

**From:** [Larry Williams](#)  
**To:** [Arnold, Jack](#)  
**Cc:** [Gonzalez, Rafael](#); [Donald Progulske](#); [Leopoldo Miranda](#); [Mike Oetker](#)  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] Comments on the LOWRP Draft BO (UNCLASSIFIED)  
**Date:** Sunday, February 17, 2019 8:22:21 AM

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Will do! Thanks Jack

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 16, 2019, at 9:18 PM, Arnold, Jack <[jack\\_arnold@fws.gov](mailto:jack_arnold@fws.gov)> wrote:

Thanks Larry. I'm circling back on emails from this past week to catch up/close the loop. Understood. ECHCP remains our priority. As Steve completes his portion of the EC BO, he should then reengage on LOWRP. I mentioned this to Leo earlier this past week - just for his awareness. I've cc'ed him and Mike here in case they get a call from the Corps or HQ at some point.

Please keep Rafa and me posted on this.

Thanks,

Jack Arnold  
Acting Assistant Regional Director - Ecological Services  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1875 Century Blvd.  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
404-679-7311 office  
404-679-7081 fax  
703-789-5620 cell

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On Mon, Feb 11, 2019 at 8:31 AM Williams, Larry <[larry\\_williams@fws.gov](mailto:larry_williams@fws.gov)> wrote:

Jack and Rafael,  
I wanted to let you know making the East Collier HCP (ECHCP) our highest priority will cause some other things to fall behind. In the example below, Steve Schubert is writing the caracara section of the BO for the East Collier HCP. Steve is also leading the BO for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project (LOWRP). Because Steve is making the ECHCP the priority the LOWRP BO will fall behind. LOWRP is a landscape-level project that is a priority for the Corps (<https://www.saj.usace.army.mil/LOWRP/>), and if we miss a deadline with it General Holland and/or the ASA of Army might engage.

We will always let you know in advance if we expect to miss a deadline. For now we just wanted to let you know other projects are being impacted by ECHCP.

Larry

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Progulske, Donald** <[donald\\_progulske@fws.gov](mailto:donald_progulske@fws.gov)>  
Date: Mon, Feb 11, 2019 at 8:15 AM  
Subject: Fwd: [EXTERNAL] Comments on the LOWRP Draft BO (UNCLASSIFIED)  
To: Larry Williams <[larry\\_williams@fws.gov](mailto:larry_williams@fws.gov)>  
Cc: Roxanna Hinzman <[roxanna\\_hinzman@fws.gov](mailto:roxanna_hinzman@fws.gov)>

Larry - just for situational awareness - delays due to ECHCP priority are starting. Thanks.

Bob

-----  
Bob Progulske  
Everglades Program Supervisor  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1339 20th Street  
Vero Beach, FL 32960

Office: 772-469-4299  
Cell: 772-559-7167  
Fax: 772-562-4288  
email: [donald\\_progulske@fws.gov](mailto:donald_progulske@fws.gov)  
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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Schubert, Steve** <[steve\\_schubert@fws.gov](mailto:steve_schubert@fws.gov)>  
Date: Mon, Feb 11, 2019 at 8:10 AM  
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Comments on the LOWRP Draft BO (UNCLASSIFIED)  
To: Ehlinger, Gretchen S CIV USARMY CESAJ (US)  
(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) >  
Cc: Timothy Breen <[timothy\\_breen@fws.gov](mailto:timothy_breen@fws.gov)>, Bob Progulske <[donald\\_progulske@fws.gov](mailto:donald_progulske@fws.gov)>

Gretchen,

Thanks for the comments. As I mentioned, I won't be able to work on LOWRP until this other assignment is finished. However, I'm hoping Tim can address the comments in a more timely manner. He's out today - there's a flu going around - but I will talk with him when he gets back in the office to see what we can do.

thanks

Steve

On Fri, Feb 8, 2019 at 10:40 AM Ehlinger, Gretchen S CIV USARMY CESAJ (US) <(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)> wrote:

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Steve,

I have compiled our comments on the LOWRP Draft Biological Opinion. There are several we would like to discuss with you and those are located on the first tab of the spreadsheet. Please review our comments and let me know when you would be available to discuss the ones we have highlighted.

Thanks, Gretchen

Gretchen Ehlinger, Ph.D.  
Senior Biologist  
Planning and Policy Division  
Jacksonville District  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
701 San Marco Blvd.  
Jacksonville, FL 32207

(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)

904-232-1682 Office  
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904-232-3442 Fax

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

--

Steve Schubert  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
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Office: 772-469-4249  
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--

Larry Williams  
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**From:** [Arnold, Jack](#)  
**To:** [Leopoldo Miranda](#); [Mike Oetker](#)  
**Cc:** [Chris Guy](#); [Rob Tawes](#); [Larry Williams](#); [Roxanna Hinzman](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: East Collier IM for RD  
**Date:** Sunday, March 24, 2019 5:55:27 PM  
**Attachments:** [20190322 DRAFT IM SFESO to RO re ECMSHCP BO with RO Edits Clean.docx](#)

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Leo, Mike - I'm forwarding the IM I mentioned to you on Friday in hopes you may have time to review it prior to the briefing we have set up for 10am tomorrow. We'll summarize it during the briefing.

Jack Arnold  
Acting Assistant Regional Director - Ecological Services  
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----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Tawes, Robert** <[robert\\_tawes@fws.gov](mailto:robert_tawes@fws.gov)>  
**Date:** Sun, Mar 24, 2019 at 3:41 PM  
**Subject:** Re: East Collier IM for RD  
**To:** Guy, Chris <[chris\\_guy@fws.gov](mailto:chris_guy@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Arnold, Jack <[jack\\_arnold@fws.gov](mailto:jack_arnold@fws.gov)>, Dell, David <[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)>

Everyone sorry for my late arrival to this. I have cleaned up the IM, accepting Jack's edits and correcting some typos. Here is a clean version for transmittal. Rob

On Sat, Mar 23, 2019 at 8:50 AM Guy, Chris <[chris\\_guy@fws.gov](mailto:chris_guy@fws.gov)> wrote:

This reflects what we discussed yesterday afternoon. I agree am ok with it going forward.  
Christopher P. Guy

Acting Deputy Assistant Regional Director - Ecological Services  
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Chesapeake Bay Field Office e-newsletter at <http://chesapeakebay.fws.gov>

On Fri, Mar 22, 2019 at 6:02 PM Arnold, Jack <[jack\\_arnold@fws.gov](mailto:jack_arnold@fws.gov)> wrote:

Rob, Chis, David - see my recommended edits in track changes. [REDACTED]

Please let me know ASAP Saturday - I'd like to email this to him on Saturday so he can review prior to our briefing Monday.

Thanks,

Jack Arnold  
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On Fri, Mar 22, 2019 at 3:54 PM Dell, David <[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)> wrote:

Per Chris's request, attached is a Word download of the IM

David Dell  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
Southeast Region  
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator  
404/679-7313  
[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)

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--

Rob W. Tawes  
Chief, Division of Environmental Review

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[www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)

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**DRAFT INFORMATION MEMORANDUM**

DATE: March 22, 2019

FROM: Roxanna Hinzman, Field Supervisor, Ecological Services, South Florida FO

THROUGH: Rob Tawes, Chief, Division of Environmental Review, Atlanta RO

SUBJECT: Draft Biological Opinion for the Eastern Collier Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (ECMSHCP)

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP  
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**BACKGROUND**

The Plan Area for the ECMSHCP is a 170,000-acre corner of mostly rural northeast Collier County, Florida. The East Collier Property Owners (ECPO; a group of 11 landowners) have prepared a private programmatic HCP that proposes commercial/residential development (and some mining activity) on 45,000 acres of this area. They seek authorization for take of Florida panthers and seven other listed species that would occur incidental to this development over the next 50 years. They seek Endangered Species Act (ESA) regulatory assurances for another 11 non-listed species (collectively, the Covered Species).

The ECPO members own about 150,000 acres of the Plan Area. They identify another 20,000 acres they do not own as lands eligible for inclusion, subject to the same 45,000-acre development cap and conservation commitments of the HCP. These totals include the previously permitted development (about 5,000 acres) and mitigation lands (about 6,800 acres) associated with the Town of Ave Maria. Excluding Ave Maria, the primary commitment of the HCP is to forgo development on about 90,000 acres of the Plan Area through easements that would perpetuate current uses on these “Preservation” lands, which include some agricultural uses.

Native wetland and upland habitats cover about 73,000 acres of the Plan Area, of which about 60,000 acres are within the designated Preservation lands. About a quarter of the Preservation lands are in active agricultural uses. ECPO does not propose specific objectives for enhancing the conservation value of the Preservation lands for the Covered Species, which are distributed throughout the Plan Area. However, as ECPO members propose development activities covered by the HCP, they would be required to implement species-specific conservation measures and wetlands mitigation, commensurate with the effects of a project, that would result in habitat enhancement and restoration within the Preservation lands. Some parcels slated for Preservation are isolated, but most are contiguous. Precluding further land use changes on about 60 percent of the ECPO lands is intended to maintain the functionality of existing panther habitat and provide critical landscape linkages for regional wildlife movement, especially panthers. Expanding the panther population north of the Caloosahatchee River, which is north of the Plan Area, is a key recovery objective and will improve the probability of maintaining a viable population of panthers in the future. Currently the only viable population of panthers is south of the

Caloosahatchee River. While there are panthers north of the river, they are primarily dispersing males from the core breeding population in South Florida. Two adult females, one with kittens, were documented north of the River in 2017, but to date we do not have confirmation of successful recruitment from these females.

The Plan Area lies entirely within the boundaries of Collier County’s “Rural Land Stewardship Area” (RLSA), which is zoned for development at densities less than 1 residential unit per 5 acres. Higher-density development may occur when accompanied by preservation of rural land uses on other lands within the RLSA. Jurisdictional wetlands cover about 40 percent of Plan Area. Proposed development, including the necessary transportation and utilities infrastructure, on many small projects and almost all large projects require permits from the Corps under section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Therefore, most future development in the Plan Area would occur with a Federal nexus and associated compliance with ESA section 7(a)(2). The HCP is ECPO’s strategy for both higher-density development under the RLSA framework and for streamlined ESA compliance on section 404 applications.

## DISCUSSION

### Key Conservation and ESA Legal Considerations

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**From:** [Dell, David](#)  
**To:** [Charles Kelso](#); [Constance Cassler](#); [Jerry Ziewitz](#); [Mcdonald, Kenneth](#); [Larry Williams](#); [Roxanna Hinzman](#); [Timothy Binzen](#); [Mott, Vicki](#); [Erin Myers](#); [Shindle, David](#); [Angela Romito](#); [Catherine Phillips](#); [Kevin Palmer](#); [Kristen Peters](#); [Nikki Price](#); [Robert Tawes](#)  
**Subject:** East Collier HCP: Friday In-Service Update Agenda  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 26, 2019 1:41:05 PM

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Everyone: Please see the draft agenda at [\(b\)\(5\)CIP \(b\)\(5\)CIP \(b\)\(5\)CIP \(b\)\(5\)CIP \(b\)\(5\)CIP \(b\)\(5\)CIP \(b\)\(5\)CIP \(b\)\(5\)CIP \(b\)\(5\)CIP](#)

Additions or suggestions are welcome.

David Dell  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
Southeast Region  
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator  
404/679-7313  
[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)

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June 28, 2019

East Collier HCP

## **In-Service Update**

Present:

Topics --

- Status of Tribal consultation
  - Seminoles
    - According to the tribe's June 21 e-mail to Kevin, they expect to let him know soon
  - Miccosukee
    - Response letter mailed June 25.
  
- Panthers and Traffic: BO Resolution
  - Current pause ends July 5th.
  - How quickly can we move?
  - What can be done while we wait?

Status of BO

- Status?
- 
- Action area -- anything new, updates?
- Status of EIS and comment responses:
  - EIS and Appendices cleaned up, needs input, about 3 pages over
  - Need to estimate Service and Applicant costs to prepare final EIS
  - Status of revisions this past week? Where is the current draft?
- SO 3355 Schedule
  - Information Memorandum pertaining to SO 3355 pause status transmitted to Director's Office 6/5/19. Pause implemented in Department database 6/6/19.
  - Need to start a revised IM to accommodate June 28 updates from ECPO, and to map out our post-resolution timeline.
  
- FOIA
  - Any news?
  
- Section 7/404 MOU

- Vicki Mott transmitted draft to the Corps on June 5
- (b)(5)DPP(b)(5)DPP(b)(5)DPP(b)(5)DPP(b)(5)DPP  
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- Comment responses
- 

ACTION ITEMS:

- Meeting with Corps to discuss draft MOU.
- Meeting with ECPO to discuss timelines
  - This coming week?
  - Hold July 5 meeting?

**From:** [Dell, David](#)  
**To:** [Charles Kelso](#); [Constance Cassler](#); [David Shindle](#); [Jerry Ziewitz](#); [Mcdonald, Kenneth](#); [Roxanna Hinzman](#); [Timothy Binzen](#); [Mott, Vicki](#); [Erin Myers](#); [Larry Williams](#); [Robert Tawes](#); [Angela Romito](#); [Catherine Phillips](#); [Kevin Palmer](#); [Kristen Peters](#); [Nikki Price](#)  
**Subject:** East Collier HCP: Friday In-Service Update  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 10, 2019 8:09:38 AM

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Everyone: Please see the agenda at the link pasted below. Suggestions are welcome.

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David Dell  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
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July 12, 2019

East Collier HCP

## In-Service Update

Present:

Topics --

- Status of Tribal consultation
  - Seminoles
    - According to the tribe's June 21 e-mail to Kevin, they expect to let him know soon
    - (b)(5)DPP(b)(5)DPP(b)(5)DPP(b)(5)DPP(b)(5)DPP(b)(5)DPP(b)(5)DPP  
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    - (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP
  - Miccosukee
    - Response letter mailed June 25.
- Panthers and Traffic: BO Resolution
  - Plan for the coming week, assuming we receive ECPO's input today (Friday)
    - Reset "Milestone" calendar
    - Reach Milestone #2 by July 19?
    -

Status of BO

- Status of EIS and comment responses:
  - Status of Appendices and Literature Cited?
  - Service and Applicant costs to prepare final EIS
  - Draft of final EIS transmitted to ECPO July 3
- SO 3355 Schedule
  - If we can start the milestones, then we are in a position to propose a new timeline to Department
- FOIA
- Section 7/404 MOU
  - Vicki Mott transmitted our latest response to Corps July 9.  
(b)(5)DPP(b)(5)DPP(b)(5)DPP(b)(5)DPP
- Comment responses

- Reminder that this needs attention now, especially as we reach resolution on BO
- Outline of Operations
- Field Office project web page

**From:** [Dell, David](#)  
**To:** [Charles Kelso](#); [Constance Cassler](#); [Shindle, David](#); [Jerry Ziewitz](#); [Mcdonald, Kenneth](#); [Larry Williams](#); [Robert Tawes](#); [Roxanna Hinzman](#); [Timothy Binzen](#); [Mott, Vicki](#); [Erin Myers](#); [Angela Romito](#); [Catherine Phillips](#); [Kevin Palmer](#); [Kristen Peters](#); [Nikki Price](#); [Jack Arnold](#); [Michael Crowley](#)  
**Subject:** East Collier HCP: Tomorrow's In-Service Update  
**Date:** Thursday, August 22, 2019 11:08:59 AM

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Everyone: The draft agenda is linked below. Please feel free to suggest items, and we will talk tomorrow. Thanks.

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David Dell  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
Southeast Region  
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August 23, 2019

East Collier HCP

### In-Service Update

Present:

Topics --

- Status of Tribal consultation
  - Seminoles
    - Comment letter received August 12
      - Should we also examine the intermediate communications from their section leaders
    - Send them an acknowledgement?
    - Issue and response table started
    - Their issues look relatively generic -- (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP  
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  - 
  - Miccosukee
    - As recently discussed, this consultation may be substantially complete
- Congressional letter and communications plans
  -
- Panthers and Traffic: BO Resolution
  - Bruce's data sent this week.
- Status of BO
  -

- Status of EIS and comment responses:
  - Connie's recent work
- SO 3355 Schedule
  - If we can start the milestones, then we are in a position to propose a new timeline to Department.
  - We continue in pause status
  
- FOIA
- Section 7/404 MOU
  - Got Josh's re-work Friday, August 2.
  - (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP
  - Need to coordinate with Vicki
  
- Outline of Operations
  - Provided for Vicki's review
  - Relation to MOU
  - Sharing with ECPO?
  
- Field Office project web page
  - Migrated -- any follow-up?
  - Chuck's status in updating ServeCat 2018 documents
-

**From:** [Arnold, Jack](#)  
**To:** [Phillips, Catherine](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: DELIBERATIVE: please review draft elicitation and agenda  
**Date:** Thursday, August 29, 2019 7:05:16 AM

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Cathy - this is related to the text I sent you earlier on FL panther SSA.

