

Florida Panther Recovery Implementation Team Meeting Summary

**March 14, 2014
Teleconference**

The purpose of this teleconference was to finalize discussions about the Payment for Ecosystem Services Concept paper and the Alternative Options Matrix, and to prepare for the Public Panther Forum in May. We also needed to complete the purpose statement for the Vehicular Mortality Subteam (now called Transportation Subteam) and talk about a new Population Subteam.

Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) Concept Paper

Team members provided comments, and Kevin agreed to produce another draft by March 24th. The document will be finalized as a product of the Team as an internal working draft. Once it is a final draft, we will share with stakeholders for their feedback. We also would like to share it with the PFLCC Landowner Incentives Working Group at their upcoming workshop and eventually share it with the entire PFLCC for hopeful funding support. The final draft will be completed by March 28th.

As an aside, Larry mentioned that FL Attorney General Pam Bondi has been speaking with DOI Secretary Jewell about opportunities to improve panther recovery and landowner compatibility.

Farm Bill Livestock Indemnity Program

The 2014 Farm Bill makes LIP a permanent program and includes an additional provision to cover “attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law...” The program will be administered by the Farm Service Agency (USDA). Team members are interested to know how this will work in Florida for depredations by panthers. Larry mentioned that years ago there was discussion about establishing a fund to compensate landowners for calf loss but ranchers were not receptive because it is so difficult to prove that panthers are responsible for the mortality. We will continue to stay updated about this program as information becomes available.

Alternative Options Matrix

The Team agreed to share the final draft of this document with stakeholders. We will need to prepare for two “preliminary” stakeholder meetings, each with a small group of landowners and NGOs. Laurie agreed to create the list for the NGO meeting and Tom and Kevin will help Dawn provide the list of landowners for that meeting. Team representatives from FWS and FWC should be present at both meetings.

Transportation Subteam

Laurie prepared a statement on the purpose of the subteam. Team members suggested that we add a statement about the effects of habitat fragmentation and loss to the purpose statement and that we include someone from the Metropolitan Planning Organization as a potential member. Laurie will revise the purpose statement for finalization and approval by the team. She agreed to serve on the subteam as the liason for the Recovery Team. Subteam members will be able to decide whether those meetings will be by invitation only or open to the public.

Population Subteam

The Team agreed to appoint a Population Subteam to update the panther population numbers that have been used by the agencies and the media. The different numbers that have been reported are confusing to the public so we need to develop a subteam to come up with the most credible, well supported estimate based on current data. The numbers currently used (100-160 panthers) are from FWC's 2010 white paper. Robin and Kipp will draft the purpose statement for the subteam. Robin agreed to chair the subteam, which will be comprised of researchers and others who have collected panther population data.

Stakeholder Forum

The FL Panther Public Forum will be held on May 22 at Archbold Biological Station. The main purpose will be to discuss the PES concept for landowners in southwest Florida and the Alternative Option Matrix for landowners north of the Caloosahatchee River and receive feedback about those options for panther conservation. The agenda will need an update on the status of the panther to begin the meeting, why the recovery team was formed, the 8 priority action items and our accomplishments. We will also need to let stakeholders know why the recovery team meetings are by invitation only and how we will have public meetings on occasion. The preliminary meetings with the small group of landowners and NGOs will help us prepare for the Forum. We will need an announcement posted on our Recovery Team website before May 1st. Dawn will prepare a draft agenda.

Next meeting: Dates discussed didn't work for all Team members, so Dawn sent a Doodle Poll after the meeting. The next Team meeting will be a teleconference on May 6th from 9:00 AM-12:00PM. We also agreed to meet at Archbold on May 21st at 2:00 p.m. for final preparation of the forum.