

# Florida Panther Recovery Implementation Team Transportation SubTeam Report January 2017

**Next Meeting** is January 26, 2017 in Bartow from 10:00 to 3:00.

Major tasks and topics are

1. finalizing the Hot Spots Report,
2. continuing to refine Cost Surface mapping north of the Caloosahatchee River,
3. identifying alternative funding sources, and
4. securing money for improvements to RADS on US41 at Turner River.

## **Southwest Florida Hot Spots Report:**

The SubTeam agreed to wait until after December 31 to update the maps and accompanying chart. This will result in a full year of 2016 data and January 1 provides a logical trigger for future updates.

The SubTeam is currently reviewing the updated data which is presented in Google Earth format. After the SubTeam approves, the accompanying chart and the easy-to-read maps will be revised. One road segment did change. Golden Gate Blvd from Wilson Blvd to Everglades Blvd elevated from Green (3-5 deaths) to Orange (6-8 deaths). Three of the four miles of this segment are outside the Panther Focus Area. Because Golden Gate Blvd is in platted North Golden Gate Estates, there is little to do beyond driver education and possibly signs. Over time, buildout will result in panther use becoming rarer and rarer.

The final SubTeam Hot Spots report will include a list of potential local, state, and federal recipients along with a draft FWS letter to these recipients. Elizabeth and Nancy, possibly other SubTeam members, will be available to meet with recipients of the report, if requested.

## **Alligator Alley Fencing:**

The Miller Canal and FakaUnion Canal bridge ledges are complete.

Here is Brent Setchell/FDOT's January 9 update:

*"For the Alley fencing project, over 1 mile is complete with much more in various stages of completion. FDOT set its wildlife camera at the Miller Canal to hopefully capture usage of the enhanced crossing. This will help support the need for a future crossing further west on the Alley. As far as the feasibility report goes, we are still awaiting comments from USFWS which were due in December.*

*"That's great the County is exploring a mitigation bank north of the study area. Another concern is the lack of a wildlife corridor either heading north or east."*

The feasibility study referenced in Brent's email was commissioned by FDOT to explore opportunities for crossings in the stretch from Miller Canal west. As Brent noted, regional habitat connectivity is a challenge north of Alligator Alley.