Jack Arnold  
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**From:** **Rivenbark, Erin** <[erin\\_rivenbark@fws.gov](mailto:erin_rivenbark@fws.gov)>  
**Date:** Thu, Aug 29, 2019 at 9:01 AM  
**Subject:** Fwd: DELIBERATIVE: please review draft elicitation and agenda  
**To:** Jack Arnold <[jack\\_arnold@fws.gov](mailto:jack_arnold@fws.gov)>

Sorry, thought you were cc'd on this.

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Hinzman, Roxanna** <[roxanna\\_hinzman@fws.gov](mailto:roxanna_hinzman@fws.gov)>  
**Date:** Thu, Aug 29, 2019 at 8:57 AM  
**Subject:** Re: DELIBERATIVE: please review draft elicitation and agenda  
**To:** Dekar, Matthew <[matthew\\_dekar@fws.gov](mailto:matthew_dekar@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Shindle, David <[david\\_shindle@fws.gov](mailto:david_shindle@fws.gov)>, Erin Rivenbark <[Erin\\_Rivenbark@fws.gov](mailto:Erin_Rivenbark@fws.gov)>, Kristi Young <[kristi\\_young@fws.gov](mailto:kristi_young@fws.gov)>, Timothy Merritt <[timothy\\_merritt@fws.gov](mailto:timothy_merritt@fws.gov)>, Larry Williams <[larry\\_williams@fws.gov](mailto:larry_williams@fws.gov)>

Matt,

We left the PL meeting and are headed back to Vero to button up for the hurricane. (b)(5)DPP  
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to postpone this. But there are complications/consequences to postponing. He was going to talk to  
Catherine and see what she thinks.

Thanks,

Rox

---

**Roxanna Hinzman** | Field Supervisor

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | South Florida Ecological Services Office  
1339 20th Street | Vero Beach, Florida 32960

Direct line: 772-469-4309 | Office: 772-562-3909 ext. 309

Cell 772-532-1247 | Fax 772-562-4288 | [roxanna\\_hinzman@fws.gov](mailto:roxanna_hinzman@fws.gov)

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---

On Thu, Aug 29, 2019 at 8:30 AM Dekar, Matthew <[matthew\\_dekar@fws.gov](mailto:matthew_dekar@fws.gov)> wrote:

Hi all,

I made a few editorial tweaks to the agenda/elicitation and I removed the (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP

Feel free to provide any final comments, I will send out the materials (including SSA) tomorrow by noon.

Thanks!

Matt

On Tue, Aug 20, 2019 at 10:52 AM Dekar, Matthew <[matthew\\_dekar@fws.gov](mailto:matthew_dekar@fws.gov)> wrote:

Hi all,

See below for link (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP

(b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP

I made a few tweaks to the questions (re-ordering, inserting policy text) so please make sure you are comfortable with the edits. Please review/edit (in suggestion mode) by next Wednesday (August 28). My goal is to send the agenda, questions, and SSA to the recommendation team by next Thursday.

Rox, I know you are at the PL meeting next week so I wonder if folks would be available for a short (ha ha) call later this week? I am thinking it might be good for David to ask any questions to the group as he prepares the SSA presentation. How about 2-3PM on Friday (sorry) for those that can participate?

Thanks!

Matt

--

Matthew Dekar, PhD  
Division of Conservation and Classification  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1875 Century Boulevard  
Atlanta, Georgia 30345  
(404) 679-4127

--

Matthew Dekar, PhD  
Division of Conservation and Classification  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1875 Century Boulevard  
Atlanta, Georgia 30345  
(404) 679-4127

--

-----  
[Erin Rivenbark](#)

Biologist and Decision Analyst

ES-DER, serving the South Atlantic - Gulf, the Mississippi-Basin, and North Atlantic-Appalachian Region Regions

"Some people see the glass half full, others see it half empty, I see a glass that's twice as big as it needs to be." - George Carlin

Remotely located at:

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
R.G. Stephens, Jr. Federal Building  
355 East Hancock Avenue, Room 320  
Athens GA 30601  
706-208-7505 (W)  
912-230-7966 (Cell)

Check it out! SSA Framework - Google Site for Staff at <https://sites.google.com/a/fws.gov/ssa/>

NCTC SSA Resource Page: <https://nctc.fws.gov/courses/csp/csp3910/resources>

For audiences outside FWS visit [http://www.fws.gov/endangered/improving\\_ESA/SSA.html](http://www.fws.gov/endangered/improving_ESA/SSA.html).

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**From:** [Larry Williams](#)  
**To:** [Catherine Phillips](#); [Jack Arnold](#)  
**Cc:** [Aaron Valenta](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: DELIBERATIVE: please review draft elicitation and agenda  
**Date:** Thursday, August 29, 2019 8:11:10 AM

---

Cathy, Jack,

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(b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP

What are your thoughts?

Larry

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Hinzman, Roxanna" <[roxanna\\_hinzman@fws.gov](mailto:roxanna_hinzman@fws.gov)>  
**Date:** August 29, 2019 at 8:56:26 AM EDT  
**To:** "Dekar, Matthew" <[matthew\\_dekar@fws.gov](mailto:matthew_dekar@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** "Shindle, David" <[david\\_shindle@fws.gov](mailto:david_shindle@fws.gov)>, Erin Rivenbark <[Erin\\_Rivenbark@fws.gov](mailto:Erin_Rivenbark@fws.gov)>, Kristi Young <[kristi\\_young@fws.gov](mailto:kristi_young@fws.gov)>, Timothy Merritt <[timothy\\_merritt@fws.gov](mailto:timothy_merritt@fws.gov)>, Larry Williams <[larry\\_williams@fws.gov](mailto:larry_williams@fws.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: DELIBERATIVE: please review draft elicitation and agenda

Matt,

We left the PL meeting and are headed back to Vero to button up for the hurricane.  
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Thanks,

Rox

---

**Roxanna Hinzman** | Field Supervisor  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | South Florida Ecological Services Office  
1339 20th Street | Vero Beach, Florida 32960  
**Direct line: 772-469-4309** | Office: 772-562-3909 ext. 309  
Cell 772-532-1247 | Fax 772-562-4288 | [roxanna\\_hinzman@fws.gov](mailto:roxanna_hinzman@fws.gov)

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On Thu, Aug 29, 2019 at 8:30 AM Dekar, Matthew <[matthew\\_dekar@fws.gov](mailto:matthew_dekar@fws.gov)> wrote:

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Feel free to provide any final comments, I will send out the materials (including SSA) tomorrow by noon.

Thanks!

Matt

On Tue, Aug 20, 2019 at 10:52 AM Dekar, Matthew <[matthew\\_dekar@fws.gov](mailto:matthew_dekar@fws.gov)> wrote:

Hi all,

(b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP  
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Rox, I know you are at the PL meeting next week so I wonder if folks would be available for a short (ha ha) call later this week? I am thinking it might be

good for David to ask any questions to the group as he prepares the SSA presentation. How about 2-3PM on Friday (sorry) for those that can participate?

Thanks!

Matt

--

Matthew Dekar, PhD  
Division of Conservation and Classification  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1875 Century Boulevard  
Atlanta, Georgia 30345  
(404) 679-4127

--

Matthew Dekar, PhD  
Division of Conservation and Classification  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1875 Century Boulevard  
Atlanta, Georgia 30345  
(404) 679-4127

**From:** [Arnold, Jack](#)  
**To:** [Larry Williams](#)  
**Cc:** [Catherine Phillips](#); [Aaron Valenta](#)  
**Subject:** Re: DELIBERATIVE: please review draft elicitation and agenda  
**Date:** Friday, August 30, 2019 7:56:21 AM

---

The (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP  
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(b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP Hope this helps.

Jack Arnold  
Deputy Assistant Regional Director - Ecological Services  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1875 Century Blvd.  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
404-679-7311 office  
404-679-7081 fax  
703-789-5620 cell

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On Thu, Aug 29, 2019 at 10:11 AM Larry Williams <[larry\\_williams@fws.gov](mailto:larry_williams@fws.gov)> wrote:

Cathy, Jack,

Here is some background on possible reasons to postpone the panther RTM. (b)(5)DPP  
(b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP  
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(b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP I'm thinking for that  
reason alone we should postpone.

What are your thoughts?

Larry

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Hinzman, Roxanna" <[roxanna\\_hinzman@fws.gov](mailto:roxanna_hinzman@fws.gov)>  
**Date:** August 29, 2019 at 8:56:26 AM EDT  
**To:** "Dekar, Matthew" <[matthew\\_dekar@fws.gov](mailto:matthew_dekar@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** "Shindle, David" <[david\\_shindle@fws.gov](mailto:david_shindle@fws.gov)>, Erin Rivenbark

<[Erin\\_Rivenbark@fws.gov](mailto:Erin_Rivenbark@fws.gov)>, Kristi Young <[kristi\\_young@fws.gov](mailto:kristi_young@fws.gov)>, Timothy Merritt <[timothy\\_merritt@fws.gov](mailto:timothy_merritt@fws.gov)>, Larry Williams <[larry\\_williams@fws.gov](mailto:larry_williams@fws.gov)>

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Thanks,

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Thanks!

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(404) 679-4127

--  
Matthew Dekar, PhD  
Division of Conservation and Classification  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1875 Century Boulevard  
Atlanta, Georgia 30345  
(404) 679-4127

**From:** [Dell, David](#)  
**To:** [Charles Kelso](#); [Constance Cassler](#); [Shindle, David](#); [Jerry Ziewitz](#); [Warren, Ken](#); [Mcdonald, Kenneth](#); [Kristen Peters](#); [Michael Crowley](#); [Erin Myers](#); [Robert Tawes](#); [Catherine Phillips](#); [Kevin Palmer](#); [Larry Williams](#); [Nikki Price](#); [Roxanna Hinzman](#); [Timothy Binzen](#); [Mott, Vicki](#)  
**Subject:** East Collier HCP: In-Service Update Tomorrow  
**Date:** Thursday, September 5, 2019 5:55:19 AM

---

Everyone: I understand Vero Beach is back to work. Hopefully the storm did not cause too much havoc in your area.

There are enough news items to maintain our meeting schedule. The draft agenda is linked below, and I'll be working on it through today. Please enter your suggested agenda items also.

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David Dell  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
South Atlantic - Gulf Region  
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator  
404/679-7313  
[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)

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September 6, 2019

East Collier HCP

## In-Service Update

Present:

Topics --

- Status of Tribal consultation
  - Seminoles
    - Status of acknowledgement letter
    - Issue and response table started
    - 
    - Their issues look relatively generic -- (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP  
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    - From Tim Binzen's September 5, e-mail:
  - 
  - Miccosukee
    - As recently discussed, this consultation may be substantially complete
    - From Tim Binzen's September 5, e-mail:
- Congressional letter and communications plans
- ECPO changes in ownership
- Panthers and Traffic: BO Resolution
  - Bruce's data sent this week
  - FLDOT may be able to offer input; contingent on their current tasks.
- Status of BO
- Status of EIS and comment responses:
  -
- SO 3355 Schedule

- If we can start the milestones, then we are in a position to propose a new timeline to Department.
  - We continue in pause status
- FOIA
  - New FOIA from ECPO, in response to Seminole comment letter
- Section 7/404 MOU
  -
- [Field Office project web page \(https://www.fws.gov/verobeach/EasternCollierHCP.html\)](https://www.fws.gov/verobeach/EasternCollierHCP.html)
  - any updates?
    - 
    -

**From:** [Dell, David](#)  
**To:** [Charles Kelso](#); [Constance Cassler](#); [Shindle, David](#); [Jack Arnold](#); [Jerry Ziewitz](#); [Warren, Ken](#); [Mcdonald, Kenneth](#); [Kristen Peters](#); [Larry Williams](#); [Mark Cantrell](#); [Michael Crowley](#); [Robert Tawes](#); [Jeff Weller](#); [Catherine Phillips](#); [Kevin Palmer](#); [Roxanna Hinzman](#); [Timothy Binzen](#); [Mott, Vicki](#)  
**Subject:** East Collier HCP: In-Service Update Tomorrow  
**Date:** Thursday, October 17, 2019 12:47:54 PM

---

Everyone: Tomorrow's agenda linked below. Talk to you at 9!

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David Dell  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
South Atlantic - Gulf and Mississippi Basin  
Unified Regions  
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator  
404/679-7313  
[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)

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October 18, 2019

East Collier HCP

## In-Service Update

Present:

Topics --

- Status of Tribal consultation
  - Seminoles
    - Acknowledgement letter sent September 10
    - Issue and response table started
    - Working on responses
    -
  - Miccosukee
    - Concerning recent issues, Larry asked the RD the results of his communications. Apparently, Leo did not hear back from the Tribe.
    - We are taking no further action on this.
- The twelfth applicant
  - NOA at Solicitors Office
- BO analysis status
  - Panthers and Traffic
    - (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP
  - Running the models and developing a FO conclusion recommendation (BO resolution)
- (b)(5)AC-DPP (attorney-level discussion)
  - Andrew was scheduling with Solicitors Office this week.
- Status of BO
  - Document status?
  - (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP
  - (b)(5)DPP
    -
- Status of EIS and comment responses:

- SO 3355 Schedule
  - Sending weekly updates to the Department
  - IM for new NOA on surname -- transmitted?
- FOIA
- Section 7/404 MOU
  - (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)
- Field Office project web page (<https://www.fws.gov/verobeach/EasternCollierHCP.html>)
  - 
  -

**From:** [Dell, David](#)  
**To:** [Charles Kelso](#); [Constance Cassler](#); [Shindle, David](#); [Jerry Ziewitz](#); [Mcdonald, Kenneth](#); [Roxanna Hinzman](#); [Jack Arnold](#); [Larry Williams](#); [Robert Tawes](#); [Mott, Vicki](#); [Catherine Phillips](#); [Heath Rauschenberger](#); [Melvin Tobin](#)  
**Subject:** Re: East Collier HCP: Draft Slides  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 10, 2019 4:46:39 AM

---

Trying again....

**(b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP**

David Dell  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
South Atlantic - Gulf and Mississippi Basin  
Unified Regions  
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator  
404/679-7313  
[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)

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On Fri, Dec 6, 2019 at 11:33 AM Dell, David <[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)> wrote:

Everyone: Here's a stand-alone link to the draft slide show we talked about.

Melvin: I return on Tuesday, Dec 10, and can brief you on this. We are preparing an RD briefing for December 18.

David Dell  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
South Atlantic - Gulf and Mississippi Basin  
Unified Regions  
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator  
404/679-7313  
[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)

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On Fri, Dec 6, 2019 at 7:57 AM Dell, David <[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)> wrote:

Here's today's Call-In information.

**This is a different number from the usual.**

**(b)(5)CIP** Code: **(b)(5)CIP**

David Dell  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
South Atlantic - Gulf and Mississippi Basin  
Unified Regions  
HCP and Safe Harbors Coordinator  
404/679-7313  
[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)

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**From:** [Leopoldo Miranda](#)  
**To:** [Mott, Vicki](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Review and Surname of NOA of Garguilo, Inc."s Application for ITP (FWS.SE.5064)  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 17, 2019 3:57:09 PM

---

;~)

Leo

Leopoldo Miranda, Regional Director  
USFWS, South Atlantic-Gulf &  
Mississippi-Basin  
[404-679-4000](tel:404-679-4000)

Sent from my iPhone

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On Dec 17, 2019, at 5:49 PM, Mott, Vicki <[vicki.mott@sol.doi.gov](mailto:vicki.mott@sol.doi.gov)> wrote:

Hi!

I had completed them last week, but as you know, Shannon was out last week. She's signing everything now.

vicki

On Tue, Dec 17, 2019 at 5:47 PM Leopoldo Miranda <[leopoldo\\_miranda@fws.gov](mailto:leopoldo_miranda@fws.gov)> wrote:

You have been busy!!! THANK YOU!!

Leo

Leopoldo Miranda, Regional Director  
USFWS, South Atlantic-Gulf &  
Mississippi-Basin  
[404-679-4000](tel:404-679-4000)

Sent from my iPhone

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On Dec 17, 2019, at 5:39 PM, Mott, Vicki <[vicki.mott@sol.doi.gov](mailto:vicki.mott@sol.doi.gov)> wrote:

Leo,

The above-referenced documents along with the NOA in WORD format are attached.

vicki

\*\*\*\*\*

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<20191217 - NOA Application ITP ECPO HCP (Garguilo, Inc)  
package - signed and surnamed.pdf>

<20190924 NOA ECPO 12th appl SOL Review (2).docx>

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**From:** [Dell, David](#)  
**To:** [Constance Cassler](#); [Shindle, David](#); [Heath Rauschenberger](#); [Mcdonald, Kenneth](#); [Kristen Peters](#); [Robert Tawes](#); [Timothy Binzen](#); [Roxanna Hinzman](#); [Catherine Phillips](#); [Charles Kelso](#); [Jack Arnold](#); [Warren, Ken](#); [Kevin Palmer](#); [Larry Williams](#); [Mott, Vicki](#)  
**Subject:** East Collier HCP: Draft Agenda for in-Service meeting this Friday  
**Date:** Wednesday, January 8, 2020 1:15:09 PM

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Everyone: I'm collecting topics for our in-Service meeting at the usual time on January 10.

