

Florida Panther



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Florida Panther Recovery Implementation Team

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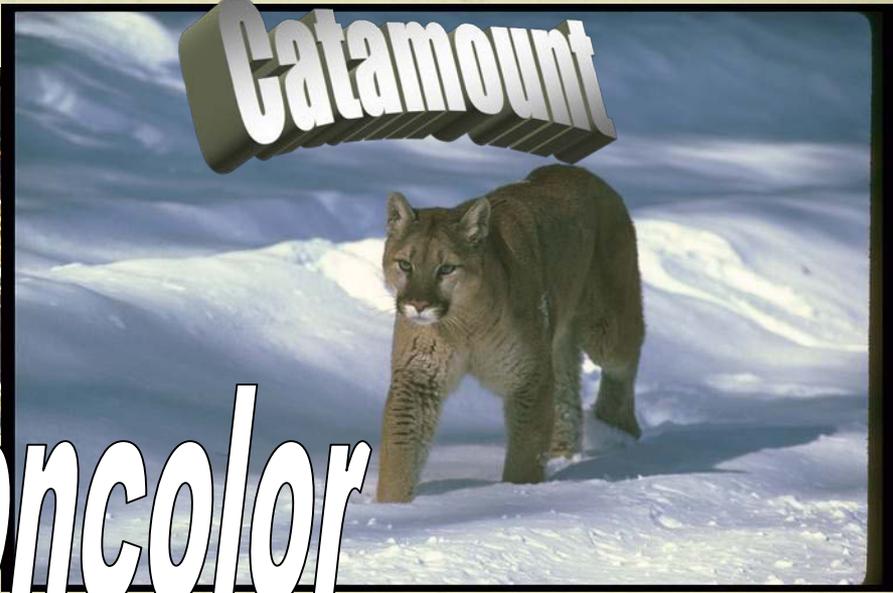
Mountain Lion



