

Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program

Victoria Ruddle



Horseshoe Cove and
Suwannee Sound workshop
March 11, 2021



State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program

- U.S. Congress created in 2000
- Provides annually appropriated funding to every state and territory to benefit wildlife and their habitats
- Matching grants program used to support projects that address needs identified in State Wildlife Action Plans
- Can be used for research, surveys, restoration, habitat management, monitoring, and more
- \$50-\$80 million distributed nationwide each year since 2001

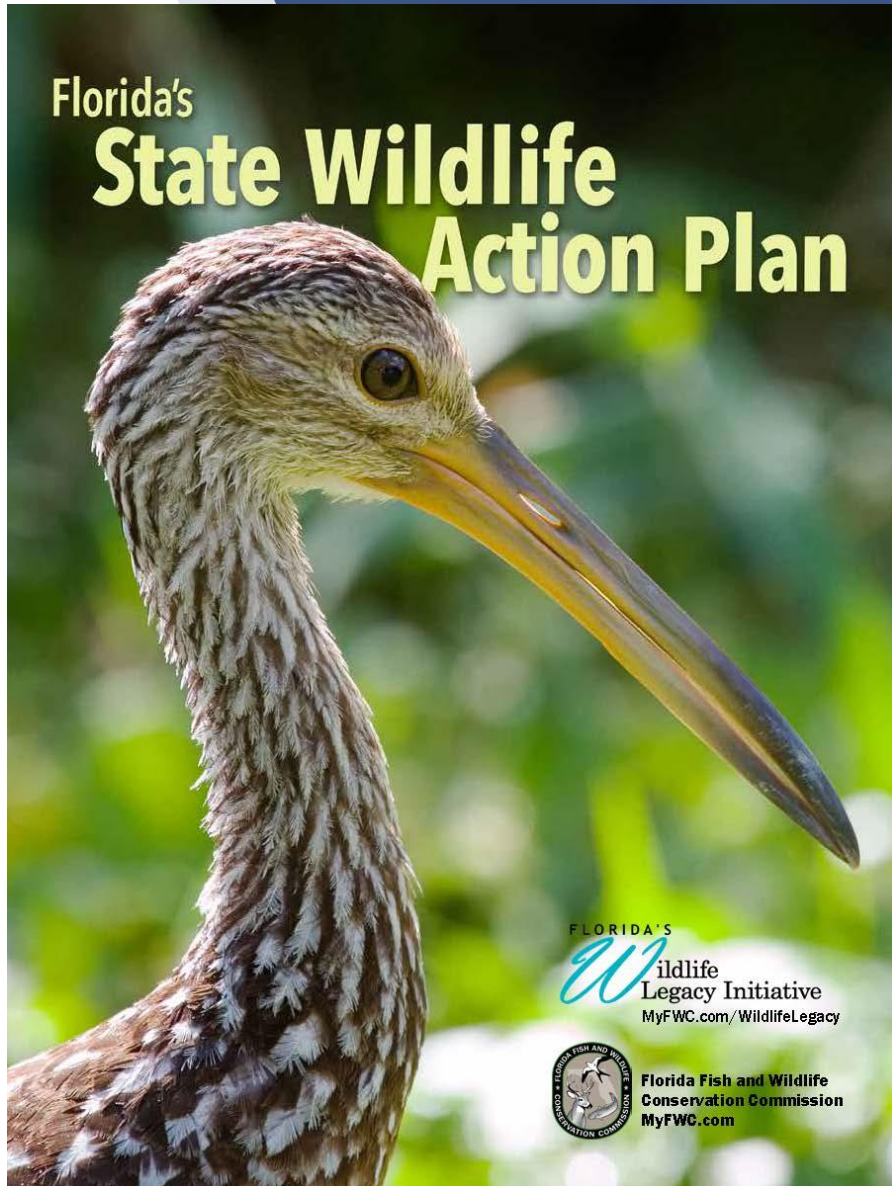
Intent: To keep imperiled species from needing federal protection under the Endangered Species Act



State Wildlife Action Plans

- U.S. Congress requires each state/tribe to have an Action Plan to receive SWG funding
- Updated every 10 years or less
- Ecosystem Classifications
- Species of Greatest Conservation Need
- Threats to habitats and species
- Conservation Actions

Intent: To provide direction and guidance for how State and Tribal Wildlife Grant (SWG) funding should be spent



Florida's Action Plan & SWG

- Create and maintain the State Wildlife Action Plan
- Create and maintain the Species of Greatest Conservation Need list
- Focus on species who are “in the gap” between hunting/fishing programs and those with federal protection
- Find, develop, and support potential SWG projects
- Engage with partners to carry out the Action Plan
- Receive approximately \$2 million per year

FWC takes an ecosystem-based approach to conservation rather than by species to maintain and restore habitat utilized by Florida's SGCN

2019 State Wildlife Action Plan

Key Changes from Previous Versions



ECOSYSTEM-BASED APPROACH

that when implemented will benefit a broad suite of species.