Please make suggestions at: (b)(5)CIP (b)(5)CIP (b)(5)CIP

(b)(5)CIP (b)(5)CIP (b)(5)CIP (b)(5)CIP (b)(5)CIP (b)(5)CIP

David Dell  
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January 10, 2020

East Collier HCP

**In-Service Update**

Present:

**Topics:**

Tribal Consultations

AECOM contract

(b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP  
(b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP  
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(b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP

ALICO, SR 82 crossing/preserve

- This and other HCP amendments
  - This affects the overall acreages in the draft BO.
- Relation to Seminole comments?
  - (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP

Status of Gargiulo NOA

- Entered into DTS for HQ and Department clearance, Jan 9

**From:** [Scott, David](#)  
**To:** [Catherine Phillips](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: [EXTERNAL] Panther Biological Opinions  
**Date:** Monday, January 13, 2020 12:43:53 PM  
**Attachments:** [Frakes et al. 2015.pdf](#)

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This is the issue that I'd like to discuss ... thanks.

**DAVID P. SCOTT**

Science Integrity Officer  
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----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **frakesr** <[frakesr@comcast.net](mailto:frakesr@comcast.net)>  
**Date:** Sun, Jan 12, 2020 at 1:22 PM  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Panther Biological Opinions  
**To:** [David\\_Scott@fws.gov](mailto:David_Scott@fws.gov) <[David\\_Scott@fws.gov](mailto:David_Scott@fws.gov)>

Dear Mr. Scott,

During a recent perusal of biological opinions involving Florida panthers produced by the South Florida Ecological Services Office (SFESO), I noticed that our 2015 publication on panther habitat selection (attached) was not discussed or cited. This is very perplexing since a BO should include the latest and best available science on each species affected. Our paper presents an accurate and easily interpreted model of panther habitat use, as well as offering a critique of the panther habitat assessment methodology currently used by the SFESO in all panther BOs. The currently used methodology was developed by me and others back in the early 2000s, based on the best available science at that time. However, more recent work on panther habitat needs by myself and others has demonstrated that the current panther methodology is badly flawed and cannot provide adequate habitat protection to ensure a viable panther population into the future. Since the SFESO is well aware of our paper (much of the work was done while I was employed at the SFESO, and the SFESO actually paid for the publication), I fail to understand how this very relevant peer-reviewed science has been omitted from the species status and effects analysis in so many panther BOs.

The purpose of a biological opinion under Section 7 is to determine whether a Federal action jeopardizes the continued existence of a listed species. All peer-reviewed publications that I am aware of (e.g., Root 2004, Kautz et al. 2006, Frakes et al. 2015) have clearly stated that further habitat loss should be avoided in order to maintain a viable panther population in south Florida. Yet the Fish and Wildlife Service continues to ignore these opinions and to permit developments in panther habitat. If the FWS disagrees with these scientists/publications, they should at least review the relevant parts of the literature in their BOs and explain why (based on what science) they have arrived at a different conclusion, and why they continue to use an outdated and flawed assessment methodology.

Anything you can do to correct these glaring deficiencies in future panther biological opinions would be greatly appreciated.

Best regards,

Robert A. Frakes, Ph.D.

FWS Supervisory Ecologist (retired)

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(b) (6)

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Landscape Analysis of Adult Florida Panther Habitat

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## OPEN ACCESS

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**Data Availability Statement:** All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files, or at the following URLs: Panther telemetry data: [http://ocean.floridamarine.org/TRGIS/Description/Layers\\_terrestrial.htm](http://ocean.floridamarine.org/TRGIS/Description/Layers_terrestrial.htm); panther annual reports: <http://www.floridapanthemet.org/index.php/reports/>.

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**Competing Interests:** The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

## Abstract

Historically occurring throughout the southeastern United States, the Florida panther is now restricted to less than 5% of its historic range in one breeding population located in southern Florida. Using radio-telemetry data from 87 prime-aged ( $\geq 3$  years old) adult panthers (35 males and 52 females) during the period 2004 through 2013 (28,720 radio-locations), we analyzed the characteristics of the occupied area and used those attributes in a random forest model to develop a predictive distribution map for resident breeding panthers in southern Florida. Using 10-fold cross validation, the model was 87.5 % accurate in predicting presence or absence of panthers in the 16,678 km<sup>2</sup> study area. Analysis of variable importance indicated that the amount of forests and forest edge, hydrology, and human population density were the most important factors determining presence or absence of panthers. Sensitivity analysis showed that the presence of human populations, roads, and agriculture (other than pasture) had strong negative effects on the probability of panther presence. Forest cover and forest edge had strong positive effects. The median model-predicted probability of presence for panther home ranges was 0.81 (0.82 for females and 0.74 for males). The model identified 5579 km<sup>2</sup> of suitable breeding habitat remaining in southern Florida; 1399 km<sup>2</sup> (25%) of this habitat is in non-protected private ownership. Because there is less panther habitat remaining than previously thought, we recommend that all remaining breeding habitat in south Florida should be maintained, and the current panther range should be expanded into south-central Florida. This model should be useful for evaluating the impacts of future development projects, in prioritizing areas for panther conservation, and in evaluating the potential impacts of sea-level rise and changes in hydrology.

## Introduction

The Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*) is a subspecies of puma (also called mountain lion or cougar). Pumas were once widely distributed throughout North and South America, but have been extirpated from the eastern United States except for a small breeding population of

Florida panthers in southern Florida (in this paper, we use the term “puma” when referring to the species as a whole and “panther” when referring specifically to the Florida panther subspecies). Panthers, like all pumas, are wide ranging, secretive, and occur at low densities. They require large contiguous areas to meet their social, reproductive, and energetic needs [1], a requirement that is being compromised by rapid development in southern Florida. Panther habitat continues to be lost to urbanization, residential development, conversion to agriculture, and mining [1]. Highways result in loss and fragmentation of habitat, lead to traffic-related panther mortality, and encourage further human development [2]. Urban, suburban, and exurban areas eliminate, fragment, and alter panther habitat and increase the potential for panther-human interactions. The recovery strategy for the Florida panther includes: (1) maintaining, restoring, and expanding the panther population and its habitat in southern Florida; (2) expanding this population into south-central Florida if sufficient habitat exists; (3) establishing at least two additional viable populations within the historic range outside of south and south-central Florida; and (4) facilitating panther recovery through public awareness and education [1]. The keystone to this recovery strategy is the existing panther population in southern Florida. Because habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation are among the greatest threats to this population, there is a need for land use planning that incorporates panther conservation and recovery.

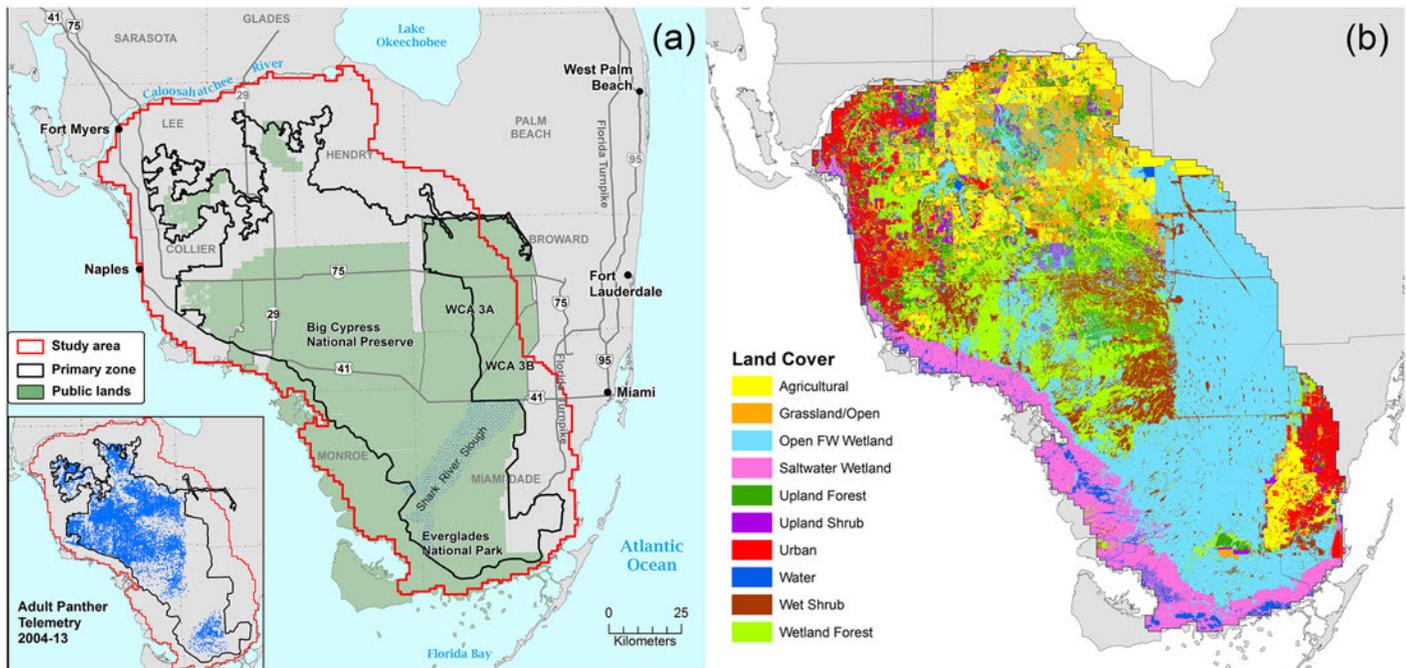
Several resource selection analyses have been completed to identify habitats selected by panthers in southern Florida. Following the ordering of selection processes suggested by Johnson [3], the majority of these analyses were third order selections (habitat within home ranges) [4–9], 3 were second order selection analyses (home ranges within the range) [6, 7, 10], and only Kautz et al. [7] and Thatcher et al. [10] attempted to analyze the first order selection (range within the region). Kautz et al. [7] identified areas that had been consistently occupied by panthers for 20 years (“Primary Zone”), adjacent areas that would be most likely to be occupied by an expanding panther population (“Secondary Zone”), and areas that would best facilitate dispersal and population expansion north of the Caloosahatchee River (“Dispersal Zone”). Thatcher et al. [10] developed a panther habitat model using the Mahalanobis distance statistic and landscape characteristics within panther home ranges, based on older (mid-1990s) telemetry and landscape data. Since these studies were completed, a great deal of new land use/land cover information and panther telemetry data have become available.

Recovery Action 1.1.4.2. in the Third Revision of the Florida Panther Recovery Plan [1] calls for updating the Kautz et al. [7] map every five years. The objective of this study was to develop a first-order predictive, landscape-scale model based on occurrence data to predict the distribution of Florida panther habitat to meet this requirement. Our study differs from most previous work in that it was intended to examine the large-scale mixture of landscape characteristics where panthers are found, as opposed to distances of panther locations from specific habitat patches, as used in most previous studies. The model will be useful in evaluating the impacts of future development projects, prioritizing areas for panther conservation (e.g., mitigation areas, panther conservation banks, conservation easements, and fee title purchases), identifying areas outside the study area for possible panther reintroductions, and evaluating the potential impacts of sea-level rise and changes in hydrology.

## Methods

### Study area

The study area (Fig 1a) was located in southwest Florida where the only breeding population of Florida panthers occurs. The study area was designated by drawing an approximate 16-km buffer (roughly the width of an average female home range) around the Primary Zone described by Kautz et al. [7]. This area is bordered on the west and south by the Gulf of Mexico



**Fig 1. Location of the Florida panther study area and major land cover classes.** (a) Main map shows the study area in relation to the Primary Zone, an area of focus by conservation agencies. Inset shows the location of resident adult telemetry points from 2004 through 2013. Breeding panthers do not occur north of the Caloosahatchee River. (b) Geographical distribution of 10 major land cover categories within the study area, used as explanatory variables in the random forest model. Categories were distilled from the Florida Land Use and Cover Classification System (FLUCCS).

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and Florida Bay, on the north by the Caloosahatchee River, and on the east by the 16-km buffer drawn around the Primary Zone boundary. Near-shore islands within the 16-km buffer were excluded. The 16,678 km<sup>2</sup> study area included most of Everglades National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, and other public lands, as well as thousands of acres of undeveloped land in private ownership. It also contained large agricultural and urbanized areas, the latter including Naples, Fort Myers, and the outskirts of Miami. The study area was divided into 16,678 square kilometer grid cells (1.0 km on each side). This grid size was chosen to account for telemetry error (within 124–230 m [4, 8, 11]) and because of our interest in analyzing panther habitat characteristics at the landscape scale.

### Panther telemetry data

Methods for collecting telemetry locations have been described elsewhere [4, 8, 11]. Our radio-telemetry dataset consisted of all locations collected from February 1981 through June 2014 ( $n = 103,828$ ) as part of ongoing research and monitoring by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the National Park Service [12]. During this 33-year monitoring program, 228 panthers were radio-collared and each collared individual was relocated 3 times per week, if possible, during the entire time that it wore a functioning collar. During the time frame of this study (2004–2013), an estimated average of 44% (range 26–62%) of the known population of resident adult panthers was collared and monitored each year, based on annual panther counts by McBride et al. [13]. Of all radio-locations collected, 102,818 locations were within the study area. These data were filtered to the period from January 2004 through December 2013 to be contemporaneous with the data for cover type, roads, human population,

and water depth. To avoid including dependent kittens and young transient males, only data for breeding-age panthers ( $\geq 3$  years old) [14] were utilized. After applying the above filters, only individuals with  $\geq 50$  telemetry points were included, in order to reduce the effects of small sample sizes on home range estimates [15]. Home ranges were plotted as 100% minimum convex polygons using the convex hull tool in ArcMap version 10.2.2 (ESRI, Redlands, CA). The final filtered dataset consisted of 87 adult panther home ranges (52 females and 35 males) comprising 28,720 telemetry locations (18,124 for females and 10,596 for males) (Fig 1a). Because of the large number of animals monitored, the frequency of relocations, and the fact that panther home ranges are large and overlap extensively, we felt that areas used and avoided by adult panthers during the 10-year time frame of this study could be accurately identified using these locations within a small margin of error (see below). Therefore, grid cells containing at least one telemetry point from the filtered dataset were classified as “present;” all others were classified as “absent.”

### Landscape variables

**Land cover types.** Vegetation cover types and land uses were obtained from the Florida Land Use and Cover Classification System (FLUCCS) Geographic Information System (GIS) database [16]. There were 76,609 FLUCCS polygons in the study area representing 124 different vegetation cover/land use classes. We combined these into 10 major land cover categories (Table 1). Categories were selected based on our judgment of characteristics important to panthers, such as amount of cover provided (forest, shrub, open), human disturbance (urban, agriculture), or cover types known to be avoided by panthers (open water, saltwater wetlands). Percentages of each of the 10 major land cover categories in each grid cell were calculated using the area tool in ArcMap, and used as explanatory variables in the model.

**Other landscape variables.** The primary prey species of the Florida panther in southern Florida are white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginiana*) and wild hogs (*Sus scrofa*) [17, 18]. The white-tailed deer is an “edge species” and the amount of edge affects both the quality and quantity of deer [19, 20]. Lacking spatial density data for these species, we estimated the amount of forest edge in each grid cell as a possible measure of prey availability (i.e., panther hunting habitat) [21, 22]. Using the 10 cover types described above, we defined forest edge as the line between forest polygons and other cover types considered suitable to form a natural edge.

**Table 1. Land cover categories used as explanatory variables and their extent in the study area.**

Land cover category	Description	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Percent of study area
Open fresh- water wetland	Freshwater marsh, sawgrass, and wet prairies	5715.9	34.3
Wetland forest	Includes cypress strands and domes, hydric pine flatwoods, cypress-mixed hardwoods, bay swamps, mixed wetland hardwoods, cypress-pine-cabbage palm, and wet melaleuca	2457.2	14.7
Agriculture	Croplands including row crops, field crops, sugar cane, citrus groves, ornamentals	1610.1	9.7
Saltwater wetland	Mangrove swamps, saltwater marshes, and tidal flats	1474.8	8.8
Grassland	Includes improved and unimproved pastures, and herbaceous (dry) prairies	1274.5	7.6
Wet shrub	Mixed wetland shrubs	1360.2	8.2
Urban	Residential, developed, industrial, commercial, or disturbed lands	1158.1	6.9
Upland forest	Includes pine flatwoods, upland hardwood forest (e.g., oak-cabbage palm), and hardwood-coniferous mixed forest	895.1	5.4
Open water	Lakes, reservoirs, rivers, bays, canals	379.4	2.3
Upland shrub	Shrub and brushland, palmetto prairies, and mixed rangeland	351.2	2.1

doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0133044.t001

Under this definition, polygons classified as urban or agricultural were not considered to be edge-forming. Grasslands and prairies, bodies of fresh water, shrubs, and open freshwater wetlands were counted as edge-forming where they were adjacent to forest. In addition, deer in Florida preferentially use areas where upland forest is adjacent to swamps [23]. Therefore, the edge between upland forest and wetland forest polygons was also counted as forest edge.