Panther

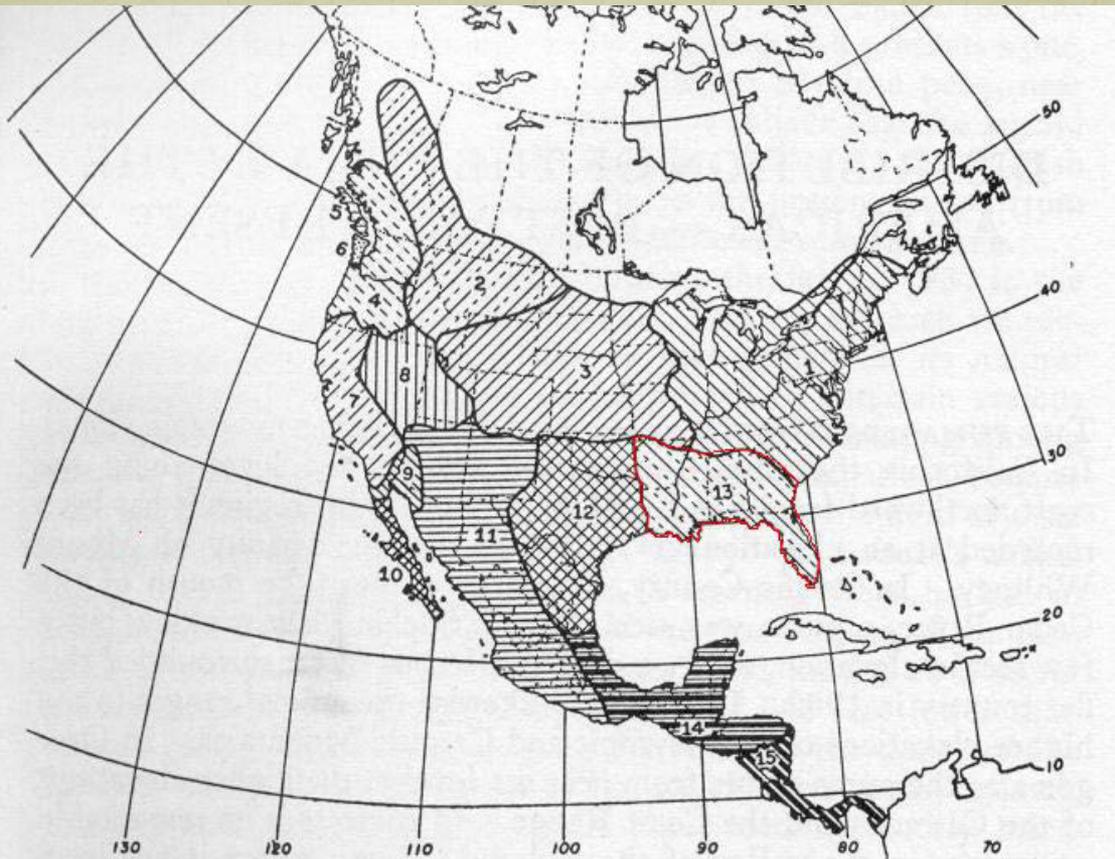
Puma

Cougar



Catamount

Puma concolor

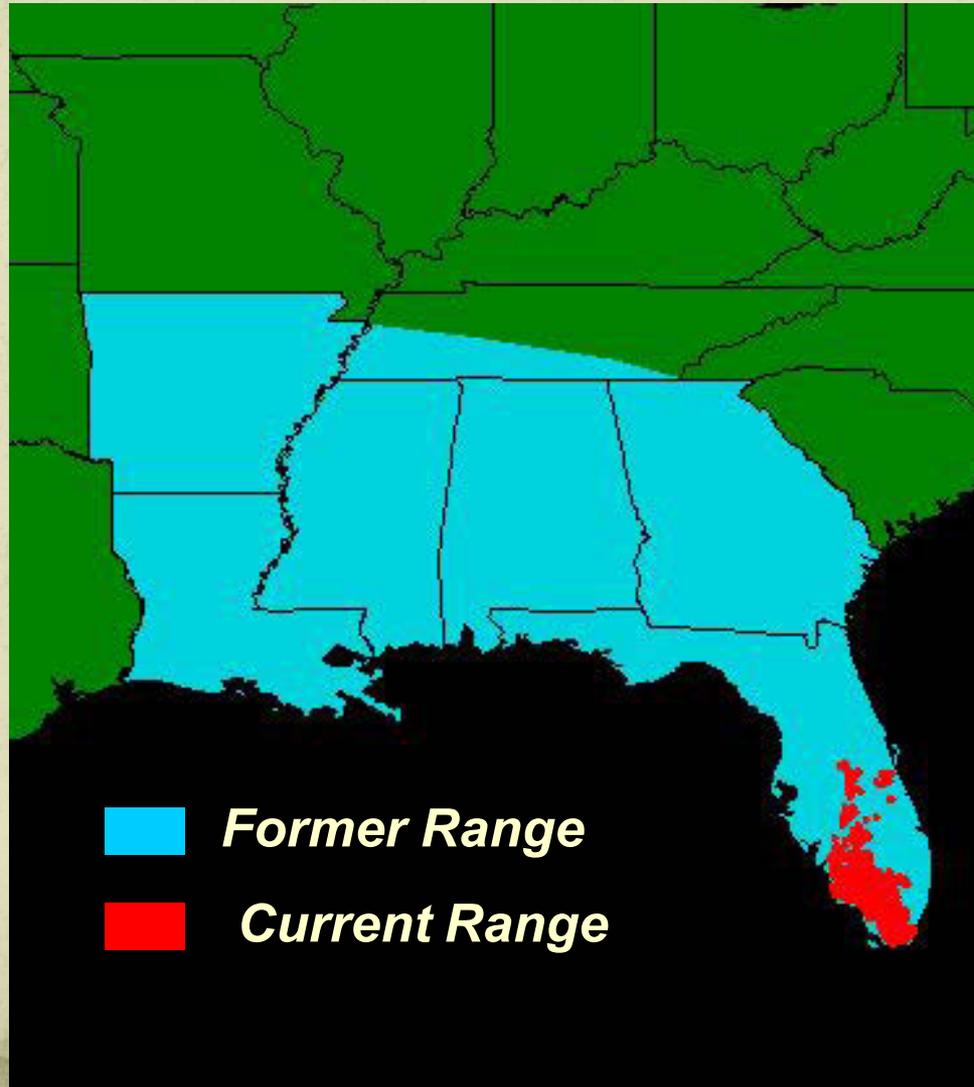


Map from Young and Goldman 1946 depicting *Puma* distribution in North and Central America

Figure 1. Distribution of subspecies of *Felis concolor* in North and Middle America

