

USFWS Alternative Options for FL Panther Recovery North of the Caloosahatchee River



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Objectives:

- Prepare for a breeding panther population north of the Caloosahatchee River through natural or assisted movement
- Make panther recovery compatible with private land ownership

Alternative

Program Details

Ecological/Social Considerations

Legal Considerations

| Alternative | Program Details | Ecological/Social Considerations | Legal Considerations |
|-------------------------|-----------------|--|--|
| <p>No Action</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The population of Florida panthers will naturally expand its range north of the Caloosahatchee River. • Education and outreach efforts will be increased to inform the public about living with panthers. • Intolerance for establishing and expanding populations may be high resulting in threats to panthers and landowner rejection of proactive habitat management. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All individuals within the expanded population will be classified as endangered. • ESA consultations and incidental take permits (sections 7 and 10) will be needed for projects that may affect the panther throughout its expanded range. |

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

- Voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance for habitat restoration on private lands.
- Emphasize projects that benefit federal trust resources.
- Minimum 10-year agreement.
- 50/50 cost-share.
(monetarily or in-kind)
- Year-round acceptance of proposals.





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Coastal Program and
Partners for Fish and
Wildlife Program
703/358-2201Division of Habitat and
Resource Conservation
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite
840
Arlington, Virginia 22203
703/358-2161 or
703/358-2183

The *Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program* was established in 1987 with a core group of biologists and a small budget for on-the-ground wetland restoration projects on private lands. This successful, results-oriented program has garnered support through the years and has grown into a larger and more diversified habitat restoration program assisting thousands of private landowners across the Nation. Click here for a [history](#) of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

Celebrating its [20th anniversary](#), on October 3, 2006 Congress unanimously approved and the President signed the [Partners for Fish and Wildlife Act](#) .

At the heart of the Service's mission are the conservation and management of the Federal Trust Species: migratory birds; threatened and endangered species; inter-jurisdictional fish; certain marine mammals; and species of international concern. It is estimated that 73% of our Nation's land is privately owned and that the majority of our fish and wildlife resources occur on those lands. Consequently, the conservation lands held by Federal and state agencies and other conservation groups cannot completely provide for fish and wildlife needs. Because the habitat needs of all Trust Species cannot be met solely on public lands, public funds are also expended on private lands to accomplish habitat improvements through cooperative conservation programs such as the Partners Program.



prairies, marshes, rivers and streams, or otherwise provide an important habitat requisite for a rare, declining or protected species.

Locally-based field biologists work one-on-one with private landowners and other partners to plan, implement, and monitor their projects. Partners Program field staff help landowners find other sources of funding and help them through the permitting process, as necessary. This level of personal attention and follow-through is a significant strength of the Program that has led to national recognition and wide support.

The Partners Program is guided by a national policy ([U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, section 640 fw1](#)) that identifies the following objectives:

- Promote and implement habitat improvement projects that benefit Federal Trust Species
- Provide conservation leadership and promote partnerships
- Encourage public understanding and participation
- Work with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to implement conservation programs

In addition, the Partners Program policy has established priority ranking factors to help guide project selection. These priorities are stepped down to the state and local levels as field staff collaborate with our stakeholders to further refine habitat priorities and geographic focus areas.

National priority ranking factors for the Partners Program are used to assign funding priority status to proposed projects that meet these conditions:

The Partners Program provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners and Tribes who are willing to work with us and other partners on a voluntary basis to help meet the habitat needs of our Federal Trust Species.

The Partners Program can assist with projects in all habitat types which conserve or restore native vegetation, hydrology, and soils associated with imperiled ecosystems such as longleaf pine, bottomland hardwoods, tropical forests, native



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Experimental Population

- Re-establish a threatened or endangered species in areas of its former range for recovery.
- Nonessential Experimental Populations (NEP) do not have full protection of the ESA.
- Alleviates the “fear” of restrictions and regulations that the presence of listed species could bring.



Experimental Population



- NEP panther population would be considered as Threatened rather than Endangered under the ESA.
- Protective regulations to provide for their conservation.
- For section 7, panthers would be treated as *proposed* to be listed, so Federal agencies would not be required to consult.

Experimental Population

- Translocate panthers to establish an experimental population.
- The experimental population must be “wholly separate geographically” from the existing populations of the same species.





U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Safe Harbor Agreements for Private Landowners

What Is a Safe Harbor Agreement?

A Safe Harbor Agreement (SHA) is a voluntary agreement involving private or other non-Federal property owners whose actions contribute to the recovery of species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The agreement is between cooperating non-Federal property owners and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which is responsible for most listed marine and anadromous fish species.

In exchange for actions that contribute to the recovery of listed species on non-Federal lands, participating property owners receive formal assurances from the FWS that if they fulfill the conditions of the SHA, the FWS will not require any additional or different management activities by the participants without their consent. In addition, at the end of the agreement period, participants



Alissa Shull/USFWS

Texas cattle rancher Bob Long and Tim Schumann of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service celebrate the success of a Safe Harbor Agreement to help the endangered Houston toad. Looking on are Robert Long, Jr., and Adam Zerrenner of the Ecological Services Program of the Service. They are standing in front of a wetland that the Partners Program helped to create as habitat for the toad on the Long property.



Safe Harbor Agreement

- Provides assurances that USFWS will not impose additional restrictions.
- Landowner is permitted for incidental take coverage for routine and ongoing activities on the property.
- Allows landowner to return the enrolled property back to pre-agreement conditions (baseline) at the end of the agreement period.



Safe Harbor Agreement

To provide a net conservation benefit, the beneficial activities must outweigh the potential impacts from routine and ongoing activities and the potential return to baseline conditions.