We estimated average wet and dry season water depths for the period 1999–2009 for each grid cell of the study area. The wet season was defined as June through October and the dry season as November through May. The value of the water depth variable represented a long-term average water depth for an entire grid cell. A negative depth implied that most of the water table was below the surface, but did not necessarily indicate a completely dry (upland) cell. Similarly, positive values suggested that most, but not necessarily all, of a cell was wetland.

Creating a water depth surface involved subtracting ground surface elevation from a corresponding stage elevation (water level). Daily mean surface water and groundwater data were acquired from the databases of Everglades National Park [24] and the South Florida Water Management District [25]. Gauging stations both within and exterior to the study area were included to minimize boundary or edge effects when generating seasonal water depths. Ground surface elevations for the southeastern portion of the study area were obtained from the U.S. Geological Survey High Accuracy Elevation Data project (HAED) [26]. Topography data for the northwestern portion of the study area were obtained from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [27]. Vertical accuracy ranged from  $\pm 7.5$  to  $\pm 15.0$  cm, depending on the source. Generating the average seasonal water depth required interpolating the stage value between the gauging stations, relating each stage value to a corresponding ground surface elevation, subtracting the ground surface elevation from the corresponding stages, and averaging the multiple water depths in each grid cell to produce a single value for each cell (see [S1 Text](#) for details).

We calculated average human population density for each cell in the study area using census block data from the 2010 U.S. Census [28]. Census blocks were intersected with the study area grid to obtain an area-weighted average human density for each cell. We calculated the total length of roads in each cell based on the 2011 TIGER/Line shapefiles of Florida roads [29]. Roads classified as four-wheel drive, bike trails, or pedestrian trails were excluded, because we felt that these did not represent enough disturbance to impact panther use of an area.

## Modeling approach

We used random forest (RF) modeling because of demonstrated advantages of RF over other types of statistical classifiers that include: (1) very high classification accuracy; (2) a method of ranking variables according to their importance; (3) the ability to model complex interactions; and (4) RF makes no assumptions about the distribution of predictor or response variables [30]. We tested many different modeling techniques before selecting RF. These included logistic regression, mixed effects logistic regression, generalized additive models (GAM), negative binomial, and Maxent. We also tested both presence-absence and used-available (resource selection function) designs. Although all of these methods produced similar results, we found RF to be more accurate at predicting known panther locations, to be more straightforward to use, and to provide more useful information than the other methods. Because the emphasis of our modeling effort was on prediction rather than explanation, we felt that predictive accuracy was the most important factor on which to base our selection of a modeling technique.

Our model was based on a presence-absence design, in which grid cells lacking a telemetry location were assumed to be absences. Generally, this assumption is potentially invalid because the species could have occurred at the location during the study but was not detected, thus these locations are often referred to as “pseudo-absences” [31]. However, we considered our

panther dataset to be valid (i.e., true absences) and the use of an area by resident adult panthers without being detected highly unlikely. Our reasons for this included the large number of animals monitored (228 total, 87 in this study), long duration of the monitoring program (33 years, 10 years in this study), high frequency of monitoring flights (3 times per week), large size of the cells (1.0 km<sup>2</sup>), and the fact that panther home ranges overlap extensively. The latter is important because, although not all panthers were radio-collared (only about half during the time frame of this study), it is likely that all areas used by panthers contained some collared individuals. In addition, the total area occupied by resident adult panthers in south Florida is relatively small, and the entire area is surveyed each year by expert trackers using hounds (e.g., [13]). Therefore, we believe that a presence-absence study design is appropriate in this case.

The model was run using the randomForest package in R (version 3.1.1, [www.r-project.org](http://www.r-project.org)). The type of random forest was classification, with 500 classification trees generated at each run, and 3 variables tried at each split. The model included 15 explanatory variables: 10 land cover categories (see Table 1), plus forest edge, dry season water depth, wet season water depth, human population density, and road density. Male and female panthers do not select significantly different habitat [8, 9], and our preliminary modeling showed that building separate models for males and females did not improve model accuracy. Therefore, the model was built using combined male and female occurrence data. Model-predicted probabilities of presence ( $P$ ) were used to classify each grid cell as present (i.e., adult panther habitat) or absent (i.e., non-habitat). We classified a grid cell as “present” when the model-predicted probability of presence was  $\geq 0.338$ , because at this cutoff point model sensitivity and specificity were equal. Selecting a cutoff threshold where sensitivity equals specificity tends to approximate the observed prevalence of the species in the study area [31].

The RF model was validated using 10-fold cross validation [32]. The training dataset was randomly divided into 10 equal-sized groupings. Nine of the groups (90%) were then combined and used to construct a model, which was used to classify the remaining group. This process was repeated ten times until all of the groups had been classified. Accuracy metrics from this process were compared with the out-of-bag accuracy of the original model. Accuracy metrics calculated included PCC (percent of cells correctly classified), sensitivity (proportion of “present” cells correctly classified), specificity (proportion of “absent” cells correctly classified), kappa (a measure of improvement of classification accuracy above that expected by chance), and AUC (area under the receiver operating characteristic curve) [31].

Sensitivity analysis consisted of plotting the model’s response to changes in one predictor while holding the other predictors constant, using the Plotmo library (version 2.2.1) in R. Plotmo’s default value for the fixed variables is the median [33]. However, this commonly used approach in which one variable is changed while the others are held at a single value (usually the median or mean) would be inadequate with our model, because some variables had different effects depending on the starting point. For example, increasing some variables might have a negative effect in a landscape that was already good habitat, but a positive effect in poor habitat. Also, assigning all variables a median or mean value was not realistic, because in no case could all variables in a cell be at their central tendency at the same time. In good habitat, beneficial landscape characteristics are high while detrimental ones are low, and vice versa for poor habitat. Therefore, model response to changes in each variable was examined in narrow ranges of  $P$  values corresponding to excellent panther habitat ( $P = 0.85\text{--}0.95$ ), medium habitat ( $P = 0.45\text{--}0.55$ ), and poor habitat ( $P = 0.05\text{--}0.15$ ). The subset of observed variable values producing  $P$  values within each range was determined. Averages were calculated for each variable for each range, and these served as the fixed value for sensitivity analysis. This allowed for use of realistic combinations of variable values as opposed to simply using median values.

We calculated the mean probability of presence for each panther home range from the  $P$  values of the grid cells contained within the home range. Mean probability of presence in home ranges were compared using the Wilcoxon rank sum test.

The randomForest package in R provides two measures of variable importance: (1) mean decrease in model accuracy, determined by randomly permuting one predictor variable at a time and determining the resulting loss in model classification accuracy, and (2) the Gini importance, calculated as the mean decrease in node impurity attributed to each predictor variable [34, 35]. Although both methods are presented here, the former is considered to be the more advanced method [34].

## Results

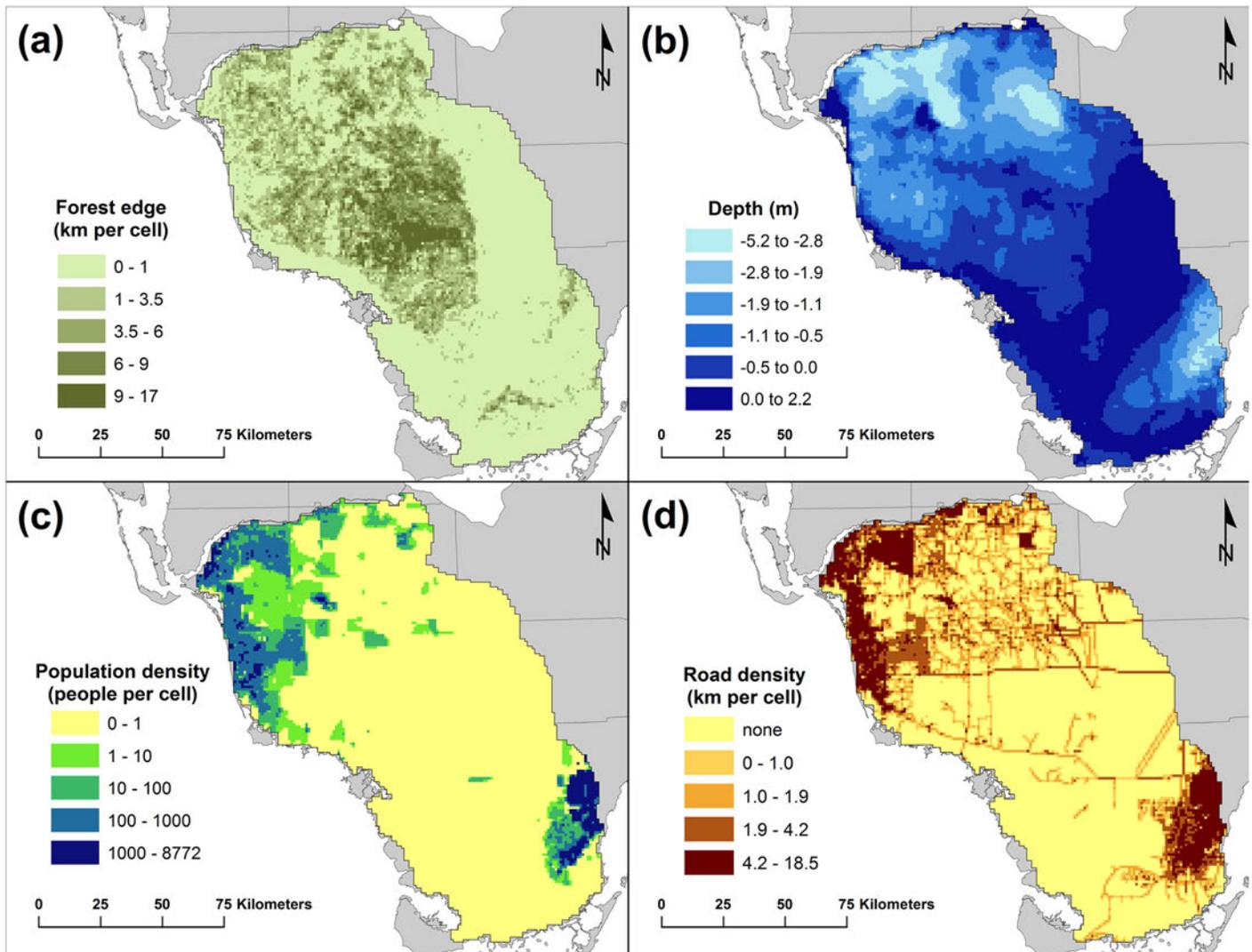
### Landscape variables

GIS analysis of land cover types showed the study area to be predominantly wetlands (Table 1, Fig 1b). Open freshwater wetlands (mostly sawgrass and freshwater marsh) were by far the largest land cover category, representing more than one third of the study area. Wetland forest and wet shrub lands were also important categories concentrated mainly in the center of the study area. Saltwater wetlands, mainly mangrove swamps, bordered the study area on the east and south. Altogether, wetlands made up 66.0% of the study area. In contrast, natural or semi-natural upland areas (upland forest, shrub lands, and grasslands) comprised only about 15.1% of the total. Upland forest, comprising only 5.4%, was scattered in small patches throughout the northern half of the study area. Urban areas predominated in the extreme northwestern (Naples-Ft. Myers area) and southeastern (Miami area) parts of the study area. Agriculture occurred mainly in the northern one-third of the study area, although there was also a large concentration of crop areas on the eastern border of Everglades National Park.

The amount of forest edge in each cell ranged from essentially none in the vast sawgrass wetlands, coastal areas, and agricultural areas, to 17 km per cell in the center of the study area (Fig 2a). Forest edge was not well-correlated ( $R^2 = 0.42$ ) with the total amount of forest cover in a cell, i.e., some areas with low amounts of forest cover might have large amounts of edge, and vice versa.

Average wet and dry season water depths in the study area ranged from -5.2 m (below ground surface) up to +2.6 m above ground. Water depths during the wet season averaged about 0.3 m greater than during the dry season. Wet season and dry season water depths were highly correlated ( $R^2 = 0.98$ ). Nevertheless, we chose to keep both variables in the model because removing one of them resulted in a slight loss in model accuracy. The driest areas occurred in the northern and extreme southeastern portions of the study area, corresponding with the well-drained agricultural and residential land uses in those areas. The highest water depths occurred in the Water Conservation Areas, the Shark River Slough in Everglades National Park, and the coastal bays of southwestern Florida. The center of the study area had mostly intermediate water depths (Fig 2b).

Human population density ranged from uninhabited throughout much of the study area, to upwards of 8,000 people per grid cell ( $\text{km}^2$ ) in the densely populated areas in the northwest and southeast corners of the study area (Fig 2c). Road density showed a similar pattern, ranging from roadless in much of the study area to over 18 km of roads per grid cell in some urban areas. However, even the most undeveloped part of the study area is bisected by several major highways including Interstate 75, US 41, and US 29 and also contains many minor roadways (Figs 1a and 2d).



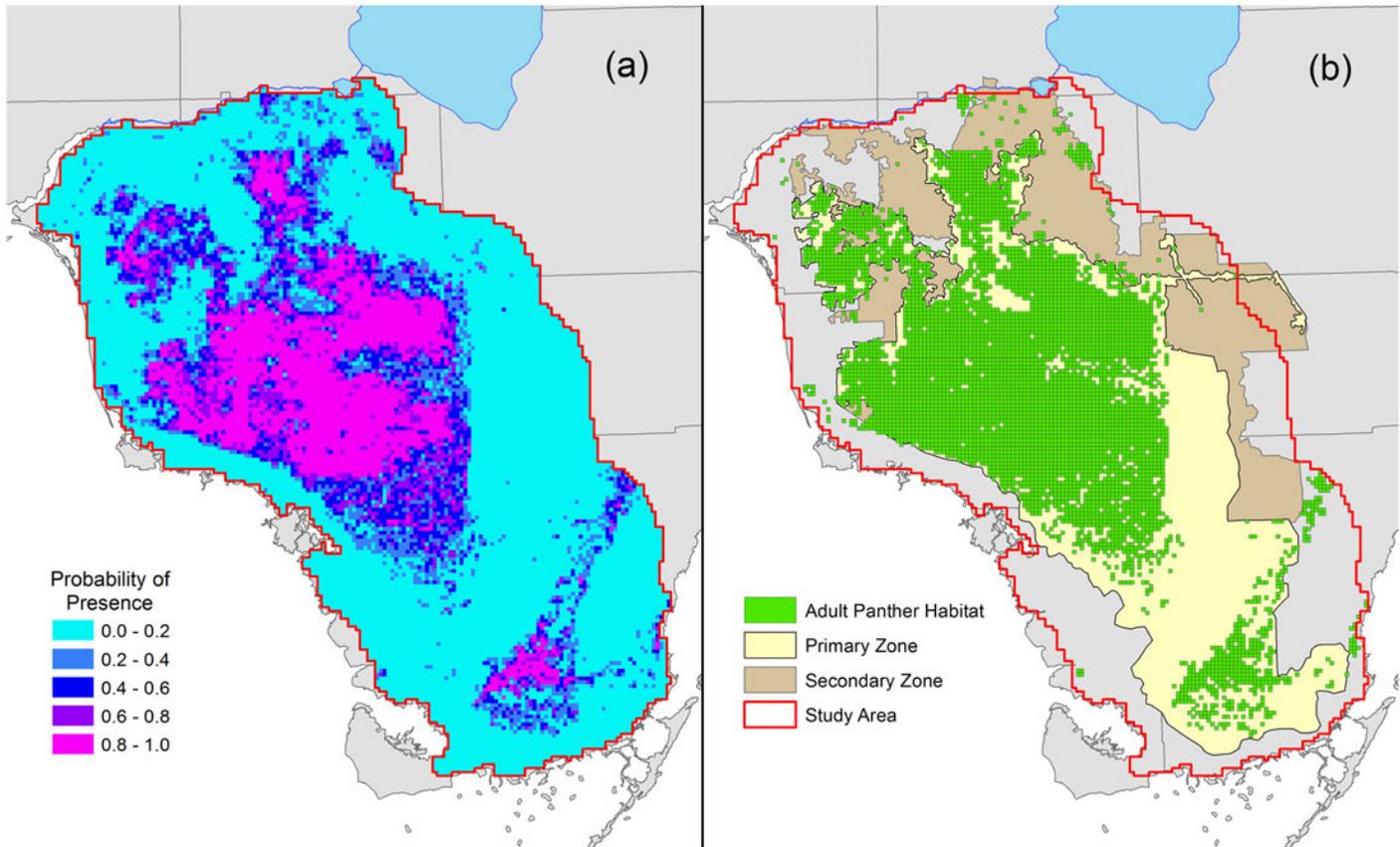
**Fig 2. Landscape characteristics within the study area used as explanatory variables.** (a) amount of forest edge (km/km<sup>2</sup>); (b) average water depths during the dry season (m); (c) area-weighted average human population density (people/km<sup>2</sup>); (d) road density (km/km<sup>2</sup>).