ALIGNS WITH OTHER FWC PLANS

to create a full wildlife conservation strategy for FWC. If you're working in the ISMP, a Regional Assessment, species action plan, or any other FWC plan, you're also working to accomplish actions in this.

TIES IN SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES

with long-term goals on a continuous basis.

CLIMATE CHANGE

affects everything we do, so it's now integrated within the plan instead of as a stand-alone chapter.

TIGHTENED SGCN LIST

to identify those species with the greatest risk of becoming imperiled in the future.

MEASURING SUCCESS

We can't know if we are doing good conservation unless we measure and evaluate ourselves and our work, so we have a chapter focused on habitat, species, and Action Plan monitoring.

URBAN AND WORKING LANDS

Species that live or use urban areas or working lands face unique challenges, but we also have unique opportunities to conserve them. A framework was developed with conservation actions for these species and to work with sometimes unconventional partners to balance people and wildlife.





Florida's 2019 State Wildlife Action Plan

Conservation in Action



16,000

Species
Native to Florida



690

Number of SGCN



113

Conservation
Actions

Action Plan Implementation Goals

- Identified by FWC and partners every five years as priorities that act as guidelines for allocating Florida's SWG funds
- Divides Action Plan implementation into Goals
 - Marine and Estuarine Enhancement
 - Aquatic Habitat Resiliency
 - Research and Monitoring
 - Terrestrial Integrity



FLORIDA'S 2019 STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION GOALS



MyFWC.com/WildlifeLegacy

RESEARCH & MONITORING

Produce research and monitoring results that will improve management of Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats.

AMY CLIFTON
(386) 754-1667
Amy.Clifton@MyFWC.com

Improve marine and estuarine ecosystem habitat quality for the benefit of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

VICTORIA RUDDLE
(561) 882-5718
Victoria.Ruddle@MyFWC.com

MARINE & ESTUARINE ENHANCEMENT

TERRESTRIAL HABITAT INTEGRITY

Improve and maintain the quality of upland habitats for the benefit of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

ANNA DEYLE
(352) 620-7734
Anna.Deyle@MyFWC.com

Improve aquatic ecosystem habitat quality and connectivity for the benefit of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

THOMAS KUHN
(850) 767-3617
Thomas.Kuhn@MyFWC.com

AQUATIC HABITAT RESILIENCY

Action Plan Implementation Goal Teams

Role of the team

- Bring project ideas to the table, such as:
 - “I’ve been approached by a non-profit – they would like to start a project that uses innovative techniques to expand oyster habitat.”
 - “I’ve heard some researchers say they wish there was more comprehensive monitoring of marine invertebrates.”
- Provide feedback and perspective on project ideas
- Review two-page proposals
- Review full Scope of Work for all submitted projects
- Be a resource and sounding board throughout the year



Action Plan Implementation Goal Teams

Marine & Estuarine Habitat Enhancement Team members:

