



Legacy Initiative Winter Newsletter



Friends and Partners!

by Thomas Eason

Friends and Partners - greetings from Tallahassee and welcome to our Winter Wildlife Legacy newsletter. Thanks to the great work of many of you, we have a lot of exciting projects and activities under way and wanted to take a moment to share them with you. It's been several months since we've been in contact with everyone and we wanted to use this newsletter to catch folks up on the various activities that have been going on. We hope to make this a regular update so you can see all the things that are happening, based on the input and priorities developed by you! We're looking forward to this year and working with all of you to ensure the protection of Florida's unique and extraordinary wildlife! Please let us know if you have any questions or feedback.

FWC Climate Change Conference

FWC will host a climate change conference in late 2008. This follows the Governor's call to action on responding to climate change. FWC will seek ways to increase awareness on the issue and look at ways for Florida's wildlife to adapt to a changing climate. Key speakers will present and participate in breakout sessions where an action plan will be developed that will help guide FWC in managing wildlife. The action plan will also help the Legacy Initiative integrate climate change planning into the comprehensive strategy.

Partnership Coordinator

Doug Parsons started in September 2007 as the Legacy Initiative's Partnership Coordinator. Doug previously worked in partnership development in the natural resource management sector in the state of [Queensland, Australia](#). Doug will be responsible for Legacy Initiative's partnership policy, development and monitoring. Doug will engage our key stakeholders and identify partnership opportunities to help implement the comprehensive strategy. Doug is imbedded within the Office for Policy and Stakeholder Coordination and will also work on agency wide partnerships.

The Partnership Coordinator is also responsible for Florida's Teaming with Wildlife coalition. This is a group that seeks to secure funding for the federal sponsored State Wildlife Grants Program and provides the bulk of the funding for the Legacy Initiative. The current coalition has over 100

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members and Doug, working with key partners, will expand that number to generate ongoing support for wildlife protection in Florida. For more information about Legacy partnerships, please contact Doug at doug.parsons@myfwc.com.

New Wildlife Legacy Biologist Anna Liner

Anna Liner was recently hired as the North Central Regional Wildlife Legacy Biologist and will be responsible for coordinating and implementing Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative within this region. Anna's work will focus primarily on supporting regional and statewide sandhill and scrub conservation and restoration efforts. Anna will also coordinate and assist surveys of the endemic Black Creek crayfish on Camp Blanding Military Reservation and Jennings State Forest later this year.

Anna received her M.S. in wildlife ecology and management in 2006 from the University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forest Resources, and she has a B.S. in zoology from the University of Florida. In addition to her education, Anna has five years' experience as a wildlife field biologist and has worked with a variety of wildlife species and wildlife conservation issues, primarily in the field of herpetology. Prior to working for our agency, Anna worked extensively at the Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center, where she assisted in wildlife research in wetland and longleaf pine habitats. For more information, contact Anna at anna.liner@myfwc.com.

Grants Program Update

The 2007 State Wildlife Grants General cycle opened on September 21st, and received 54 applications totaling over \$5 million dollars in requested funding. The criteria for this year's cycle focused on six priority habitats of Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative and filling data gaps on species of fishes and invertebrates. The applications are sent through a rigorous process of technical review by experts, and are ultimately selected by a final grants committee. The program plans to announce awards of funding on February 1st, 2008. For more information, contact Brian at brian.branciforte@myfwc.com.

Legacy Goals Update

By working with our partners, Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative has identified [5 areas](#) where we'll work for the next 3 years. The ultimate goal is to conserve our native wildlife and habitats through non-regulatory, voluntary, incentive-based actions and partnerships. Partnerships built around these areas are critical because this effort is much larger than any one agency or organization can accomplish alone.

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Cooperative Conservation Blueprint Update

Proposed in 2005 in *Florida's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy* and independently by the Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida, both efforts recognized the need for a long-term conservation planning vision, 25 to 50 years ahead.

In 2006 and 2007, experts identified the critical land and waters necessary to sustain both wildlife and people. The Florida Farm Bureau, Florida Chamber of Commerce, the Century Commission's Rural Land Advisory Council, members of the conservation community, state agencies and the public all commented on this draft document.

