



U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Endangered Species Act Review of the National Flood Insurance Program in the Florida Keys

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 9, 2006

Service Develops New Strategy to Protect Imperiled Species in the Florida Keys

Contacts: Allen Webb, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 772-562-3909

On August 8, 2006, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) finalized a new review of impacts from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program on imperiled species in the Florida Keys. The review also outlines an improved strategy for protecting threatened and endangered species and the habitats they need. The Service completed the new review with the best available science in fulfillment of a Court Order issued in September 2005. The Court Order also prohibited FEMA from issuing flood insurance policies in certain areas within the Florida Keys until the review was completed and accepted.

This new review benefited from an in depth review of future habitat impacts that was guided by real-world projections of development in the Florida Keys. The new information allowed the evaluation to focus on areas where impacts were most likely to occur and develop a conservation strategy for addressing them in full. In addition, the review relied on the better understanding we have today about the condition of many species, and there are some success stories to report. For example, the Key deer population, once in dire condition, has significantly improved and benefited from conservation efforts at the local, State, and Federal levels.

Paul Souza, Acting Field Supervisor for the Service's South Florida Ecological Services Office, echoed these sentiments: "We were able to use up-to-date information to more precisely estimate the future impacts from development on threatened and endangered species. This will allow us to work closely with our partners in Monroe County to develop targeted conservation measures that protect imperiled species and build upon recent conservation successes."

To improve imperiled species protection and meet the Court's mandate, the Service clearly defined FEMA's oversight role in the new review and outlined a more comprehensive strategy of evaluating the impacts of development. The Service plans to meet with FEMA and local government officials in October to implement this process. The Court will review the revised strategy and determine whether to lift the prohibition on flood insurance.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also

oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

You can find out more information on the species at:

<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/vbpdfs/species/>

For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit our home page at:

<http://southeast.fws.gov/> or <http://www.fws.gov/>

NOTE: You can view our releases or subscribe to receive them – via e-mail – at the Service's Southeast Regional home page at: <http://southeast.fws.gov>

Our national home page is at: <http://news.fws.gov/newsreleases/>