Kara Radabaugh, FWRI

Caroline Gorga, FWRI

Erin McDevitt, FWC

Eric Milbrandt, SCCF

Caitlin Lustic, TNC

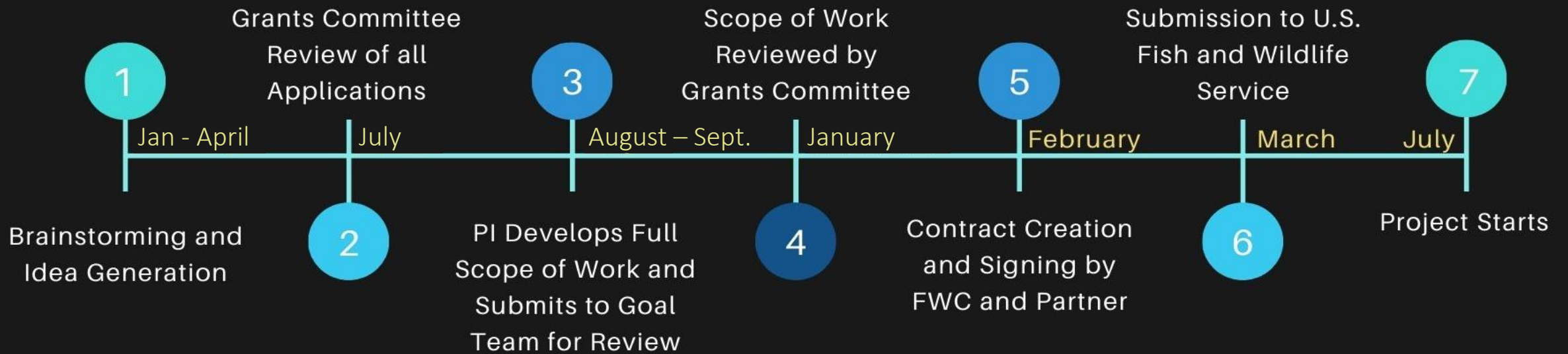
Lauri Maclaughlin, NOAA

Scott Eastman, DEP



State Wildlife Grants

Life Cycle of a New Project



MyFWC.com/WildlifeLegacy

Applying for SWG Funds - FAQs

Who may apply?

- State agencies, local government entities, educational facilities, organizations and individuals can apply.

What is the minimum and maximum amount of money I can request in my application?

- There is no minimum amount you may request. While the amount each year varies due to Congressional appropriations, each Goal Team expects to receive approximately \$500,000 in available funds for the 2021 – 2022 cycle.

Are matching funds required?

- Yes. For the 2020 Cycle, applicants had to provide a non-federal match of at least 35% of the total project costs.



An underwater photograph showing a large school of small, silvery fish swimming in clear blue water. In the center-right, a large sea turtle is visible, its head and front flippers partially submerged. The fish are densely packed around the turtle, creating a dynamic and vibrant scene. The lighting is bright, suggesting a shallow depth.

FLORIDA'S WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

MARINE & ESTUARINE ENHANCEMENT

IMPLEMENTATION GOAL

Marine & Estuarine Habitat Enhancement Goal

Goal:

Improve marine and estuarine ecosystem habitat quality for the benefit of SGCN.

Objective 1:

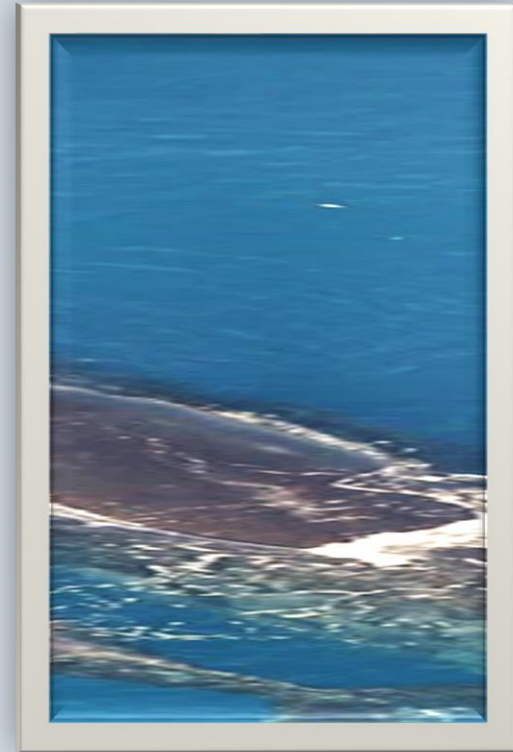
Complete at least 4 acres of high priority coastal habitat improvement by creating or restoring habitat in each of oyster reef, mangrove, salt marsh, and upland buffer.

Objective 2:

Increase coral cover by at least 25% on no fewer than 60 reefs through the repeated out-planting of no less than 60,000 colonies of reef-building elkhorn, brain, boulder, and star corals and monitor outplant success for at least a five-year period.

Priority habitats:

saltmarsh, mangrove, oyster reef, seagrass, coral reef



Objective 1

Complete at least 4 acres of high priority coastal habitat improvement by creating or restoring habitat in each of oyster reef, mangrove, salt marsh, and upland buffer.