In 2008, the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint will build agreement between government and private interests to use common priorities as the basis for statewide land-use decisions. Meetings will take place around the state to ask people about their land-use priorities, how best to present the resulting maps on-line for their use, and new ideas for incentives that assure sustainability.

In 2008, we will host more meetings to garner additional input. We expect the CCB to be the definitive conservation plan that is accepted and used by conservation planning and advocacy groups, private landowners, and federal, state, regional and local government agencies. We look forward to your continued participation in the development of this key conservation tool. For more information about the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint, visit our web site at <http://myfwc.com/wildlifelegacy/docs/2008/BlueprintFWCFAQs.pdf> or contact Christine Small at Christine.small@myfwc.com.

Coral Reef Update

Coral reef experts convened and decided on the priorities for this critical habitat. The group agreed to focus on completing coral reef extent and distribution maps. There has been a considerable increase in technology to better map these critical resources where no maps currently exist, such as the entire Florida Keys and Martin County. Experts saw a unique opportunity to bring together state, university, NGO, and federal agencies to join forces to characterize and map the shallow-water coral ecosystems of South Florida. Completing this mapping effort will provide important information needed to meet the coral reef conservation goals outlined in Florida's Strategy. The maps and survey data will provide many benefits, including critical information needed to fill gaps identified in estuarine and marine habitat maps, and will support the development of conservation actions to address threats to both habitats and organisms listed in Florida's Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The maps will provide critical information needed to understand the extent of the coral reef habitat throughout south Florida. Finally, the maps will enable managers to enforce impact avoidance. For more

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information regarding the Southwest Freshwater Region, please contact Mary at mary.truglio@myfwc.com.

Sandhill/Scrub Update

The Legacy Initiative is approaching the sandhill/scrub habitat goal from a couple of directions. We have funded the creation of a series of regional working groups to help neighbors share and coordinate ideas, information, and resources for managing their scrub and sandhill acreage; scrub working groups in northeast and southwest Florida began meeting in late 2007, and the north-central scrub group and north Florida sandhill group will meet in early 2008. We've also funded the creation of a new fire strike team in northeast Florida (to begin operations in early 2008), have continued our multi-year support of the Lake Wales Ridge team, and in summer 2008 will begin supporting a team in the western panhandle. We also have several projects to fund mechanical and chemical burn preparation to facilitate increased prescribed burning. Finally, we're funding a number of research projects targeting scrub and sandhill wildlife species. For more information regarding the Northeast Region, please contact Jimi at james.gragg@myfwc.com.

Seagrass Update

We are working to address the conservation threats and stresses identified for submerged aquatic vegetation in Florida's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Specific conservation actions identified in the strategy, involving management and research, include: assisting multi-agency efforts in the identification of ecologically sensitive areas; understanding boating techniques that reduce propeller scars; and improving understanding of marine flora/fauna diseases and pathogens on seagrasses.

Projects include working to fill data gaps for faunal communities, water quality, and ecosystem function in seagrass habitat, assessing habitat damage from boater impacts, and subsequent restoration efforts. As it is a highly productive marine habitat, seagrass health has been shown to depend on the cleanliness of marine waters. A shared priority is statewide, ongoing monitoring and mapping to ascertain the changing status of this habitat. Because of existing work involving conservation and restoration by FWC, we are working to coordinate and supplement existing efforts in addition to identifying future needs. For more information regarding the Seagrass monitoring, please contact Dan O'Brien at daniel.o'brien@myfwc.com.

Habitat Monitoring Update

Wildlife management often involves the manipulation of habitat to maximize conditions for certain wildlife species or suites of species. Very often, we don't really know whether the effects

of our management efforts have an impact on increasing the amount or quality of a habitat and therefore, increasing its value for supporting native wildlife. The Legacy Initiative has identified 18 habitats in Florida that are threatened by development or degradation and are in serious need of preservation or management. Six of these habitats were given top priority by the Legacy Initiative, to focus our efforts and State Wildlife Grants to help increase the quantity and quality of scrub, sandhill, spring and spring run, softwater streams, coral reef and sea grass habitats. These six habitats are the target of a project designed to develop performance measures and procedures to enable FWC, the Legacy Initiative, and our partners to monitor the status and extent of each habitat on a statewide basis.