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Felis concolor couguar</i> | 9. <i>F. c. browni</i> |
| 2. <i>F. c. missoulensis</i> | 10. <i>F. c. improcera</i> |
| 3. <i>F. c. hipplestes</i> | 11. <i>F. c. azteca</i> |
| 4. <i>F. c. oregonensis</i> | 12. <i>F. c. stanleyana</i> |
| 5. <i>F. c. vancouverensis</i> | 13. <i>F. c. coryi</i> |
| 6. <i>F. c. olympus</i> | 14. <i>F. c. mayensis</i> |
| 7. <i>F. c. californica</i> | 15. <i>F. c. costaricensis</i> |
| 8. <i>F. c. kaibabensis</i> | |

Former and Current Range of Florida Panthers *Puma concolor coryi* In the Southeastern United States

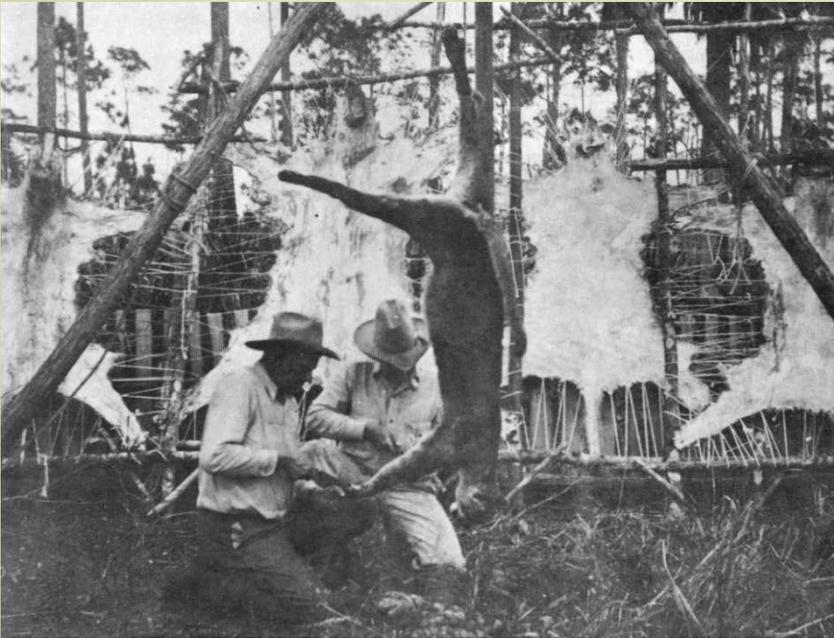


Panther Basics- Biology



- Adults 100-160 lbs
- Carnivores
- Range up to 200 sq. mi.
- Can live over 10 years
- Breed at age 2
- Have litters of 1-4 kittens

- Prior to 1950, Florida panthers were unprotected
- Florida first protected panthers in 1950 when the Commission listed them as a game species
- In 1958, the Commission fully protected the Florida panther from take



Panther Basics-

Legal Protections and public Support

- Protected under Florida law in 1958
- Listed as endangered by USFWS in 1967 and included in Endangered Species Act, 1973
- The official state animal
- 5th most popular license plate over 57,000

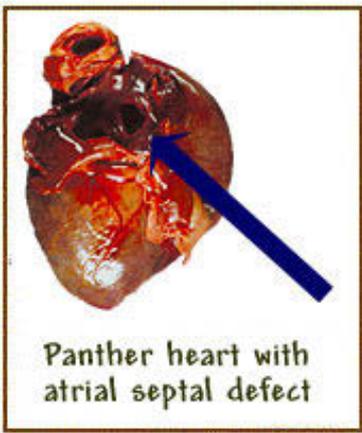


FWC Florida Panther Research

- 1981: Research commences
- 1980s-90s: Documentation of natural history
- 1990-94: Identification of inbreeding depression
- 1995: Genetic restoration
- 1995-2014: Population increase
- Moving forward: continuation of recovery