- Limited FWC involvement compared to other habitat restoration/management
 - Marine & Estuarine Sub-section (MESS)
- Ongoing coral disease spread
- Undo prior damage, promote resiliency
 - Living shorelines
 - Restore altered systems



Objective 1: The Big Picture



- Statewide Estuarine work:
 - Living shorelines push
 - Regional Estuarine Teams
- Many partners have estuarine restoration work: DEP Aquatic Preserves, counties and local governments, USFWS, NOAA, TNC, etc.
- SWG funds have more “bang for their buck” in estuarine habitats

Our Role in Estuarine Habitat Restoration



- Communicating SWG priorities to ERTs
- Directing focus to at-risk species
 - Current focus is on ecosystem services and/or commercially important species



Objective 1 Project Highlight



Oyster-based Living Shorelines in Florida State Parks

- Great example of partnership
- Create and enhance 0.7 acres of oyster, saltmarsh, mangrove, and upland buffer habitat
- Tomoka State Park, Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area, Washington Oaks Gardens State Park



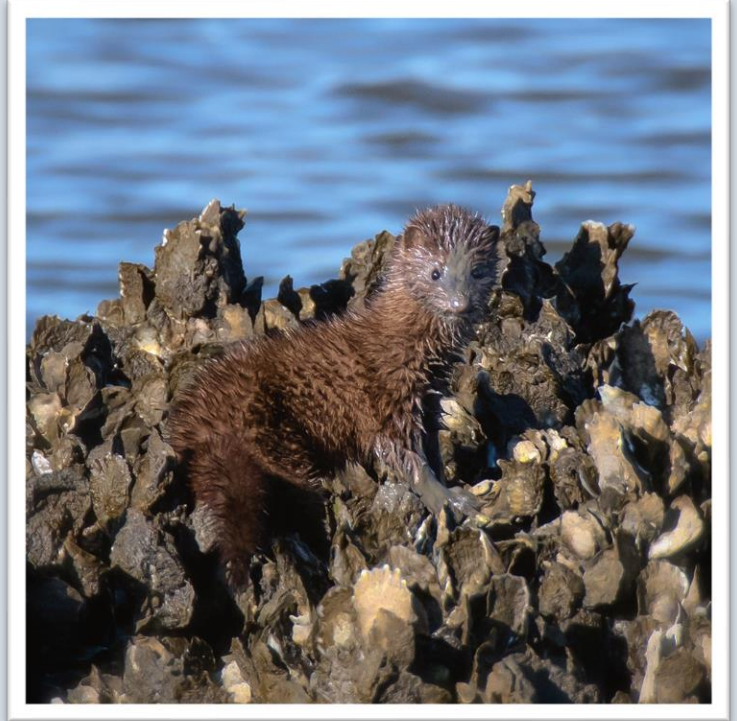
Objective 1: Future Work

Previous projects have contributed to restoration of ~83 acres of mangrove forest

- In partnership with: Palm Beach County, Martin County, Pasco County, the Marine Discovery Center, and the Sanibel Captive Conservation Foundation

Continue restoration of oyster reefs and saltmarsh

- New focus on multi-system projects and projects that build on previous SWG-funded work



FLORIDA'S WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

RESEARCH & MONITORING

IMPLEMENTATION GOAL



Research and Monitoring Goal

Goal:

Produce research and monitoring results that will improve management of Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats.

Objective 1:

Acquire information necessary to improve the management of at least 5 Species of Greatest Conservation need or their habitats.

Objective 2:

Address climate change vulnerability of at least 2 Species of Greatest Conservation Need by identifying or implementing adaptation strategies.

Objective 3:

Maintain and use species and habitat status assessment tools to evaluate the effectiveness of conservation actions.



Objective 1

Acquire information necessary to improve the management of at least five Species of Greatest Conservation need or their habitats.

- The R&M team has provided funding for projects that improve landscape manager's ability to manage for SGCN.
 - Assessing the effects of landscape succession on the Sanibel Island Rice Rat – 2019
 - Identifying habitat needs for Florida mussel species- 2018



Objective 2

Address climate change vulnerability of at least two Species of Greatest Conservation Need by identifying or implementing adaptation strategies.

