC.



Theme 3. Sharing responsibility for fish and wildlife conservation and management, with emphasis on developing conservation values in young people

Goal 1.—Ensure that present and future generations support conservation of fish and wildlife.

Strategies

1. Expand and promote the Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network through leveraging FWC programs and staff and developing public and private partnerships and sponsorships.
2. Develop and deliver standardized youth conservation curricula and outdoor activity programs in fishing, hunting, boating, and wildlife viewing, and help adapt programs and curricula to meet the needs of diverse communities.
3. Foster stewardship and shared responsibility for fish and wildlife conservation through conservation education programs.
4. Expand marketing and outreach to diverse audiences and engage all FWC staff in priority outreach initiatives.

Goal 2.—Ensure that residents, visitors, stakeholders, and partners are engaged in development and implementation of conservation programs.

Strategies

1. Foster a common vision among the FWC and its partners to maintain and enhance the populations and habitats of fish and wildlife species through interagency coordination and mutually beneficial goals and initiatives.
2. Engage residents, visitors, stakeholders, and partners to understand their perspectives, develop and implement conservation programs, and implement fishing, hunting, boating, and wildlife-viewing management activities.
3. Use citizen science to enhance conservation programs.

Goal 3.—Increase opportunities for residents and visitors, especially youth, to actively support and practice fish and wildlife conservation stewardship.

Strategies

1. Inform residents and visitors of conservation stewardship and encourage them to become actively involved in the conservation of fish and wildlife.
2. Provide and promote opportunities for residents and visitors, especially youth, to participate in conservation stewardship activities, including volunteer opportunities with the FWC.

Goal 4.—Encourage communities to conserve lands and waters critical to sustaining healthy and diverse populations of fish and wildlife.

Strategies

1. Provide communities with the assistance necessary to help them obtain the social and economic benefits of local conservation lands.
2. Provide residents and visitors with information about the social and economic benefits of conservation, fishing, hunting, boating, and wildlife viewing.
3. Support community events and programs that promote fish and wildlife conservation.

Theme 4. Responsive organization and quality operations

Goal 1.—Integrate our commitment to benefiting the community and enhancing the economy through our conservation efforts and public service.

Strategies

1. Identify and implement ways of supporting Florida businesses and job growth while managing fish and wildlife species and their habitats.
2. Identify and promote opportunities for FWC staff members to help local communities through participation in approved activities in which FWC resources can be used (such as the Florida State Employees' Charitable Campaign, the Guardian Ad Litem Program, mentoring programs, FWC Disaster Response Teams, and American Red Cross Disaster Services).
3. Provide residents and visitors with reliable information on Florida's fish and wildlife.
4. Continue to attract visitors by providing top-quality fishing, hunting, boating, and wildlife-viewing opportunities.

Goal 2.—Provide resources and support for the safety and protection of residents and visitors and for Florida's natural and cultural resources, and to allow emergency responses to critical incidents and environmental disasters.

Strategies

1. Identify existing and emerging risks to the safety of residents and visitors and foster internal collaboration and external partnerships necessary to manage, reduce, or eliminate those risks.
2. Provide immediate and effective disaster response and recovery through mutual-aid efforts with local, state, and federal partners.
3. Provide search, rescue, and recovery services in coordination with local, state, and federal entities to ensure the safety of residents and visitors.
4. Protect natural and cultural resources through proactive and responsive enforcement efforts.

Goal 3.—Ensure that the FWC has effective and adaptive business practices.

Strategies

1. Address emerging biological, social, and economic trends, anticipate their impacts, and take advantage of opportunities to accomplish FWC's mission.
2. Expect each FWC employee to be an ambassador for FWC and its mission with respect to Florida's diverse residents and visitors.
3. Provide efficient and effective service to Florida's diverse residents and visitors and to FWC staff.
4. Foster a diverse, accountable, responsive, and skilled work force that effectively serves Florida's residents and visitors.
5. Manage existing resources and secure additional resources necessary for achieving fish and wildlife conservation and meeting residents', visitors', and stakeholders' needs.
6. Create and maintain an effective business model that supports the FWC's mission by using continuous improvement approaches that foster a collaborative and professional culture.