

# Peninsular Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative



## The Purpose

The Peninsular Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative (PFLCC) is an applied conservation science partnership among federal, state and local agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, universities, and other stakeholders to benefit fish and wildlife and their habitats. The PFLCC will complement Florida's Wildlife Action Plan and other landscape-level conservation strategies to restore, manage, and conserve the biodiversity of the region in the face of both climate change and intense development pressure associated with a rapidly growing human population.

## The Region

Peninsular Florida is unique and complex, connecting subtropical and temperate climate zones and featuring a mosaic of more than 40 habitat types. This biologically diverse region encompasses hundreds of miles of beach and dune habitats, the St. Johns River watershed, xeric scrub uplands of the Lake Wales Ridge, the freshwater marshes of the Kissimmee River and Lake Okeechobee, vast sawgrass and cypress wetlands of the Everglades, extensive coastal mangroves and salt marsh, expanses of seagrass beds, and the unique pine rocklands and tropical hardwood hammocks of the Florida Keys. Offshore, it includes the only living coral reef ecosystem in the continental United States.

This region is home to approximately 700 species of mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles, over 1,000 species of freshwater and marine fish, over 4,000 species of plants and about 50,000 species of invertebrates. More than 100 of these species are federally listed as endangered or threatened, and the State of Florida considers nearly 1,000 of them as Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Public interest in species conservation is intense regarding species such as the Florida manatee, Florida panther, wood stork, Florida scrub-jay, and several species of sea turtles.

The primary conservation challenges include habitat destruction and conversion, invasive species, and



*Florida panther by USFWS/Larry Richardson*



*Key deer by John Oberheuer*

management of fire and natural hydrological processes. However, the most critical challenge is time. Florida faces intense pressure from development and peninsular Florida is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of sea level rise, saltwater intrusion, and aquifer depletion. An area the size of Vermont may be developed in Florida over the next 50 years and millions of human residents may be displaced by the impact of sea level rise by the turn of the century. PFLCC partners are truly in the national spotlight in confronting these issues and the effectiveness of the PFLCC will have far reaching implications.

## The Structure and Function

The PFLCC will operate as a self-governing partnership with a committee structure and a core staff. The makeup of the committees and composition of the staff will be determined by the partners. This will most likely include a

Steering Committee or Management Board and multiple mechanisms to exchange information with stakeholders. Staff expertise will likely include GIS, various scientific disciplines, and communications.

The PFLCC is well positioned to move forward in the broad application of Strategic Habitat Conservation in that many landscape-level planning and conservation efforts are already in place throughout the region. For example, Florida's "Cooperative Conservation Blueprint" establishes common priorities as the basis for land use decisions and includes priority statewide conservation areas, working landscapes, and development areas.

The PFLCC partners will be able to take advantage of existing planning, research, and management tools and extensive species, habitat, and climate data and analyses while technical staff focuses on bridging any remaining gaps. Early efforts will likely focus on incorporation of accelerated climate change into conservation planning and design, and to ensure consideration of migratory and broad ranging species in updates of statewide conservation plans.

## Organization and Partnerships

The functional challenge of the PFLCC is to insure that conservation plans and designs are not only comprehensive from a biological perspective, but meet the needs of the stakeholder organizations. In this way, the PFLCC can facilitate and improve coordinated delivery of broad conservation efforts. Therefore, success of the PFLCC will depend on the participation and commitment of the partners.



*Florida scrub jay by USFWS*



*Peninsular Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative Area*

The PFLCC will be part of a national network of more than 20 LCCs that have been proposed by the Department of Interior. In Peninsular Florida, the LCC will enhance and expand existing partnerships among state, federal, and local agencies, the Miccosukee and Seminole Tribes of Florida, non-governmental organizations, universities, and other stakeholders.

A sample of the existing partnerships in this region include the Florida Teaming with Wildlife Coalition, four National Estuary Programs, three National Estuarine Research Reserve programs, Northeast Florida Resource Management Partnership, Florida Springs Initiative, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, two TNC fire teams, multiple Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas, Florida Bird Conservation Initiative, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, Archie Carr Working Group, Wood Stork Working Group, Lake Okeechobee/Estuaries Periodic Scientist Group, and Ocean Conservation Education Action Network.

### Our Commitment

The Service's commitment to the PFLCC is to support and facilitate the development of the partnership, to incorporate the elements of Strategic Habitat Conservation in execution of our mission and, in doing so, to use the plans

and designs of the partnership to guide our future conservation efforts.

### For More Information

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### To Learn More

Please visit our Region's web site at [www.fws.gov/southeast](http://www.fws.gov/southeast). Other resources can be found at [www.fws.gov/southeast/climate](http://www.fws.gov/southeast/climate) and [www.fws.gov/southeast/shc](http://www.fws.gov/southeast/shc).



*American alligator by USFWS/Steve Hillebrand*