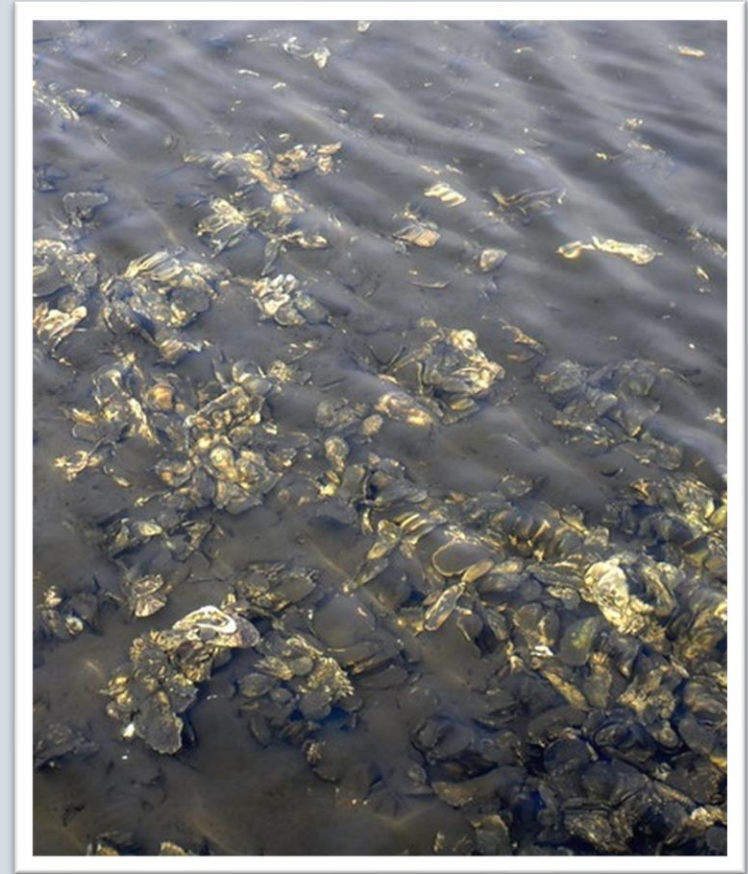
- Research & Monitoring have funded projects that address climate change vulnerability.
 - Determining the effectiveness of artificial platforms on beach nesting birds - 2020
 - Develop a long-term wading bird colony database to improve the ability to detect effects of sea level rise - 2020



Objective 3

Maintain and use species and habitat status assessment tools to evaluate the effectiveness of conservation actions.

- Research & Monitoring have funded projects that increase the ability to detect conservation effectiveness.
 - Integrating multiple freshwater mapping and monitoring tools - 2020
 - Create and manage an oyster mapping and monitoring tool - ongoing





FLORIDA'S WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

AQUATIC HABITAT RESILIENCY

IMPLEMENTATION GOAL

Aquatic Habitat Restoration Goal

Goal:

Improve aquatic ecosystem habitat quality and connectivity for the benefit of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Objective:

Improve physical habitats in aquatic systems by restoring and enhancing at least 3000 feet of stream habitat and 1000 acres of wetlands utilized by Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Priority habitats:

forested and non-forested wetlands, rivers and streams



Objective 1

Improve physical habitats in aquatic systems by restoring and enhancing at least 3000 feet of stream habitat and 1000 acres of wetlands utilized by Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

- Freshwater goal team funded multiple threats assessments
 - Inventory and Prioritization of Impaired Sites in the Yellow River Watershed in Florida - 2008
 - Peace River and Withlacoochee River Threats Assessments and Fish Assemblage Monitoring - 2014
 - Increasing Florida's Aquatic Connectivity by Informing Project Selection through Assessment and Prioritization of Barriers - 2015
- Now we're looking to address those threats