Panthers captured from 1981 to 1995 appeared to be suffering from inbreeding

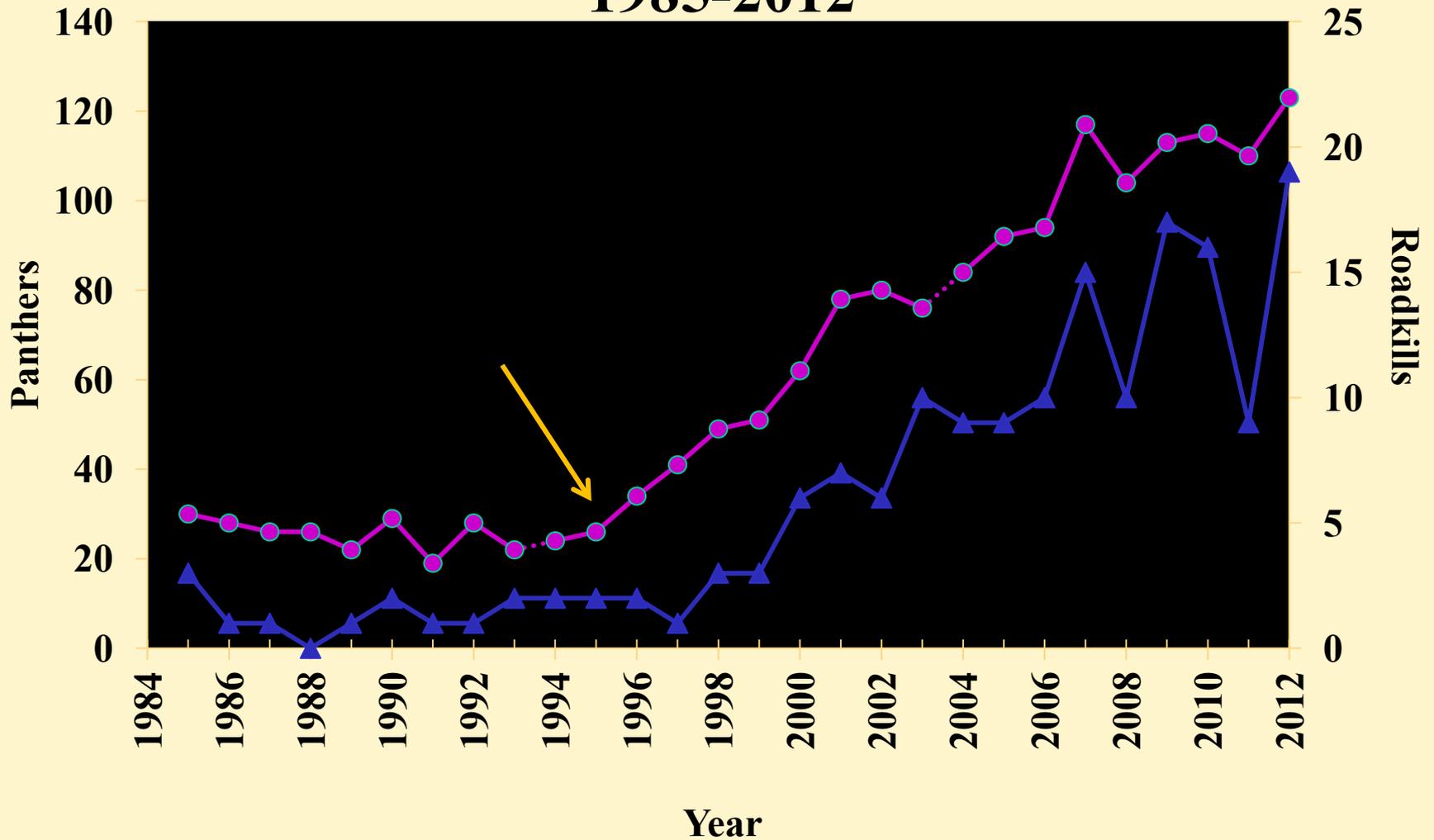


Genetic Restoration Plan of 1995

- Released 8 pumas from Texas into south Florida
- Mimicked natural genetic mixing
- Underwent Environmental Assessment with extensive public comment and review
- Federal legal opinion that panthers are still fully protected under the Endangered Species Act
- Has been very successful in restoring genetic vigor to population
- Genetic health is a focus area for the new Recovery Team



Panther Minimum Count and Roadkills 1985-2012



Population Trend

- Three different approaches suggest a population increase since genetic restoration in 1995
- Demographic modeling suggests a *potential* population growth of 4%
- There is currently no published statistically valid sound population estimate.