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### Model results

Probabilities of panther presence for each grid cell predicted by the model were plotted on a map of the study area (Fig 3a). Adult panther habitat (therefore breeding habitat) was defined as those grid cells classified as “present”, i.e., having a probability of presence of adult resident panthers greater than 0.338 (Fig 3b). Using this cutoff point, 5579 km<sup>2</sup> of breeding habitat were identified within the study area. Areas of high probability of panther presence were, for the most part, concentrated in a single large contiguous block within the central and north-western part of the study area. A separate, smaller area of predicted panther use occurred in the southwestern portion of the study area within Everglades National Park. Breeding panther presence was not likely in the Water Conservation Areas, Shark River Slough, or the coastal wetlands of southwest Florida.

**Accuracy.** The RF model accurately predicted the presence or absence of adult panthers in the study area. Using a cutoff probability of 0.338, the RF model had an overall accuracy (PCC)



**Fig 3. Probability of presence and adult panther habitat.** (a) Probability of presence ( $P$ ) of resident adult panthers throughout the study area in south Florida, as predicted by the random forest model. (b) Grid cells with  $P > 0.338$  are considered to be adult (breeding) panther habitat. Adult panther habitat is shown in relation to the Primary and Secondary Zones.

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of 87.7% of cells correctly classified, based on out-of-bag error rates (Table 2). By simple resubstitution of the training data, the RF model correctly classified 99% of the grid cells. Sensitivity and specificity were both equal to the PCC at this cutoff point. The kappa statistic (0.711) and AUC (0.95) both indicated high model accuracy in predicting panther presence within the study area. Ten-fold cross validation accuracy was nearly identical to out-of-bag accuracy for all metrics (Table 2).

**Variable importance.** The 15 explanatory variables are ranked from highest to lowest importance in Fig 4. Human population density stood out as the most important variable affecting model accuracy, followed by wetland forest. The amount of wetland forest and forest

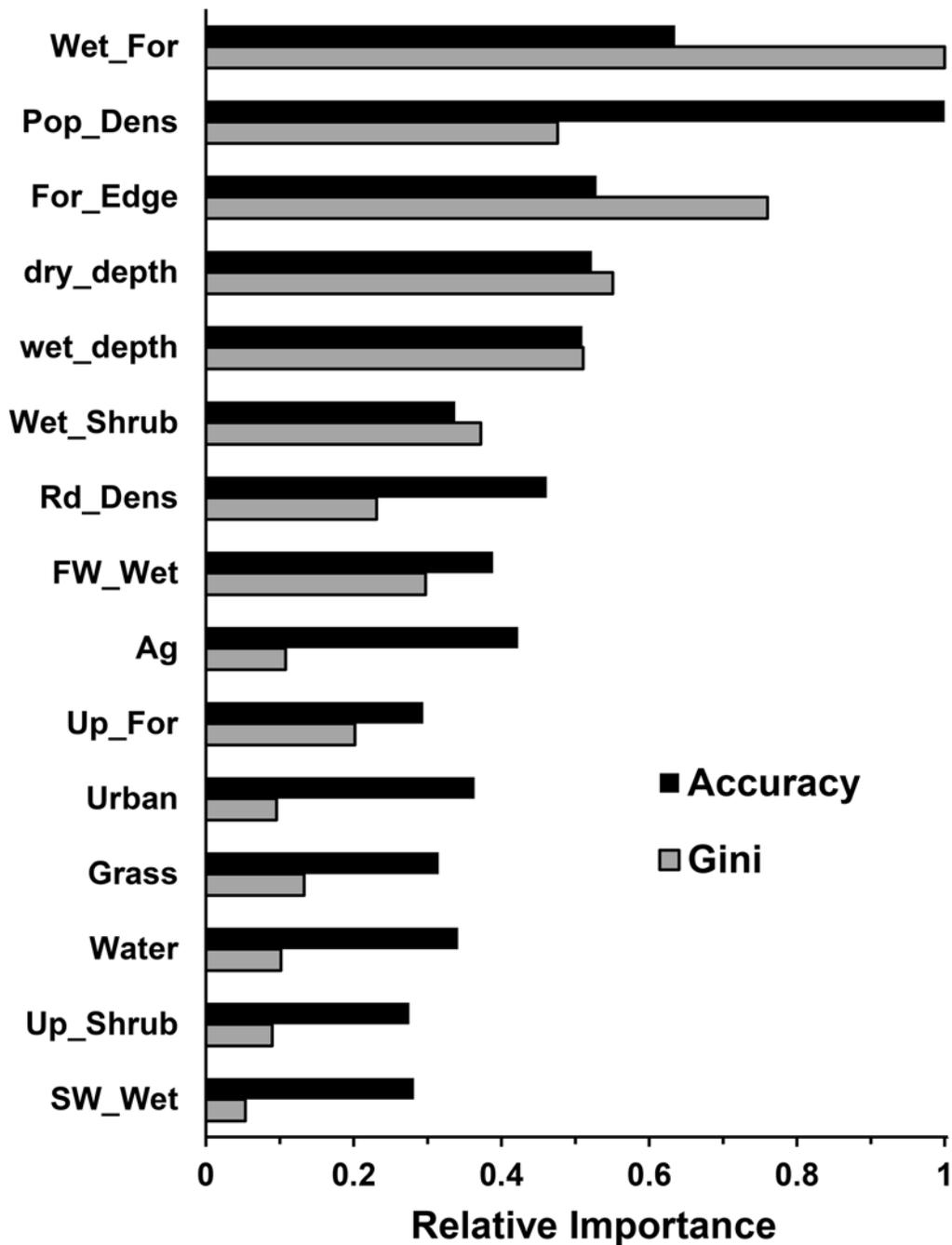
**Table 2. Accuracy metrics for the Florida panther habitat model.**

Method of Calculation	PCC <sup>a</sup>	Specificity	Sensitivity	Kappa	AUC <sup>b</sup>
resubstitution	98.7	98.5	99.1	0.97	1.00
out-of-bag	87.7	87.6	87.7	0.71	0.95
10-fold cross validation	87.5	87.4	87.7	0.71	0.95

<sup>a</sup>Percent correctly classified.

<sup>b</sup>Area under the receiver operating characteristic curve.

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**Fig 4. Variable importance.** Importance was calculated based on mean decrease in model accuracy (black bars) and mean decrease in Gini index (gray bars). Importance scores were standardized relative to the most important variable by each method. Variables are ranked from highest to lowest importance, based on combined scores from the two methods. Wet For = wetland forest, Pop Dens = human population density, For Edge = forest edge, dry depth = average dry season water depth, wet depth = average wet season water depth, Wet Shrub = wetland shrub, Rd Dens = road density, FW Wet = open freshwater wetlands, Ag = agricultural, Up For = upland forest, Grass = grasslands/dry prairies, Water = open water, Up Shrub = upland shrub, SW Wet = saltwater wetland.

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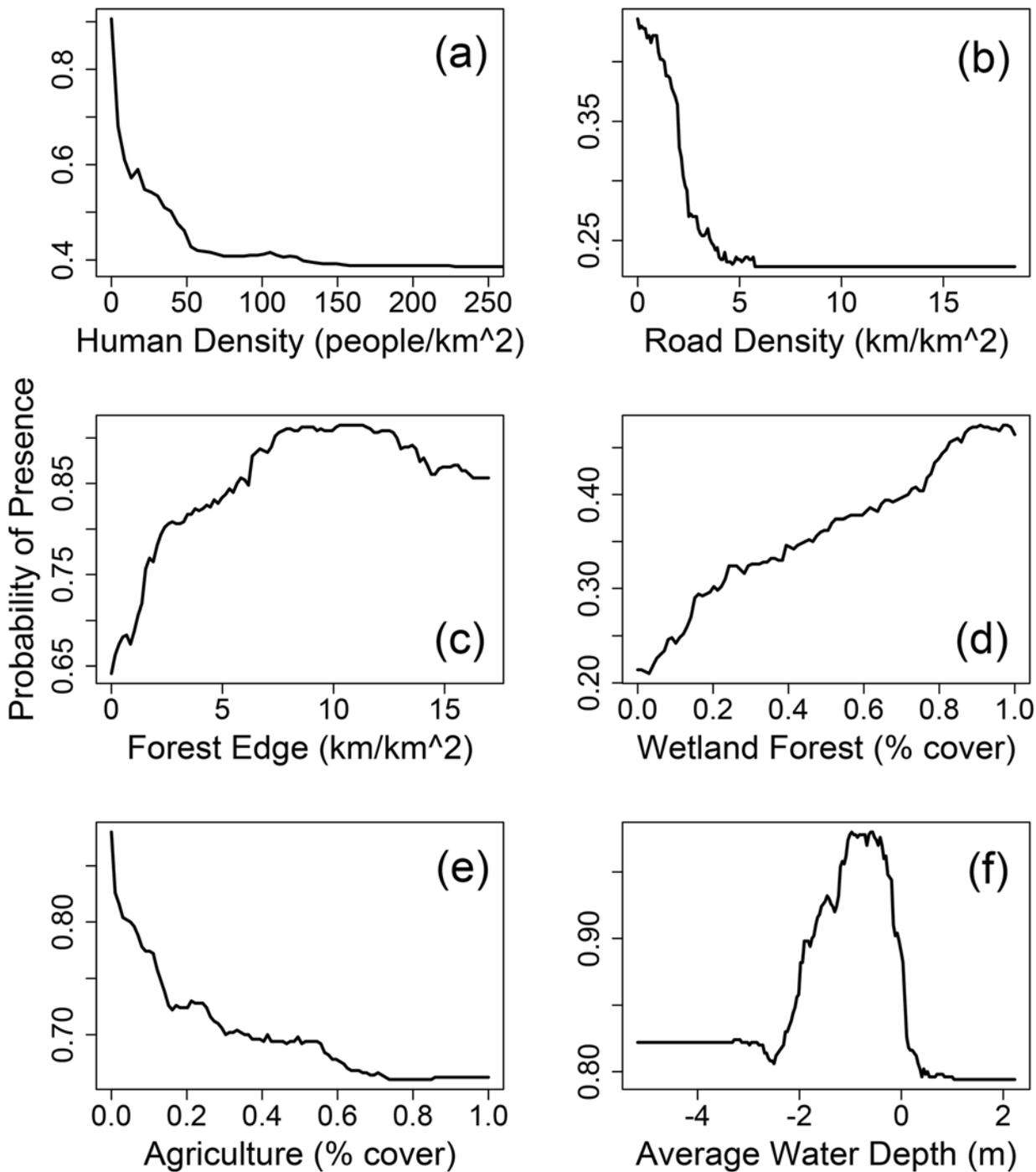
edge were the most important variables according to the Gini index. The top five variables were the same by both importance measures, although in different order. Using the combined relative importance from the two methods, the order of variable importance was wetland forest > human density > forest edge > dry season water depth > wet season water depth. It is surprising that both water depth variables were included in the top five, even though they were highly collinear. Wetland shrubs, road density, freshwater wetlands, and agricultural use were of medium importance relative to the other variables. The upland cover types (upland forests, grasslands, and upland shrubs) did not score as highly in importance as expected. Along with urban, open water, and saltwater wetlands, these were among the least predictive variables. There was greater variation in importance among the variables based on the Gini index compared with model accuracy. According to the accuracy analysis, all variables contributed somewhat to model accuracy.

**Sensitivity analysis.** Sensitivity analysis results for six of the most important predictor variables are shown in Fig 5. Small increases in human density were predicted to have a pronounced negative effect on the probability of panther presence ( $P$ ) (Fig 5a). In excellent (high  $P$  value) panther habitat, when human density increased from 0 to 10 people per km<sup>2</sup>, the model predicted a 0.3 decrease in the probability of panther use. At 50 people per km<sup>2</sup>,  $P$  decreased by almost 0.5. Likelihood of use by panthers continued to decrease up to about 140 people per grid cell, at which point further increases in human density had little effect. The human density variable had a similar but less pronounced effect on model outputs in lesser quality habitat. A related variable, road density was another strong negative predictor of panther presence. In medium quality habitat, a cell with no roads was predicted to be about twice as likely to support adult panthers than a cell with 5 km of roads (Fig 5b). Road density had its maximal effect at the middle ranges of  $P$ , but the effect was similar in all ranges. Since human population and roads generally occur together, the combined impact of increased roads and increased population density in residential developments, even low density developments, is predicted to be large.

The probability of panther presence was positively related to amount of forest edge, peaking at about 8 km of forest edge per cell (Fig 5c). Increasing forest edge from 0 to 8 km produced a corresponding increase of 0.36 in  $P$  in good quality panther habitat. The effect was similar but less pronounced in low  $P$  ranges. Beyond 8 km of forest edge, no further increase in  $P$  was observed. Increasing the amount of wetland forest cover in low quality habitat caused a steady increase in  $P$  from 0.21 up to 0.47 (Fig 5d). The increase was fairly constant throughout the entire range of forest coverage from 0 to 100%. The effect was similar at higher  $P$  ranges but began to drop off at about 80%.

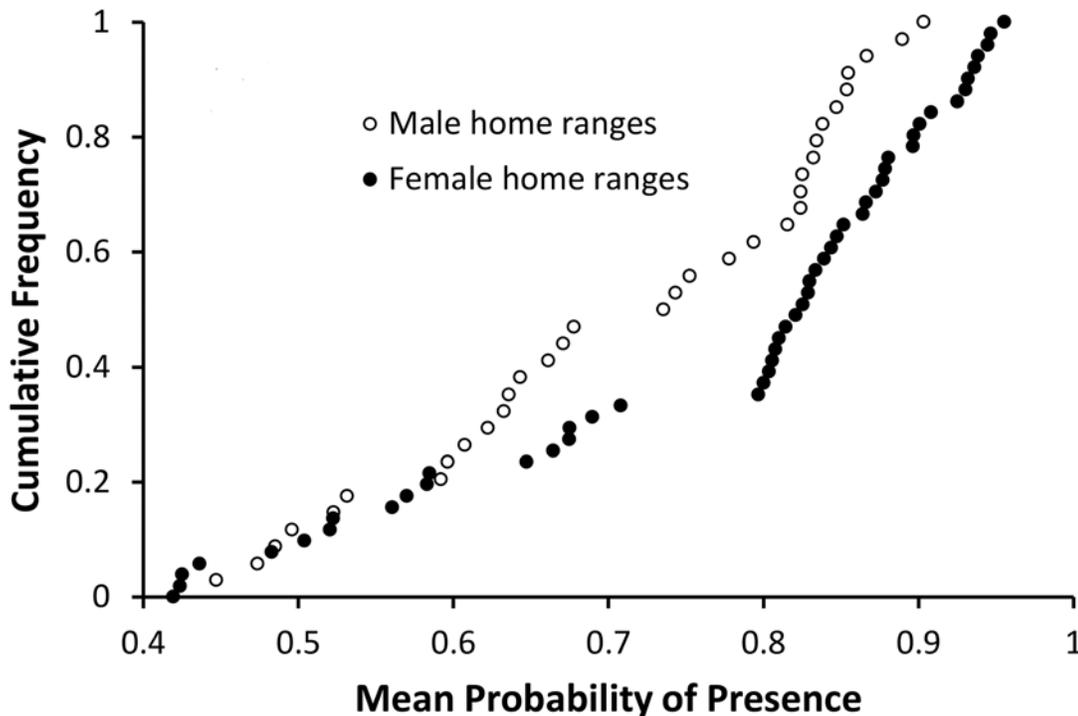
Agricultural uses other than pasture within a grid cell were predicted to reduce its suitability for panthers, particularly in otherwise good (high  $P$ ) habitat (Fig 5e). Panther presence was most likely when the average water level was just below ground surface. In high quality habitat,  $P$  was highest when the average water depth in the dry season was between -2 m and 0 m, and dropped off sharply on either side of this range. Peak probability of presence occurred at -0.6 m average water depth (Fig 5f). Average wet season water depths showed a similar probability profile. The other variables in the model had less profound or inconsistent effects. For example, increasing amounts of shrub (both upland and wetland) were predicted to have a positive effect on poor habitat and a negative effect on good habitat. Upland forest had a consistent positive effect but the maximum gain in  $P$  was less than 0.1.

The average probability of presence for each of the 87 panther home ranges was between 0.35 and 0.96, with a median value of 0.81. Except for one male with an unusually large home range, no panther home range had an average  $P$  below 0.4. Female panthers selected slightly higher quality habitat than males ( $p < 0.01$ , Wilcoxon rank sum test) (Fig 6).



**Fig 5. Sensitivity of model predictions (probability of presence, *P*) to changes in selected explanatory variables.** (a) human population density; (b) road density; (c) forest edge; (d) wetland forest cover; (e) agriculture (other than pasture); (f) average dry season water depth. The response to each variable was examined at high, medium and low ranges of *P*. The *P* range where the variable had its largest effect is shown.