The FWLI has contracted with PBS&J, an environmental consulting firm located in Tampa, to conduct a series of meetings with management experts in each of the six priority habitats, to learn which performance measures they consider most critical to determine the extent and health of each habitat type. Then, with continued expert input from our partners, we will develop the protocols, software, and data base elements necessary to gather data, conduct data analysis, and evaluate the status of these habitats. PBS&J has just signed the contract and will be initiating the first phase of the project in February. Our first goal involves surveying and summarizing all applicable habitat monitoring projects that are currently ongoing in Florida. We will then identify and involve those individuals, agencies, and NGOs in a series of stakeholder meetings to solicit input from them about necessary performance measures, habitat measurement protocols, data reporting requirements, and finally, data sharing, processing and analysis needs. We will then develop a series of recommendations to develop a habitat monitoring system for each of the six priority habitats. These recommendations will be completed by February 2009, and will be implemented in the second phase of the project. For more information regarding the Southwest Region, please contact Randy at randall.havens@myfwc.com.

Springs Update

Spring and Spring Run habitat goal work has focused attention on creating two new spring working groups at Fanning/Manatee and Volusia Blue springs. We funded a working group coordinator to work with stakeholders in each basin. The quarterly meetings will serve as a forum for residents, agencies and organizations to work together to identify solutions to protect the springs. The first meeting for Fanning/Manatee will be held February 14, 2008, and Volusia Blue will be held in early March. For more information regarding the Northwest Region, please contact Shea at shea.armstrong@myfwc.com.

Softwater Stream Update

The Legacy Initiative is starting a new Ad Hoc Advisory Group to address the conservation needs of Softwater Streams. Many individuals, agencies and NGOs are concerned with the issues

surrounding softwater streams and this is the first coordinated effort by FWC to bring these partners together. One of the desired outcomes of these meetings will be a prioritized list of action items that conserve softwater streams. For more information regarding the Southwest Freshwater Region, please contact Kevin at kevin.kemp@myfwc.com.

Guest Stakeholder Contribution

by Joe Murphy

Florida Program Coordinator

Gulf Restoration Network

Florida's wildlife resources depend on a public that is engaged in their conservation. All too often folks in the hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation, and conservation communities find themselves working on similar projects, but not talking to each other. When we sit down and talk through our goals and our shared desire to see wild and natural Florida protected for future generations, we find we have far more in common than we thought.

The Gulf Restoration Network supports the FWC's Wildlife Legacy Program, and we feel that the 2007 Wildlife Stakeholder's Forum was an excellent opportunity for us to meet and get to know diverse stakeholders from the hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation community whom we will partner with as we work towards common conservation goals. Since the 2007 Forum, we have had conversations and dialogue with hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation groups about conservation issues along Florida's Gulf Coast where we agreed to work together to protect habitat, protect water quality, and talk about the impacts of sea level rise and climate change on the resources all of us love and depend on. In particular we have enjoyed getting to know new partners in our work to protect coastal estuaries and coastal cypress swamps. People who spend time on the land and on the water know what is at stake in Florida, and voices for wildlife always are more effective when joined in chorus.

The process of bringing groups together to support and discuss a common vision for Florida's wildlife future is a critical one, and one that was well served by the Stakeholder's Forum. We look forward to the next Forum, and we continue to deepen and expand the relationships we began at the last Forum. For more information about Gulf Restoration Network, contact Joe Murphy at joe@healthygulf.org.

Teaming with Wildlife

More than 100 organizations and businesses from across Florida have come together to spread the word about the Florida State Wildlife Action Plan and to secure the funding it needs for success.

You can help by [joining the coalition](#), engaging organizations in your community and urging our elected officials to support the federal [State Wildlife Grants Program](#) and [legislation](#) providing long-term, dedicated funding for wildlife conservation and related education and recreation.

Led by the FWC, the Florida Teaming with Wildlife Coalition includes wildlife biologists, hunters and anglers, birdwatchers, hikers, nature-based businesses and other conservationists. Some of you are already members, but for those of you who are not currently part of the Florida Coalition, please consider joining.

Attached is a document with more information about joining the coalition. The funding from this program is absolutely critical to the success of the Legacy Initiative. By enrolling more members in the state coalition, we can demonstrate widespread support for wildlife conservation. Our success is dependent on partners like you. For those who are already members of the coalition, we thank you greatly. For more information, contact Doug Parsons at doug.parsons@myfwc.com.