

Florida Department of Transportation Wildlife Crossing Guidelines

These guidelines have been developed for use by the Florida Department of Transportation Districts to determine the **appropriateness** of including wildlife crossings (upland or wetland), other structures modified for wildlife use, such as bridges with shelves, and/or exclusionary devices (fencing, walls, temporary barriers, etc.) on proposed District projects or on existing roadways as retrofits. These guidelines also establish **criteria** that should be considered during design of wildlife crossings, other structures such as bridges with shelves, and/or exclusionary devices. These guidelines should be utilized as early as possible in the project planning process and prior to project design.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have regulatory authority and are the recognized experts for wildlife species within the State of Florida and nationally. These guidelines have been developed in coordination with the FWC and USFWS.

The Districts should only determine if a wildlife crossing, other structures such as bridges with shelves, and/or exclusionary device is appropriate based on the coordination and recommendation of the FWC and/or USFWS/NMFS. The Districts will also consider recommendations from other interested stakeholders, e.g. conservation organizations, biologists, land management agencies, or academics. NOTE: The FDOT PD&E phase is the best opportunity for stakeholders to get involved in the project planning process.

- **For a proposed project:** Wildlife crossings, other structures such as bridges with shelves, and/or exclusionary devices should be considered when the project is a planned new roadway or capacity improvement that involves the addition of travel lanes, new roadways, improvement of current lands, complete road rebuild, and/or bridge replacement.
- **For a requested retrofit project:** Districts should require entities requesting a wildlife crossing, other structures such as bridges with shelves, and/or exclusionary devices to provide documentation or studies to substantiate their requests. Districts should also pursue funding partnerships with requesting entities.
- Wildlife crossings, other structures such as bridges with shelves, and/or exclusionary devices will also be considered when the project involves locations of critical conservation need where non-District funding can be obtained.

In cases where data does not exist to adequately address the guidelines, it may be necessary to perform studies or additional research to obtain the data. The FWC and/or USFWS should have an active role in the review and development of all relevant studies; and in the review and evaluation of the results.

The following guidelines should be utilized in determining if a wildlife crossing, other structure such as bridges, and/or exclusionary device is appropriate. The list below is not conclusive and not every guideline below needs to be met to deem a wildlife crossing is appropriate.

- The District has been presented with a science-based need for a wildlife crossing
- There are listed species documented within the project area and the project area has been shown to be utilized by these species.
- There are documented road kills of wildlife within the project area.
- The project is within the documented range of the Florida panther and/or Florida black bear.
- The project crosses a documented landscape level habitat linkage, ecological greenway, or Florida Forever project area.
- The project is within a known area of wildlife/vehicle strikes that create a potential motorist hazard.
- Public conservation lands or lands under perpetual conservation or agricultural easement are present (or are planned to be present at the time of design) in sufficient amounts, on both sides of the road (adjoining and contiguous) where the crossing will be located in order to ensure that future land use is compatible with wildlife needs or ecosystem viability.

Data collected or provided to address the above guidelines should serve as the basis of decision for determining whether or not a wildlife crossing, other structures such as bridges with shelves, and/or exclusionary devices are appropriate.

In addition, this data should also serve as a basis in the selection of a crossing design. Alternative measures and technology should be considered where appropriate.

The specific design (type, size, and location) of the crossing, other structure such as bridge with shelves, and/or exclusionary device, should be determined by the District through coordination with the FWC and/or USFWS. The Districts will also consider recommendations from other interested stakeholders.

Determination of a crossing design should include, but not be limited to:

- The crossing cannot compromise any state or federal safety criteria.
- The crossing and fencing cannot restrict legal access to adjacent property owners.
- The crossing cannot negatively impact adjacent properties (e.g., provide access for people and/or wildlife to private properties where none presently exist).
- The crossing cannot negatively impact existing drainage patterns or flood off-site properties.
- The crossing utilizes the most cost-efficient and effective design that meets the needs identified by FWC and/or USFWS.

- Upland and wetland habitat impacts should be avoided and minimized to the extent practicable by proper design and during construction.