Primary Elements of Panther Conservation

- Reduce human-caused deaths
- Monitor and improve panther health, including genetic health
- Maintain and manage habitat
- Address human-panther conflicts
- Monitor population to assess progress towards recovery

Panther Conservation Partnerships

- FWC
- Big Cypress National Preserve
- Everglades National Park
- USFWS Vero Beach Field Office
- Panther National Wildlife Refuge
- State agencies
- Non-Governmental organizations
- Private land owners



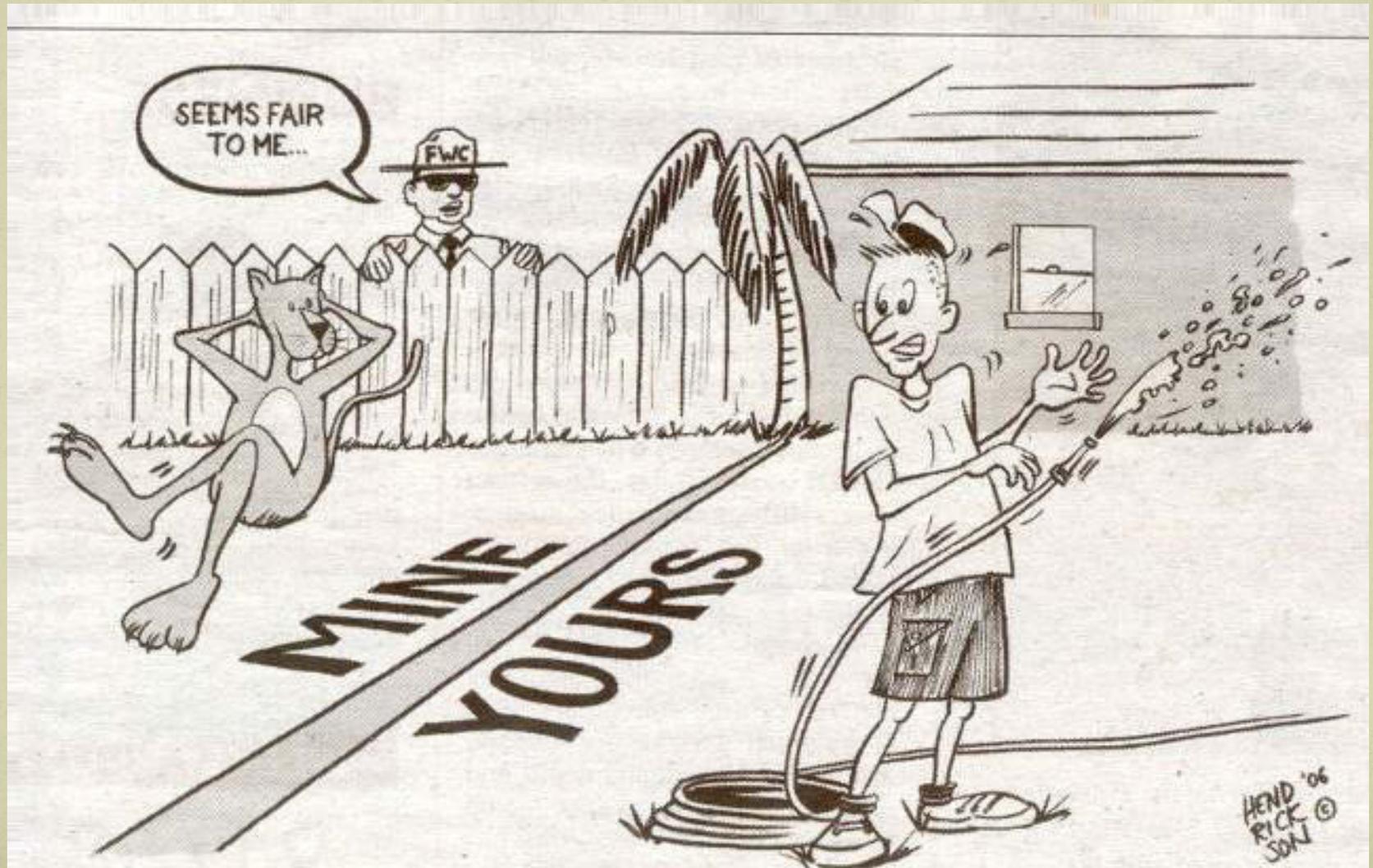
USFWS Recovery Plan





**Well, a funny thing happened
on the road to recovery...**

As panther numbers increased, so did social acceptance issues





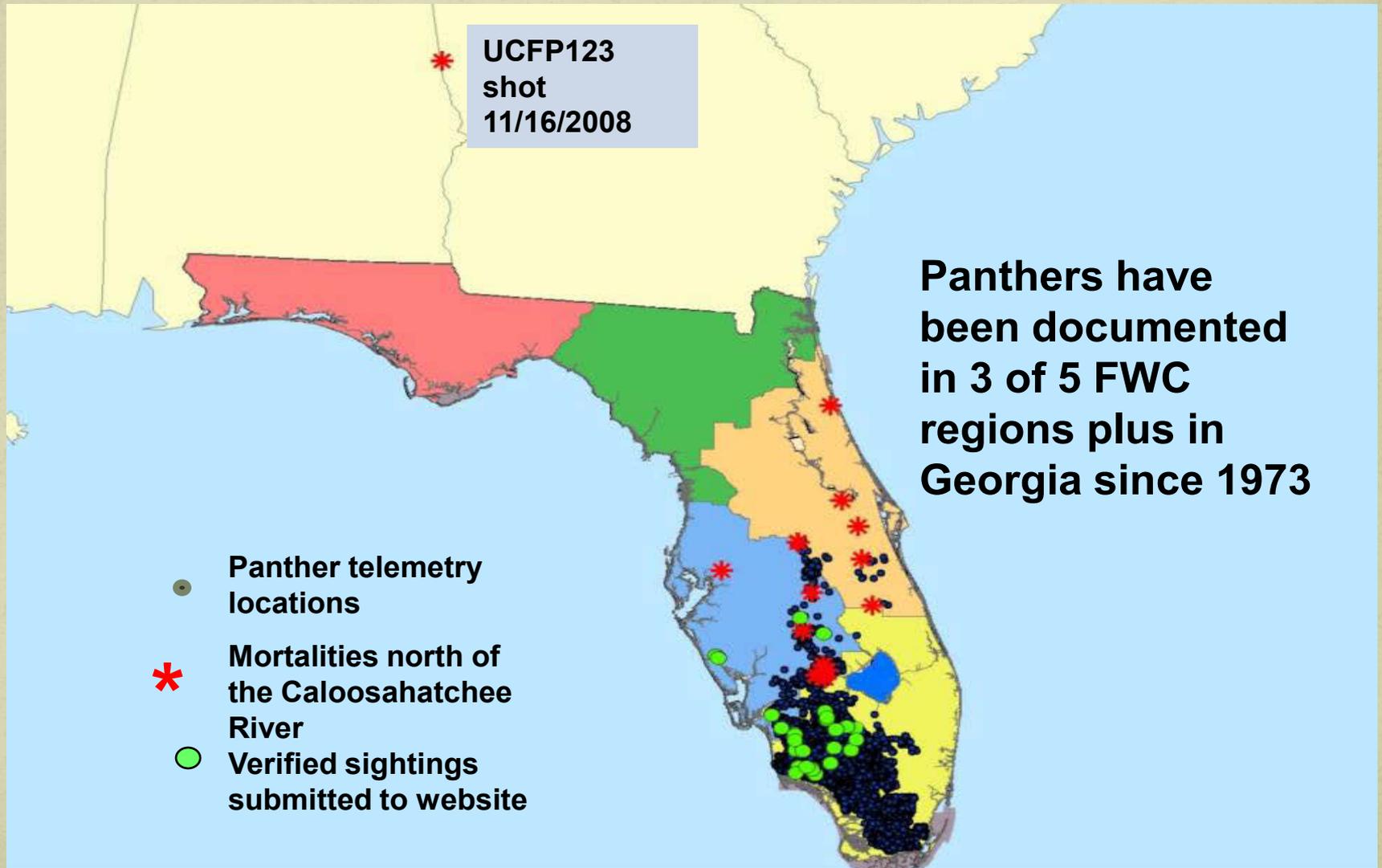
More people and more panthers will lead to more opportunities for human/panther interactions.