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**Fig 6. Average probability of presence in Florida panther home ranges.** Males (open circles): median = 0.74,  $n = 35$ ; females (solid circles): median = 0.82,  $n = 52$ . One male home range (average  $P = 0.35$ ) is not shown.

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## Discussion

### Panther habitat

The most important factors determining panther presence or absence in a given cell were (1) the amount of forest cover, (2) human population density, (3) the amount of forest edge, and (4) the average water level (Fig 4). To our knowledge, this is the first model to demonstrate the importance of forest edge and water depth in panther habitat use, although other studies have examined related factors such as forest patch size [5, 7, 9, 36] and water regime (duration of flooding) [10]. A more widely applicable but still accurate model could probably be built based on the above four factors alone. However, with RF modeling when the objective is accurate prediction within the region, as was the case here, there is no compelling reason to reduce the number of variables. Our analysis showed that all variables made some contribution to model accuracy, however slight in some cases.

In the western states, the distribution of cougars is influenced by the amount of topographic heterogeneity and the quantity of forested cover [37], and in south Florida forested habitats have been shown to be important to panthers [4–9, 38], although it is topographically flat [39]. Maehr and Cox [5] and Maehr and Deason [36] asserted that Florida panthers used only forest patches >500 ha in size. However, Kautz et al. [7] and Onorato et al. [9] showed that forest patches of all sizes are used. Results from our study are consistent with the latter in that, related to forest patch size, the amount of forest edge was a highly predictive variable of adult panther presence. Studies by Holmes and Laundré [21] and Laundré and Loxterman [22] suggested that forest edges provide the necessary structural components for successful hunting by pumas, and Laundré and Hernández [40] concluded that use of edge areas allowed a puma to observe deer out in the open and to ambush deer as they moved between open and forest patches.

Other studies have suggested that edge might be an important factor in panther habitat selection [5, 9]. Onorato et al. [9] reported often encountering panther kills in forests adjacent to more open habitats. We hypothesize that the importance of forest edge to panthers in south Florida is primarily as hunting and feeding habitat.

The extent of upland forest in our study area (895 km<sup>2</sup>) was small, and 333 km<sup>2</sup> (37%) of that occurred outside the Primary Zone, in isolated patches surrounded by residential or agricultural land cover types. In addition, many areas used intensively by panthers within the Primary Zone contained very little land cover classified by FLUCCS as upland forest. Therefore, our model did not find upland forest cover to be a major factor in predicting presence of adult panthers on a landscape scale. However, upland forests ranked high in habitats selected *within* panther home ranges [6–9]. Benson et al. [41] found that panthers tended to select upland hardwoods, pinelands, and mixed wet forests for den sites. They suggested that the use of upland forests for denning may be a behavioral mechanism to maximize offspring survival in the flood-prone landscape of south Florida. However, panthers also selected mixed wet forests as den sites, did not avoid cypress swamps, and even denned in freshwater marsh [41]. Previous studies also found that panthers selected cypress swamps [6, 7]. Therefore, the importance of upland forest in panther habitat selection remains unclear, but it is obvious that forest cover in general is an essential element of panther habitat.

A consistent characteristic of panther den sites was extremely dense understory of saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), thickets, shrubs, or vines [17, 41]. Benson et al. [41] suggested that hydrology and resulting understory conditions in upland habitat types at least partially explain why pinelands and upland hardwoods were strongly selected by females as den sites. Our model showed that hydrology is indeed one of the most important factors determining the presence of adult panthers. The model indicated that the probability of adult panther presence is greatest when average water levels are just below the surface and drops off rapidly as water depths increase or decrease. Conditions would probably be optimal for the growth of dense understory vegetation when water depths are just below the surface. As water depths increasingly fall below the surface, however, understory vegetation may become less dense and, therefore, less usable to panthers. In addition, the areas within our study area where water depths were well below the surface were often associated with agricultural and urban land cover types.

Human land uses avoided by panthers on the landscape scale are also important in predicting panther presence or absence. Our model indicated that urbanized areas (as represented by human population and/or road density) were strong negative predictors of adult panther presence. The probability of adult panther presence dropped off precipitously as the number of people and roads per unit area increased (Fig 5a and 5b). The conversion of land for urban or agricultural uses eliminates, fragments, and alters panther habitat. Research by Burdett et al. [42] indicated that pumas avoided intensively developed suburban or urban areas, showed a negative response to exurban development (but individual responses were variable), and responded neutrally to rural development (again, individual responses were variable). In our model, agriculture (excluding pasture and rangelands) was of medium importance as a variable and had a pronounced negative effect on panther habitat.

## Comparison with previous landscape model

The boundary of the panther Primary Zone as drawn by Kautz et al. [7] was supported by our model, with a few notable exceptions. The Water Conservation Areas on the east side of the Primary Zone, the Shark River Slough in Everglades National Park, and the long, narrow corridor extending east from the Primary Zone and bisecting the Secondary Zone, do not contain adult panther habitat according to the probabilities assigned to those areas by our model (Fig

3b). These areas probably are used by transient males and fit more closely to the definition of the Secondary Zone [7]. The Shark River Slough portion, although not breeding panther habitat, is nevertheless an important connection between the main subpopulation to the north and the smaller Everglades subpopulation to the south, and thus represents an area that may be essential to panther survival and recovery. This area is currently protected within Everglades National Park, although rising water levels in this region could sever connections between the two subpopulations.

The RF model indicates that 5579 km<sup>2</sup> of suitable adult panther habitat remain in southern Florida. Of this, 1399 km<sup>2</sup> (25%) is in non-protected private ownership. Of the available breeding habitat, approximately 5232 km<sup>2</sup> (93.8%) is contained within the Primary Zone defined by Kautz et al. [7], and 211 km<sup>2</sup> (3.8%) is contained within their Secondary Zone. The remaining lands classified as adult habitat by our model (135.8 km<sup>2</sup>, 2.4%) are disjunct patches outside the Primary and Secondary zones and are seldom used by panthers, except for transient males (Fig 3b).

The Secondary Zone of Kautz et al. [7] is of little value to breeding panthers in its current state (Fig 3). Our model predicted an overall average probability of use of 0.086 for the Secondary Zone, compared with 0.455 for the Primary Zone. The former is much less than the minimum average value of a panther home range (0.352), suggesting that an adult panther could not establish a home range there. Kautz et al. [7] estimated that the effective area of the Secondary Zone is about 34.5% of that in the Primary Zone. In contrast, our model identified only 211 km<sup>2</sup> of potential adult habitat in the Secondary Zone, compared with 5232 km<sup>2</sup> in the Primary Zone (4.0%). Although containing little suitable habitat for adult, breeding panthers, the Secondary Zone is still important as a refuge for transient, non-breeding panthers. It also provides crucial connectivity to unoccupied areas and has the potential to be restored to more productive habitat.

Our study suggests that changes are needed to current conservation policies and practices for the Florida panther, especially with regard to methodologies for calculating habitat needs and impacts from development. For example, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Panther Habitat Assessment Methodology (see Biological Opinions issued by USFWS since 2003 [43]) under-values the remaining adult habitat by overestimating the value of lands outside the Primary Zone. The USFWS methodology currently assumes lands in the Secondary Zone have a 69% equivalency with those in the Primary Zone. Our model shows that these lands, and a large portion of the Primary Zone itself, are of little value to support a breeding population of Florida panthers. As a result, compensation in the form of habitat protection required by the agency to offset losses due to development has been largely inadequate, because our study suggests that the amount of habitat remaining has been significantly overestimated. Even if all of the adult habitat within southern Florida had the maximum adult density of 2.80 panthers per 100 km<sup>2</sup> as reported in Quigley and Hornocker [44], the total population would remain below 240 adults and subadults, a population size thought to be necessary to maintain genetic viability and a high probability of persistence [7]. Coupled with our findings, this indicates that there is not enough adult panther (breeding) habitat remaining in south Florida to maintain one genetically viable population.

## Conclusions

Our study has attempted to identify the remaining adult (breeding) habitat for the Florida panther south of the Caloosahatchee River. This population may already be at or close to carrying capacity, yet the panther population is probably below what is required for long-term genetic viability. Therefore, protection of the remaining breeding habitat in south Florida is essential

to the survival and recovery of the subspecies and should receive the highest priority by regulatory agencies. Further loss of adult panther habitat is likely to reduce the prospects for survival of the existing population, and decrease the probability of natural expansion of the population into south-central Florida. This model is suitable for use by conservation agencies attempting to identify and protect the most valuable panther habitat in south Florida. Because it assigns a numerical “score” (probability of presence) to each square km in the study area, it will help managers to rank and prioritize those areas most important to panther survival. It will also be useful for calculating compensation for the inevitable habitat losses that will occur. One of the strong points of the model is its regional specificity for the unique south Florida landscape. However, it should be used with caution outside south Florida, due to the dominance of wetland habitats there compared to other areas.

## Supporting Information

**S1 Table. Landscape Data for South Florida Study Area.**  
(CSV)

**S1 Text. Detailed Water Depth Methodology.**  
(DOCX)

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*Disclaimer:* The findings and conclusions in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

## Author Contributions

Conceived and designed the experiments: RAF RCB. Performed the experiments: RAF. Analyzed the data: RAF RCB BEW FEJ. Wrote the paper: RAF RCB FEJ. GIS analysis: BEW RAF. Hydrological calculations: FEJ.

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**To:** [Phillips, Catherine](#)  
**Cc:** [Matthew Dekar](#); [Scott, David](#)  
**Subject:** Re: panther science  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 21, 2020 10:53:44 AM  
**Attachments:** [20200116 Email Chain Tawes et al Panther Chapter ECMSHCP BO.pdf](#)

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Thanks Cathy. I have not seen the draft panther chapter that is being reviewed in the field office but have encouraged Dave Shindle's review of it. (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP (b)(5)DPP, and I believe he was set to review the BO late last week. I have attached my latest communication with the field office on the matter.

Dave has been very good at bringing a recovery-focused and cooperative landscape level conservation perspective to our discussions on the East Collier project - his panther expertise and knowledge of the literature has helped immensely.

I will continue to reinforce that his review is needed but ultimately he is supervised by Rox/Larry and the South FL field office (i.e., I do not have line authority). Rob

On Tue, Jan 21, 2020 at 12:00 PM Phillips, Catherine <[catherine\\_phillips@fws.gov](mailto:catherine_phillips@fws.gov)> wrote:

Rob,

As we are moving forward with the East Collier BO work, please continue to make sure that Dave Shindle (as Service recovery lead) is actively reviewing the model and the information and publications it is based on to ensure we are using the best available science.

Thank you for your diligence and oversight on this matter.

Catherine

Catherine T. Phillips, Ph.D.  
Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services  
South Atlantic-Gulf and Mississippi Basin  
Interior Regions  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1875 Century Boulevard  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
404-679-7085  
404-450-7563 (cell)

--

Rob W. Tawes  
Chief, Division of Environmental Review  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
South Atlantic, Gulf & Mississippi Basin Regions  
1875 Century Boulevard  
Atlanta, GA 30345

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[www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)

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Tawes, Robert &lt;robert\_tawes@fws.gov&gt;

---

**Re: panther chapter for ECMSHCP BO**

---

**Cassler, Constance** <constance\_cassler@fws.gov>

Thu, Jan 16, 2020 at 9:43 AM

To: "Tawes, Robert" &lt;robert\_tawes@fws.gov&gt;

Cc: David Dell &lt;david\_dell@fws.gov&gt;, Heath Rauschenberger &lt;heath\_rauschenberger@fws.gov&gt;

Hi,

David Shindle says he is reviewing it today. Larry hasn't seen it yet either. We haven't talked about timeframes yet, but I can discuss timeframes with Roxanna this afternoon when we talk to Ken.

Connie

Constance L. Cassler, Ph.D.  
Supervisory Fish and Wildlife Biologist  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1339 20th Street  
Vero Beach, Florida 32960  
office: 772-469-4243  
fax: 772-562-4288  
email: [constance\\_cassler@fws.gov](mailto:constance_cassler@fws.gov)

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Follow us on InstaGram @usfws\_south\_florida  
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On Thu, Jan 16, 2020 at 9:21 AM Tawes, Robert &lt;robert\_tawes@fws.gov&gt; wrote:

Thanks Connie. I know the field office (Larry) was going to make a recommendation. Have y'all decided on the timeframe for that? Does the panther chapter represent Larry's recommendation? Has David Shindle reviewed it? Thanks!

On Thu, Jan 16, 2020 at 9:05 AM Cassler, Constance &lt;constance\_cassler@fws.gov&gt; wrote:

Good morning,

I know I told you the panther chapter would be finished last Friday, and it was. However, I didn't realize you all weren't on the email when Ken sent it until yesterday. Roxanna and I have read it and are meeting with Ken to discuss our comments and questions this afternoon. This means the document will be more polished when it reaches you. I'll try to give you an idea of when you will get an updated draft later today. Sorry for the confusion.

Connie

Constance L. Cassler, Ph.D.  
Supervisory Fish and Wildlife Biologist  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1339 20th Street  
Vero Beach, Florida 32960  
office: 772-469-4243  
fax: 772-562-4288  
email: [constance\\_cassler@fws.gov](mailto:constance_cassler@fws.gov)

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Follow us on Facebook @USFWSSouthFlorida  
Follow us on InstaGram @usfws\_south\_florida

[Visit our web site at www.fws.gov/verobeach/](http://www.fws.gov/verobeach/)

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--

Rob W. Tawes  
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[shannon.goessling@sol.doi.gov](mailto:shannon.goessling@sol.doi.gov)

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On Feb 21, 2020, at 4:33 PM, Shannon Goessling  
<[shannon.goessling@sol.doi.gov](mailto:shannon.goessling@sol.doi.gov)> wrote:

Leo,

(b)(5)AC(b)(5)AC(b)(5)AC(b)(5)AC  
(b)(5)AC(b)(5)AC(b)(5)AC(b)(5)AC(b)(5)AC  
(b)(5)AC(b)(5)AC(b)(5)AC(b)(5)AC

Thanks,  
Shannon

**Shannon L. Goessling**

Field Special Assistant to the Secretary

Interior Region 2|South Atlantic-Gulf

U.S. Department of Interior |Office of the Secretary

Regional Solicitor

Interior Region 2|South Atlantic-Gulf & Interior Region 4|Mississippi  
Basin

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**From:** [Goessling, Shannon](#)  
**To:** [Phillips, Catherine](#)  
**Cc:** [Miranda, Leopoldo](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Fw: Meeting to discuss HCP project  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 6:01:53 AM

---

Cathy,

Thank you for this effort. (b)(5)ACP (b)(5)ACP (b)(5)ACP (b)(5)ACP (b)(5)ACP (b)(5)ACP  
(b)(5)ACP (b)(5)ACP (b)(5)ACP (b)(5)ACP (b)(5)ACP (b)(5)ACP (b)(5)ACP (b)(5)ACP (b)(5)ACP  
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(b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC

Best,  
Shannon

**Shannon L. Goessling**

Field Special Assistant to the Secretary

Interior Region 2 | South Atlantic-Gulf

U.S. Department of Interior | Office of the Secretary

Regional Solicitor

Interior Region 2 | South Atlantic-Gulf & Interior Region 4 | Mississippi Basin

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On Mon, Feb 24, 2020 at 7:41 AM Phillips, Catherine <[catherine\\_phillips@fws.gov](mailto:catherine_phillips@fws.gov)> wrote:

Shannon,

Good morning. (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC  
(b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC (b)(5)AC

Catherine

Catherine T. Phillips, Ph.D.  
Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services  
South-Atlantic Gulf and Mississippi Basin  
1875 Century Blvd  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
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404-450-7563 (cell)

---

**From:** Christian Spilker <[CSpilker@collierenterprises.com](mailto:CSpilker@collierenterprises.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, February 24, 2020 6:11 AM

**To:** Dove, William T <[william\\_dove@ios.doi.gov](mailto:william_dove@ios.doi.gov)>

**Cc:** Miranda, Leopoldo <[Leopoldo\\_Miranda@fws.gov](mailto:Leopoldo_Miranda@fws.gov)>; Tawes, Robert <[robert\\_tawes@fws.gov](mailto:robert_tawes@fws.gov)>; Dell, David <[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)>; Williams, Larry O <[larry\\_williams@fws.gov](mailto:larry_williams@fws.gov)>; Hinzman, Roxanna <[roxanna\\_hinzman@fws.gov](mailto:roxanna_hinzman@fws.gov)>; Phillips, Catherine <[catherine\\_phillips@fws.gov](mailto:catherine_phillips@fws.gov)>; Cassler, Constance <[constance\\_cassler@fws.gov](mailto:constance_cassler@fws.gov)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Meeting to discuss HCP project

Dear Mr. Dove,

I wanted to thank you for your offer to meet and to clarify the nature of our request. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the legal standard governing the determination of "effects of the action" in the biological opinion, under 50 C.F.R. 402.02, with respect to future offsite third party vehicle collisions with panthers. We requested the meeting after our counsel and the Regional Solicitor's office reached an impasse on the legal issue and agreed that resolution would likely require discussion with the Solicitor's Office in Washington. After we provided notice to the Region that we would be requesting a meeting, our counsel contacted the Solicitor's Office in Washington to ask for a meeting on the legal issue, and was asked to place the request in writing with brief background and include Director Skipwith in

the request. All other aspects of the HCP review are pending with officials in the Southeast Region.