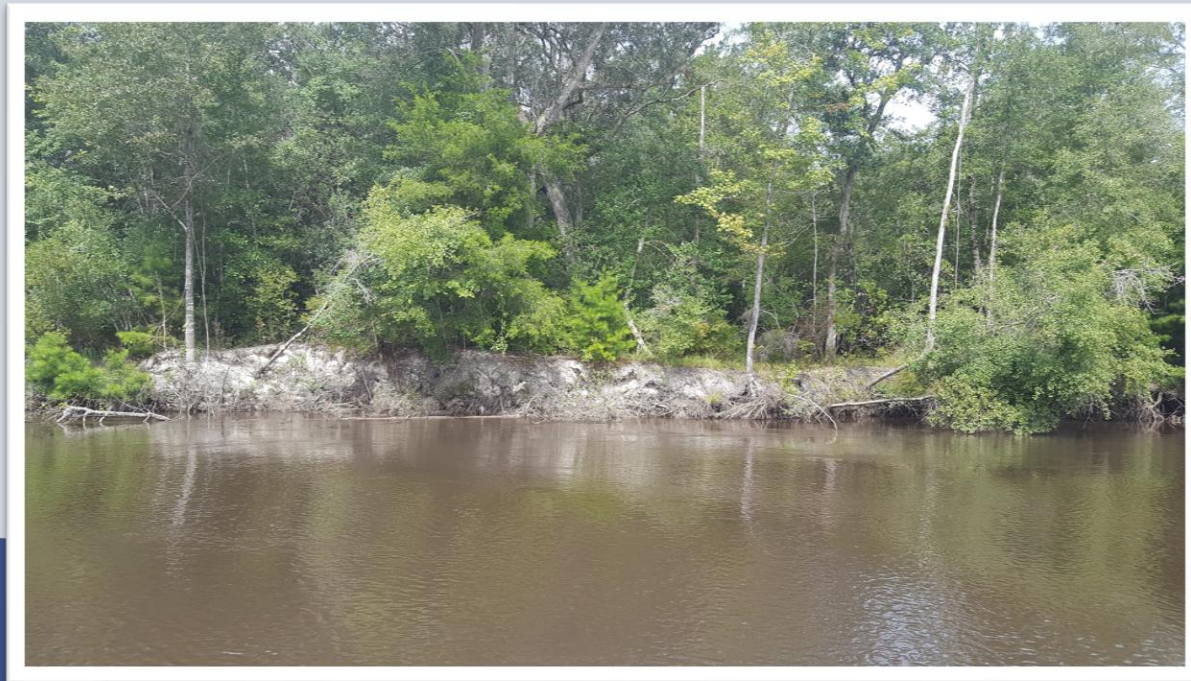
Objective 1: The Big Picture



- Stream modification for navigation, flood mitigation, and irrigation have altered Florida's streams and rivers
- These modifications have resulted in widespread erosion and channelization
- Many erosion control efforts occur with little concern for wildlife habitat or the streams original condition
- FWC, USFWS, county governments, the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) and private landowners have all been involved in efforts to restore streams to a natural state

Future Work

- Address identified threats with partners
- Current and upcoming partners
 - FWRI, AHRES, USFWS, DoD, private landowners, CPS, Okaloosa Co.



FLORIDA'S 2019 STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION GOALS



MyFWC.com/WildlifeLegacy

RESEARCH & MONITORING

Produce research and monitoring results that will improve management of Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats.

AMY CLIFTON
(386) 754-1667
Amy.Clifton@MyFWC.com

Improve marine and estuarine ecosystem habitat quality for the benefit of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

VICTORIA RUDDLE
(561) 882-5718
Victoria.Ruddle@MyFWC.com

MARINE & ESTUARINE ENHANCEMENT

TERRESTRIAL HABITAT INTEGRITY

Improve and maintain the quality of upland habitats for the benefit of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

ANNA DEYLE
(352) 620-7734
Anna.Deyle@MyFWC.com

Improve aquatic ecosystem habitat quality and connectivity for the benefit of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

THOMAS KUHN
(850) 767-3617
Thomas.Kuhn@MyFWC.com

AQUATIC HABITAT RESILIENCY

Applying for SWG Funds - FAQs

Can Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program fund projects associated with wildlife education or wildlife law enforcement activities?

- No, unless the law enforcement or education component is a minor or incidental activity – less than ten percent of total project costs – that is considered critical to the success of a project, directly contributes to the conservation of wildlife species and their habitats with the greatest conservation need, and is consistent with the development or implementation of Florida's Wildlife Action Plan.

Can Florida State Wildlife Grants be used for projects associated with wildlife recreation? No.

If I am awarded a grant, do I get all the money right away?

- No. Funding would begin on July 1, 2021. You will be reimbursed on an invoice schedule for the money spent on achieving the project objectives. For more information, see the [Program Guidelines](#).

What are the reporting requirements if I am awarded a grant?

- Typically, no more than three progress reports and one annual report will be required during each fiscal year. Grantees will be provided a copy of the Report Guidelines as guidance for the preparation of progress, annual and final reports.

What are the scoring criteria for submitted applications?

- Submitted applications are evaluated on a variety of criteria, including relevance to Florida's State Wildlife Action Plan, partner involvement, and sound methods and approaches.