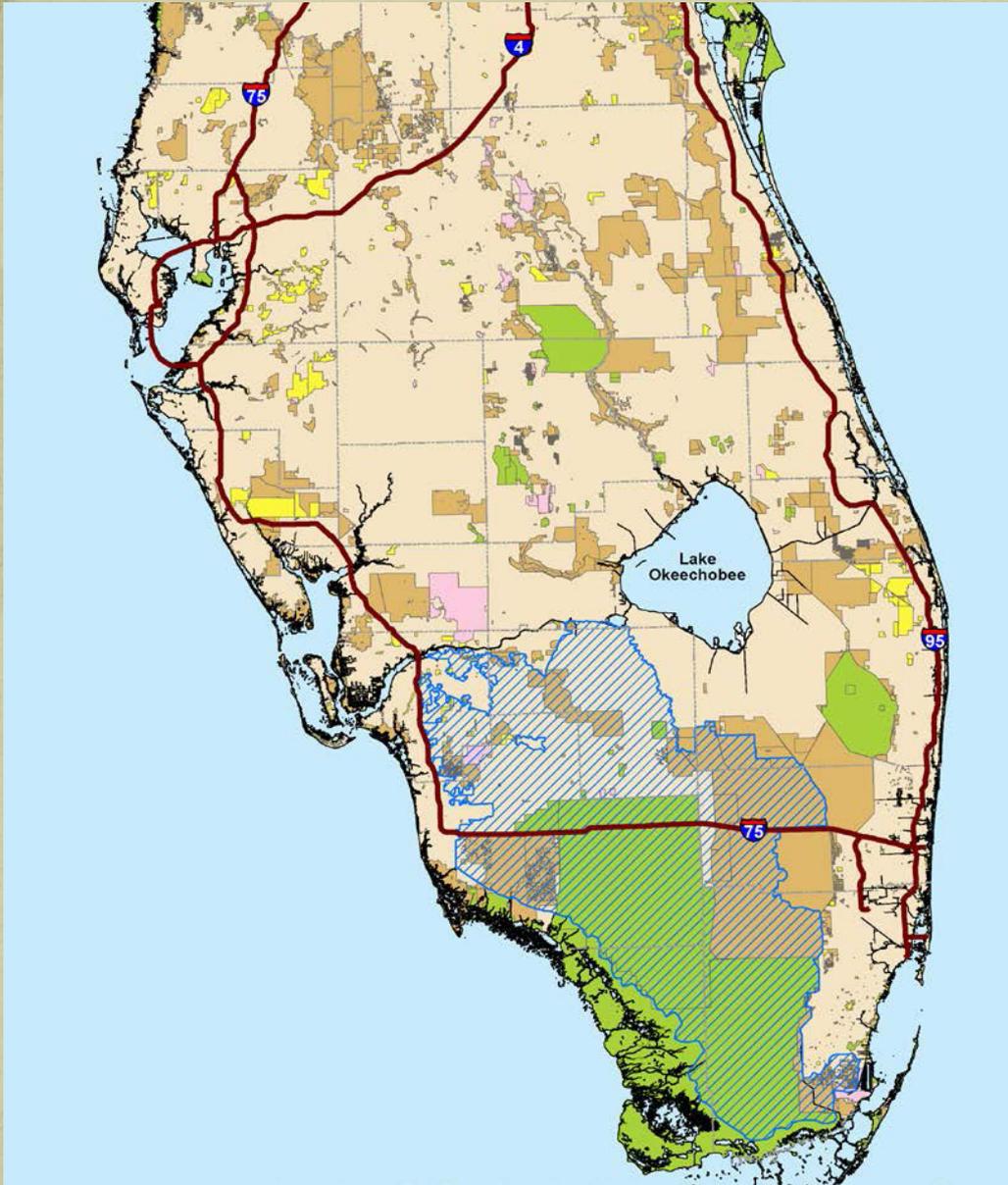
Some Emerging Social Acceptance Issues



- **Depredations on pets, hobby livestock**
- **Depredations on commercial cow/calf ranching operations**
- **Will panther presence impact my land use plans?**
- **Fear of panther attack**

Northward Range Expansion





Fewer and more isolated conservation lands south of I-4 to Lake Okeechobee

- State
- Federal
- County
- Private
- Panther breeding range

Panther conservation score card

Successes

- ✓ Genetic restoration
- ✓ Improved panther health
- ✓ Population increase
- ✓ Road underpasses
- ✓ Increased public awareness
- ✓ Increased scientific knowledge
- ✓ Land purchase & conservation banks

Challenges

- ? Panthers in towns and neighborhoods
- ? Depredations
- ? Decreasing habitat in S. FL
- ? Carrying capacity concerns
- ? Unrealistic population goals
- ? Population estimate
- ? Range expansion