We look forward to discussing this matter in the hopes of reaching resolution and making progress toward implementation of the HCP.

Regards,

Christian Spilker  
Senior Vice President of Land  
Collier Enterprises

---

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**From:** [Goessling, Shannon](#)  
**To:** [Leopoldo Miranda](#); [Phillips, Catherine](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: fWS Regional Director, Regional Solicitor and ECPO  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2020 6:08:12 AM

---

FYI

To assist in moving things in the direction we've agreed.

**Shannon L. Goessling**

Field Special Assistant to the Secretary

Interior Region 2 | South Atlantic-Gulf

U.S. Department of Interior | Office of the Secretary

Regional Solicitor

Interior Region 2 | South Atlantic-Gulf & Interior Region 4 | Mississippi Basin

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From: **Goessling, Shannon** <[shannon.goessling@sol.doi.gov](mailto:shannon.goessling@sol.doi.gov)>

Date: Mon, Feb 24, 2020 at 8:07 AM

Subject: fWS Regional Director, Regional Solicitor and ECPO

To: Turner, Andrew <[aturner@hunton.com](mailto:aturner@hunton.com)>

Good morning, Andrew,

I have been told that the Regional Solicitor and ECPO have reached an impasse and agreed it should be elevated for consideration in Washington, I was not advised of an impasse nor of any agreement by me that the matter should be elevated. Leo Miranda, Regional Director at FWS, and I agree that we, as SESers in the South Atlantic-Gulf Region, should have an opportunity to address your and your clients' concerns. I am requesting that the Regional FWS and SOL, and you and your clients get together to discuss the issue. I believe FWS is also communicating a similar message. Please let me know your thoughts.

Best regards,  
Shannon

**Shannon L. Goessling**

Field Special Assistant to the Secretary

Interior Region 2|South Atlantic-Gulf

U.S. Department of Interior |Office of the Secretary

Regional Solicitor

Interior Region 2|South Atlantic-Gulf & Interior Region 4|Mississippi Basin

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**From:** [Pitchford, Daffny](#)  
**To:** [Miranda, Leopoldo](#)  
**Cc:** [Barnhill, Laurel](#); [Oetker, Michael](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today  
**Date:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 1:38:08 PM  
**Attachments:** [Tobias proposed questions and answers.docx](#)

---

Daffny Pitchford  
Acting ARD - External Affairs  
South Atlantic-Gulf and Mississippi Basin Interior Regions, NWRS  
1875 Century Blvd.  
Suite 200  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
(404) 679-7163  
(540) 602-8499(cell)

---

**From:** Miranda, Leopoldo <Leopoldo\_Miranda@fws.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 3:29 PM  
**To:** Pitchford, Daffny <Daffny\_Pitchford@fws.gov>  
**Cc:** Barnhill, Laurel <Laurel\_Barnhill@fws.gov>; Oetker, Michael <Michael\_Oetker@fws.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today

Can you attach? I can't get to it through the link

Leo

Leopoldo Miranda, Regional Director  
USFWS, South Atlantic-Gulf &  
Mississippi-Basin  
[404-679-4000](tel:404-679-4000)

Sent from my iPhone

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On Apr 23, 2020, at 3:03 PM, Pitchford, Daffny <[Daffny\\_Pitchford@fws.gov](mailto:Daffny_Pitchford@fws.gov)> wrote:

Good Afternoon Folks,

Just received surname from ES. Can you review so that I can get this media request to HQs.

[Tobias proposed questions and answers.docx](#)

Daffny Pitchford  
Acting ARD - External Affairs  
South Atlantic-Gulf and Mississippi Basin Interior Regions, NWRS  
1875 Century Blvd.  
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Atlanta, GA 30345  
(404) 679-7163  
(540) 602-8499(cell)

---

**From:** Phillips, Catherine <[catherine\\_phillips@fws.gov](mailto:catherine_phillips@fws.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 2:55 PM  
**To:** Pitchford, Daffny <[Daffny\\_Pitchford@fws.gov](mailto:Daffny_Pitchford@fws.gov)>; Tirpak, John <[John\\_Tirpak@fws.gov](mailto:John_Tirpak@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Mitchell, Jennifer S <[jennifer\\_mitchell@fws.gov](mailto:jennifer_mitchell@fws.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today

Hi Daffny. I reviewed and the responses look appropriate. Consider this my surname. Do I need to do something in DTS, as well?

Catherine T. Phillips, Ph.D.  
Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services  
South-Atlantic Gulf and Mississippi Basin  
1875 Century Blvd  
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---

**From:** Pitchford, Daffny <[Daffny\\_Pitchford@fws.gov](mailto:Daffny_Pitchford@fws.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 6:20 AM  
**To:** Phillips, Catherine <[catherine\\_phillips@fws.gov](mailto:catherine_phillips@fws.gov)>; Tirpak, John <[John\\_Tirpak@fws.gov](mailto:John_Tirpak@fws.gov)>  
**Subject:** Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today

Good Morning,

I would like to get this to Leo sometime this morning. Can you look at the proposed answers to the inquiry we received from Jimmy Tobias and surname the document so I can get this to the RDs Office to comment on before we send back to HQ. If you would like to make changes, please do so in Track Changes mode and surname the document at the top.

[Tobias proposed questions and answers.docx](#)

Thanks so much!!  
Daffny Pitchford

Acting ARD - External Affairs  
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1875 Century Blvd.  
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Atlanta, GA 30345  
(404) 679-7163  
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---

**From:** Kloer, Philip B <[philip\\_kloer@fws.gov](mailto:philip_kloer@fws.gov)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, April 22, 2020 2:32 PM

**To:** Pitchford, Daffny <[Daffny\\_Pitchford@fws.gov](mailto:Daffny_Pitchford@fws.gov)>

**Subject:** Need RO surname on answers for journalist on Florida panther

Daffny: A journalist named Jimmy Tobias, who has not played fair with us in the past, is asking questions of HQ EA about Florida panther and a specific controversial program. Here are proposed answers. Given the nature I thought this should be reviewed by you, ES ARD and RD's office so no is surprised.  
Thanks.

**Phil Kloer**  
**Public Affairs Specialist**  
**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**  
**Southeast Region**  
**Atlanta, GA**  
**404-679-7299 (office)**  
**404-644-7193 (mobile)**

*"When wildlife wins, people win."*



**From:** [Oetker, Michael](#)  
**To:** [Miranda, Leopoldo](#); [Pitchford, Daffny](#)  
**Cc:** [Barnhill, Laurel](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today  
**Date:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 1:57:25 PM

---

I do not have any changes or edits.

Mike

Mike Oetker  
Deputy Regional Director  
Interior Regions 2 & 4  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
404-679-4000

---

**From:** Miranda, Leopoldo <Leopoldo\_Miranda@fws.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 3:44 PM  
**To:** Pitchford, Daffny <Daffny\_Pitchford@fws.gov>  
**Cc:** Barnhill, Laurel <Laurel\_Barnhill@fws.gov>; Oetker, Michael <Michael\_Oetker@fws.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today

Thanks Daffny! Check on the question we just talked about and if no changes to answer #1, then, consider this my surname....

Leo

Leopoldo Miranda, Regional Director  
USFWS, South Atlantic-Gulf &  
Mississippi-Basin  
[404-679-4000](tel:404-679-4000)

Sent from my iPhone

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On Apr 23, 2020, at 3:38 PM, Pitchford, Daffny <[Daffny\\_Pitchford@fws.gov](mailto:Daffny_Pitchford@fws.gov)> wrote:

Daffny Pitchford  
Acting ARD - External Affairs  
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1875 Century Blvd.  
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---

**From:** Miranda, Leopoldo <[Leopoldo\\_Miranda@fws.gov](mailto:Leopoldo_Miranda@fws.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 3:29 PM  
**To:** Pitchford, Daffny <[Daffny\\_Pitchford@fws.gov](mailto:Daffny_Pitchford@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Barnhill, Laurel <[Laurel\\_Barnhill@fws.gov](mailto:Laurel_Barnhill@fws.gov)>; Oetker, Michael <[Michael\\_Oetker@fws.gov](mailto:Michael_Oetker@fws.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today

Can you attach? I can't get to it through the link

Leo

Leopoldo Miranda, Regional Director  
USFWS, South Atlantic-Gulf &  
Mississippi-Basin  
[404-679-4000](tel:404-679-4000)

Sent from my iPhone

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 [Tobias proposed questions and answers.docx](#)

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**Sent:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 2:55 PM  
**To:** Pitchford, Daffny <[Daffny\\_Pitchford@fws.gov](mailto:Daffny_Pitchford@fws.gov)>; Tirpak, John <[John\\_Tirpak@fws.gov](mailto:John_Tirpak@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Mitchell, Jennifer S <[jennifer\\_mitchell@fws.gov](mailto:jennifer_mitchell@fws.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today

Hi Daffny. I reviewed and the responses look appropriate. Consider this my surname. Do I need to do something in DTS, as well?

Catherine T. Phillips, Ph.D.  
Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services  
South-Atlantic Gulf and Mississippi Basin  
1875 Century Blvd  
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404-679-7085  
404-450-7563 (cell)

---

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**Sent:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 6:20 AM  
**To:** Phillips, Catherine <[catherine\\_phillips@fws.gov](mailto:catherine_phillips@fws.gov)>; Tirpak, John <[John\\_Tirpak@fws.gov](mailto:John_Tirpak@fws.gov)>  
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 [Tobias proposed questions and answers.docx](#)

Thanks so much!!  
Daffny Pitchford  
Acting ARD - External Affairs  
South Atlantic-Gulf and Mississippi Basin Interior Regions, NWRS  
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Atlanta, GA 30345  
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**Sent:** Wednesday, April 22, 2020 2:32 PM

**To:** Pitchford, Daffny <[Daffny\\_Pitchford@fws.gov](mailto:Daffny_Pitchford@fws.gov)>

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Thanks.

**Phil Kloer**

**Public Affairs Specialist**

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

**Southeast Region**

**Atlanta, GA**

**404-679-7299 (office)**

**404-644-7193 (mobile)**

*"When wildlife wins, people win."*

<Tobias proposed questions and answers.docx>

**From:** [Pitchford, Daffny](#)  
**To:** [Miranda, Leopoldo](#)  
**Cc:** [Barnhill, Laurel](#); [Oetker, Michael](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today  
**Date:** Friday, April 24, 2020 9:45:37 AM

---

Closing the loop. Jim Boggs was not involved so I will let them know to send on up now.

Thanks!!

Daffny Pitchford  
Acting ARD - External Affairs  
South Atlantic-Gulf and Mississippi Basin Interior Regions, NWRS  
1875 Century Blvd.  
Suite 200  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
(404) 679-7163  
(540) 602-8499(cell)

---

**From:** Miranda, Leopoldo <Leopoldo\_Miranda@fws.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 3:43 PM  
**To:** Pitchford, Daffny <Daffny\_Pitchford@fws.gov>  
**Cc:** Barnhill, Laurel <Laurel\_Barnhill@fws.gov>; Oetker, Michael <Michael\_Oetker@fws.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today

Thanks Daffny! Check on the question we just talked about and if no changes to answer #1, then, consider this my surname....

Leo

Leopoldo Miranda, Regional Director  
USFWS, South Atlantic-Gulf &  
Mississippi-Basin  
[404-679-4000](tel:404-679-4000)

Sent from my iPhone

***NOTE: This email correspondence and any attachments to and from this sender is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be disclosed to third parties.***

On Apr 23, 2020, at 3:38 PM, Pitchford, Daffny <[Daffny\\_Pitchford@fws.gov](mailto:Daffny_Pitchford@fws.gov)> wrote:

Daffny Pitchford  
Acting ARD - External Affairs

South Atlantic-Gulf and Mississippi Basin Interior Regions, NWRS  
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**From:** Miranda, Leopoldo <[Leopoldo\\_Miranda@fws.gov](mailto:Leopoldo_Miranda@fws.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 3:29 PM  
**To:** Pitchford, Daffny <[Daffny\\_Pitchford@fws.gov](mailto:Daffny_Pitchford@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Barnhill, Laurel <[Laurel\\_Barnhill@fws.gov](mailto:Laurel_Barnhill@fws.gov)>; Oetker, Michael <[Michael\\_Oetker@fws.gov](mailto:Michael_Oetker@fws.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today

Can you attach? I can't get to it through the link

Leo

Leopoldo Miranda, Regional Director  
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Good Afternoon Folks,

Just received surname from ES. Can you review so that I can get this media request to HQs.

[Tobias proposed questions and answers.docx](#)

Daffny Pitchford  
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**From:** Phillips, Catherine <[catherine\\_phillips@fws.gov](mailto:catherine_phillips@fws.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 2:55 PM  
**To:** Pitchford, Daffny <[Daffny\\_Pitchford@fws.gov](mailto:Daffny_Pitchford@fws.gov)>; Tirpak, John <[John\\_Tirpak@fws.gov](mailto:John_Tirpak@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Mitchell, Jennifer S <[jennifer\\_mitchell@fws.gov](mailto:jennifer_mitchell@fws.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today

Hi Daffny. I reviewed and the responses look appropriate. Consider this my surname. Do I need to do something in DTS, as well?

Catherine T. Phillips, Ph.D.  
Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services  
South-Atlantic Gulf and Mississippi Basin  
1875 Century Blvd  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
404-679-7085  
404-450-7563 (cell)

---

**From:** Pitchford, Daffny <[Daffny\\_Pitchford@fws.gov](mailto:Daffny_Pitchford@fws.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 23, 2020 6:20 AM  
**To:** Phillips, Catherine <[catherine\\_phillips@fws.gov](mailto:catherine_phillips@fws.gov)>; Tirpak, John <[John\\_Tirpak@fws.gov](mailto:John_Tirpak@fws.gov)>  
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[Tobias proposed questions and answers.docx](#)

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---

**From:** Kloer, Philip B <[philip\\_kloer@fws.gov](mailto:philip_kloer@fws.gov)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, April 22, 2020 2:32 PM

**To:** Pitchford, Daffny <[Daffny\\_Pitchford@fws.gov](mailto:Daffny_Pitchford@fws.gov)>

**Subject:** Need RO surname on answers for journalist on Florida panther

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Thanks.

**Phil Kloer**  
**Public Affairs Specialist**  
**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**  
**Southeast Region**  
**Atlanta, GA**  
**404-679-7299 (office)**  
**404-644-7193 (mobile)**

*"When wildlife wins, people win."*

<Tobias proposed questions and answers.docx>

**From:** [Miranda, Leopoldo](#)  
**To:** [Pitchford, Daffny](#)  
**Cc:** [Barnhill, Laurel](#); [Oetker, Michael](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today  
**Date:** Friday, April 24, 2020 3:46:20 PM

---

Thank you!

Leo

Leopoldo Miranda, Regional Director  
USFWS, South Atlantic-Gulf &  
Mississippi-Basin  
[404-679-4000](tel:404-679-4000)

Sent from my iPhone

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**Cc:** Mitchell, Jennifer S <[jennifer\\_mitchell@fws.gov](mailto:jennifer_mitchell@fws.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: Action - Surname Requested for routing to RD and HQ today

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Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services  
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**Phil Kloer**  
**Public Affairs Specialist**

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

**Southeast Region**

**Atlanta, GA**

**404-679-7299 (office)**

**404-644-7193 (mobile)**

*"When wildlife wins, people win."*

<Tobias proposed questions and answers.docx>

**From:** [Reese, Acquanetta](#)  
**To:** [Leopoldo Miranda](#)  
**Cc:** [Oetker, Mike](#); [Victoria Davis](#); [Maloof, Laura](#); [Tawes, Robert](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: East Collier Multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan: Draft Email and Revised Waiver for the Department  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 26, 2019 10:16:56 AM  
**Attachments:** [signed 20190325 ECMSHCP Request for Waiver of Time.docx](#)

---

Hey Leo.....the email is below along with the email address to send the attached request to and folks to "cc". Your e-sig has been applied to attachment. Let us know if you have any questions. Thanks.

*Acquanetta*

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Tawes, Robert** <[robert\\_tawes@fws.gov](mailto:robert_tawes@fws.gov)>  
**Date:** Tue, Mar 26, 2019 at 11:09 AM  
**Subject:** East Collier Multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan: Draft Email and Revised Waiver for the Department  
**To:** Acquanetta Reese <[acquanetta\\_reese@fws.gov](mailto:acquanetta_reese@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Chris Guy <[chris\\_guy@fws.gov](mailto:chris_guy@fws.gov)>, Larry Williams <[larry\\_williams@fws.gov](mailto:larry_williams@fws.gov)>, Dell, David <[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)>

Acquanetta, here is the draft email for transmittal of the timeline waiver to the Department that I just mentioned. Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information. Rob

-----  
**To:** [nepa.depsec@ios.doi.gov](mailto:nepa.depsec@ios.doi.gov)

**From:** Leo

**cc:** Rob Tawes, Gina Shultz, Trish Adams, Rachel London, David Dell, Maureen Foster

**Subject:** SO 3355 Timeline Waiver Request for East Collier Multi-species HCP

Deputy Secretary's Office - NEPA

Attached please find a request for waiver from SO 3355 timeline requirements. This affects the East Collier Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

Our current, approved deadline for finalizing the Record of Decision is May 29, 2019. We are requesting an extension of 60 days to July 29, 2019, as explained in the attached waiver request.

Please let me know if you have any questions or require additional information.

## Request for Waiver of Time and Page Limits Under S.O. 3355

To: Office of the Deputy Secretary  
Through: Margaret Everson, Principal Deputy Director  
From: Leopoldo Miranda, Southeast Regional Director  
Date: March 26, 2019



1. Bureau or Office Name: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
2. Title of Document: Eastern Collier Property Owners (ECPO or Applicants), Collier County, Florida, Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)
3. Description of Action: Endangered Species Act, section 10 incidental take permit application by 11 landowners that would authorize incidental take of Florida panther and 18 other species due to development and earth mining over a requested 50-year term.
4. Time waiver:  150 Page waiver:  (check all that apply)

5. Was a waiver or extension previously granted, and if so, how much time or many pages were previously approved?

No waiver has been granted previously.

### 6. Description of Reason for Request:

The Draft EIS Notice of Availability closed December 3, 2018. The Applicants committed to providing responses to public comments (~2,000) and these were received February 8, 2019.

On December 20, 2018, the Service provided suggestions to the Applicants to strengthen the HCP based on the public comments received. The Service's next meeting with ECPO was February 1, 2019, where we discussed the suggested revisions. After two subsequent meetings, the Applicants' proposed February 28, 2019, as their initial target date to respond to our suggestions and provide a revised HCP. We received a partial response on March 8, 2019, and on March 25, 2019, the Service received ECPO's full, final version of the HCP. Part of the delay in revising their HCP stemmed from last-minute negotiations among the eleven ECPO members to finalize land-use coverage proposed in the HCP.

The EIS contractor continued work during the partial government shutdown. They provided a revised EIS incorporating public comments on February 22, 2019, and suggested additional analyses of traffic effects. On March 1, 2019, the Service approved the additional work to improve the highway traffic-effects analyses in the EIS. This analysis and the revised EIS were received from the contractor March 15, 2019.

The current Record of Decision (ROD) target date is May 29, 2019, (rescheduled from April 27, 2019, to evenly distribute Review Team briefings). We are requesting to adjust the ROD target date by 60 calendar days to:

- a. Accommodate the Applicants' review and revisions to their HCP in response to public comment and our recommendations.
- b. Allow the Service to review and finalize the latest revisions to the EIS supplied by the contractor.

This revised schedule would target May 10, 2019 for our Stage 5 Departmental briefing and July 29, 2019, for signature on the ROD.

7. Need and deadline (if any) for issuance of waiver(s) decision: We need to accommodate Applicants' desire to provide responses to public comments and to receive revisions to the HCP suggested by the Service on December 20, 2018, and clarified in our February 20, 2019, meeting with them. Late-breaking developments among Applicants have revised land-use acreages and alignments that affect our analyses in the EIS and biological opinion (BO). It is in the best interest of the administrative record and the project to fully incorporate and properly assess the changes.

8. Positions of affected stakeholders: The Applicants fully support our time waiver request.

9. Other relevant considerations: As expressed in our September 14, 2018, Department Review Team briefing, the Applicants are sensitive to liability for harm to panthers caused by third-party traffic effects. We expect push-back and debate with the Applicants once we share the draft BO with them.

Since April 2018, except during the partial government shutdown, we have met bi-weekly with the Applicants to discuss progress, share information, and needed information or documents. Our Secretarial timeline has been communicated to the Applicants.

Despite the delay in receiving key materials from the Applicants, we have continued to make progress on the biological opinion and final EIS, with up to 14 field office and 5 regional office staff working on this project at any given time. This is a top priority project for the Southeast Region.

10. Attachments: *If the request is for a waiver of the time requirement, attach a copy of the original and the new proposed project timeline with the waiver request.*

Granted: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Denied: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**From:** [Miranda, Leopoldo](#)  
**To:** [Depsec, NEPA](#)  
**Cc:** [Margaret Everson](#); [Foster, Maureen](#); [Mike Oetker](#); [Robert Tawes](#); [Jack Arnold](#); [Gina Shultz](#)  
**Subject:** SO 3355 Timeline Waiver Request for East Collier Multi-species HCP  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 27, 2019 1:18:26 PM  
**Attachments:** [signed 20190325 ECMSHCP Request for Waiver of Time.docx](#)

---

To whom it may concern

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Our current, approved deadline for finalizing the Record of Decision is May 29, 2019. We are requesting an extension of 60 days to July 29, 2019, as explained in the attached waiver request. This request is fully supported by the applicant.

Please let me know if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

Leopoldo "Leo" Miranda  
Regional Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1875 Century Boulevard  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
404-679-4000  
[Leopoldo\\_Miranda@fws.gov](mailto:Leopoldo_Miranda@fws.gov)

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## Request for Waiver of Time and Page Limits Under S.O. 3355

To: Office of the Deputy Secretary

Through: Margaret Everson, Principal Deputy Director

From: Leopoldo Miranda, Southeast Regional Director



Date: March 26, 2019

1. Bureau or Office Name: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

2. Title of Document: Eastern Collier Property Owners (ECPO or Applicants), Collier County, Florida, Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

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Granted: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Denied: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**From:** [Miranda, Leopoldo](#)  
**To:** [Jack Arnold](#); [Larry Williams](#); [Mike Oetker](#); [Robert Tawes](#); [Jeffrey Fleming](#); [Chris Guy](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Approval of waiver for ECPO, HCP  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 3, 2019 3:55:17 PM  
**Attachments:** [Scanned from a Xerox Multifunction Printer.pdf](#)

---

## Here you go!

Leopoldo "Leo" Miranda  
Regional Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1875 Century Boulevard  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
404-679-4000  
[Leopoldo\\_Miranda@fws.gov](mailto:Leopoldo_Miranda@fws.gov)

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**From:** Foster, Maureen <[maureen\\_foster@ios.doi.gov](mailto:maureen_foster@ios.doi.gov)>  
**Date:** Wed, Apr 3, 2019 at 4:10 PM  
**Subject:** Approval of waiver for ECPO, HCP  
**To:** Leopoldo Miranda <[leopoldo\\_miranda@fws.gov](mailto:leopoldo_miranda@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Charisa Morris <[charisa\\_morris@fws.gov](mailto:charisa_morris@fws.gov)>, frazer gary <[Gary\\_Frazer@fws.gov](mailto:Gary_Frazer@fws.gov)>, Gina Shultz <[Gina\\_Shultz@fws.gov](mailto:Gina_Shultz@fws.gov)>

Attached is the approved waiver for Eastern Collier Property Owners (ECPO), Collier County, Florida, HCP.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Maureen

---

Maureen D. Foster  
Chief of Staff  
Office of the Assistant Secretary  
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks  
1849 C Street, NW, Room 3161  
Washington, DC 20240

202.208.5970 (desk)  
202.208.4416 (main)

[Maureen\\_Foster@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Maureen_Foster@ios.doi.gov)

**Request for Waiver of Time and Page Limits Under S.O. 3355**

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Through: Margaret Everson, Principal Deputy Director  
From: Leopoldo Miranda, Southeast Regional Director  
Date: March 26, 2019



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2. Title of Document: Eastern Collier Property Owners (ECPO or Applicants), Collier County, Florida, Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)
3. Description of Action: Endangered Species Act, section 10 incidental take permit application by 11 landowners that would authorize incidental take of Florida panther and 18 other species due to development and earth mining over a requested 50-year term.
4. Time waiver:  150 Page waiver:  (check all that apply)

5. Was a waiver or extension previously granted, and if so, how much time or many pages were previously approved?

No waiver has been granted previously.

6. Description of Reason for Request:

The Draft EIS Notice of Availability closed December 3, 2018. The Applicants committed to providing responses to public comments (~2,000) and these were received February 8, 2019.

On December 20, 2018, the Service provided suggestions to the Applicants to strengthen the HCP based on the public comments received. The Service's next meeting with ECPO was February 1, 2019, where we discussed the suggested revisions. After two subsequent meetings, the Applicants' proposed February 28, 2019, as their initial target date to respond to our suggestions and provide a revised HCP. We received a partial response on March 8, 2019, and on March 25, 2019, the Service received ECPO's full, final version of the HCP. Part of the delay in revising their HCP stemmed from last-minute negotiations among the eleven ECPO members to finalize land-use coverage proposed in the HCP.

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The current Record of Decision (ROD) target date is May 29, 2019, (rescheduled from April 27, 2019, to evenly distribute Review Team briefings). We are requesting to adjust the ROD target date by 60 calendar days to:

- a. Accommodate the Applicants' review and revisions to their HCP in response to public comment and our recommendations.
- b. Allow the Service to review and finalize the latest revisions to the EIS supplied by the contractor.

This revised schedule would target May 10, 2019 for our Stage 5 Departmental briefing and July 29, 2019, for signature on the ROD.

7. Need and deadline (if any) for issuance of waiver(s) decision: We need to accommodate Applicants' desire to provide responses to public comments and to receive revisions to the HCP suggested by the Service on December 20, 2018, and clarified in our February 20, 2019, meeting with them. Late-breaking developments among Applicants have revised land-use acreages and alignments that affect our analyses in the EIS and biological opinion (BO). It is in the best interest of the administrative record and the project to fully incorporate and properly assess the changes.

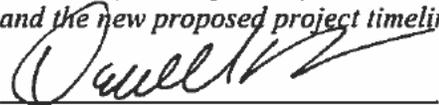
8. Positions of affected stakeholders: The Applicants fully support our time waiver request.

9. Other relevant considerations: As expressed in our September 14, 2018, Department Review Team briefing, the Applicants are sensitive to liability for harm to panthers caused by third-party traffic effects. We expect push-back and debate with the Applicants once we share the draft BO with them.

Since April 2018, except during the partial government shutdown, we have met bi-weekly with the Applicants to discuss progress, share information, and needed information or documents. Our Secretarial timeline has been communicated to the Applicants.

Despite the delay in receiving key materials from the Applicants, we have continued to make progress on the biological opinion and final EIS, with up to 14 field office and 5 regional office staff working on this project at any given time. This is a top priority project for the Southeast Region.

10. Attachments: *If the request is for a waiver of the time requirement, attach a copy of the original and the new proposed project timeline with the waiver request.*

Granted:  Date: 4/1/19

Denied: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**From:** [Miranda, Leopoldo](#)  
**To:** [Reese, Acquanetta](#)  
**Cc:** [Oetker, Mike](#); [Victoria Davis](#); [Maloof, Laura](#); [Tawes, Robert](#); [Jack Arnold](#)  
**Subject:** Re: East Collier Multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan: Draft Email and Revised Waiver for the Department  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 26, 2019 11:05:26 AM

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**Thanks! I just talked to Jim and Margaret and it needs to go through her office. She asked that we check with Charissa on how to submit it. She is please that the applicant is fully supportive as described in the memo.**

**Leo**

Leopoldo "Leo" Miranda  
Regional Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1875 Century Boulevard  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
404-679-4000  
[Leopoldo\\_Miranda@fws.gov](mailto:Leopoldo_Miranda@fws.gov)

*NOTE: This email correspondence and any attachments to and from this sender is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be disclosed to third parties.*

On Tue, Mar 26, 2019 at 12:16 PM Reese, Acquanetta <[acquanetta\\_reese@fws.gov](mailto:acquanetta_reese@fws.gov)> wrote:

Hey Leo.....the email is below along with the email address to send the attached request to and folks to "cc". Your e-sig has been applied to attachment. Let us know if you have any questions. Thanks.

*Acquanetta*

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Tawes, Robert <[robert\\_tawes@fws.gov](mailto:robert_tawes@fws.gov)>  
**Date:** Tue, Mar 26, 2019 at 11:09 AM  
**Subject:** East Collier Multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan: Draft Email and Revised Waiver for the Department  
**To:** Acquanetta Reese <[acquanetta\\_reese@fws.gov](mailto:acquanetta_reese@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Chris Guy <[chris\\_guy@fws.gov](mailto:chris_guy@fws.gov)>, Larry Williams <[larry\\_williams@fws.gov](mailto:larry_williams@fws.gov)>, Dell, David <[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)>

Acquanetta, here is the draft email for transmittal of the timeline waiver to the Department that I just mentioned. Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information. Rob

-----  
**To:** [nepa.depsec@ios.doi.gov](mailto:nepa.depsec@ios.doi.gov)

From: Leo

cc: Rob Tawes, Gina Shultz, Trish Adams, Rachel London, David Dell, Maureen Foster

Subject: SO 3355 Timeline Waiver Request for East Collier Multi-species HCP

Deputy Secretary's Office - NEPA

Attached please find a request for waiver from SO 3355 timeline requirements. This affects the East Collier Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

Our current, approved deadline for finalizing the Record of Decision is May 29, 2019. We are requesting an extension of 60 days to July 29, 2019, as explained in the attached waiver request.

Please let me know if you have any questions or require additional information.

**From:** [Miranda, Leopoldo](#)  
**To:** [Morris, Charisa](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: East Collier Multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan: Draft Email and Revised Waiver for the Department  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 26, 2019 1:26:34 PM  
**Attachments:** [signed\\_20190325\\_ECMSHCP\\_Request\\_for\\_Waiver\\_of\\_Time.docx](#)

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**Charisa,**

**Not sure if you have already been contacted by my folks in ATL. Margaret asked me to check with you on process to transmit this request for an extension for this EIS.**

**Could you shine some light on this?**

**Leo**

Leopoldo "Leo" Miranda  
Regional Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1875 Century Boulevard  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
404-679-4000  
[Leopoldo\\_Miranda@fws.gov](mailto:Leopoldo_Miranda@fws.gov)

***NOTE: This email correspondence and any attachments to and from this sender is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be disclosed to third parties.***

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**From:** **Reese, Acquanetta** <[acquanetta\\_reese@fws.gov](mailto:acquanetta_reese@fws.gov)>  
**Date:** Tue, Mar 26, 2019 at 12:16 PM  
**Subject:** Fwd: East Collier Multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan: Draft Email and Revised Waiver for the Department  
**To:** Leopoldo Miranda <[Leopoldo\\_Miranda@fws.gov](mailto:Leopoldo_Miranda@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Oetker, Mike <[michael\\_oetker@fws.gov](mailto:michael_oetker@fws.gov)>, Victoria Davis <[Victoria\\_Davis@fws.gov](mailto:Victoria_Davis@fws.gov)>, Maloof, Laura <[Laura\\_Maloof@fws.gov](mailto:Laura_Maloof@fws.gov)>, Tawes, Robert <[Robert\\_Tawes@fws.gov](mailto:Robert_Tawes@fws.gov)>

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*Acquanetta*

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**Date:** Tue, Mar 26, 2019 at 11:09 AM  
**Subject:** East Collier Multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan: Draft Email and Revised

Waiver for the Department

To: Acquanetta Reese <[acquanetta\\_reese@fws.gov](mailto:acquanetta_reese@fws.gov)>

Cc: Chris Guy <[chris\\_guy@fws.gov](mailto:chris_guy@fws.gov)>, Larry Williams <[larry\\_williams@fws.gov](mailto:larry_williams@fws.gov)>, Dell, David <[david\\_dell@fws.gov](mailto:david_dell@fws.gov)>

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From: Leo

cc: Rob Tawes, Gina Shultz, Trish Adams, Rachel London, David Dell, Maureen Foster

Subject: SO 3355 Timeline Waiver Request for East Collier Multi-species HCP

Deputy Secretary's Office - NEPA

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Please let me know if you have any questions or require additional information.

## Request for Waiver of Time and Page Limits Under S.O. 3355

To: Office of the Deputy Secretary  
Through: Margaret Everson, Principal Deputy Director  
From: Leopoldo Miranda, Southeast Regional Director  
Date: March 26, 2019



1. Bureau or Office Name: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
2. Title of Document: Eastern Collier Property Owners (ECPO or Applicants), Collier County, Florida, Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)
3. Description of Action: Endangered Species Act, section 10 incidental take permit application by 11 landowners that would authorize incidental take of Florida panther and 18 other species due to development and earth mining over a requested 50-year term.
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10. Attachments: *If the request is for a waiver of the time requirement, attach a copy of the original and the new proposed project timeline with the waiver request.*

Granted: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Denied: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_