

Panama City

Ecological Services & Fisheries Resources Office



Photo: Egltn Air Force Base



Photo: Ed Crataeus, USFWS



Photo: Hildreth Cooper, USFWS



Photo: Laura Jenkins, USFWS

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Photos, top to bottom

Longleaf pine and other pine lands were the historic landcover of much of northwest Florida. Work is underway to restore longleaf habitats and the diverse natural communities that once were interspersed.

The threatened Gulf sturgeon is a resident of many of the northern Gulf of Mexico rivers and estuaries. Efforts are underway to recover this prehistoric species.

The coastal ecosystem is the most well known natural feature in northwest Florida. A delicate balance is struck between enjoying this popular recreation site and preserving the unique natural features that attract human use.

The Panama City Field Office provides many education and outreach services to the local community.

Station Facts

- Established: 1973.
- Staff: 16
- Key cities: Tallahassee, Panama City, Ft. Walton Beach, and Pensacola.

Conservation Priorities

- Ecosystem management partnerships.
- Protection of instream flow requirements of aquatic resources.
- Restoration and stewardship of long-leaf pine forest habitats.
- Conservation of wetlands.
- Conservation of coastal dune habitats.
- Restoration of riparian habitats.
- Maintenance of the integrity of the Apalachicola, Ochlockonee, Choctawhatchee, Blackwater, Escambia, Perdido basins and St. Andrew, St. Joseph, and Pensacola Bay systems.

Restoration and Recovery of:

- Anadromous species.
- Endangered beach mice.
- Threatened sea turtles.
- Endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.
- Endangered and threatened pine forest plants.
- Endangered freshwater mussels.
- Endangered Okaloosa darter.
- Threatened flatwoods salamander.

Services Provided to:

- Landowners, private citizens.
- Military bases.
- National Forest.
- Other Federal and state agencies.
- Interstate organizations.
- Conservation organizations.
- Local governments.

Activity Highlights

- Assist in the conservation of the coastal system by working with public land managers to protect and restore habitats of beach mice and sea turtles.
- Lead activities related to the recovery of the threatened Gulf sturgeon.
- Coordinate the restoration of the striped bass on the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint river system by collection of broodstock, stocking, and habitat protection.
- Assist Corps of Engineers in the protection and restoration of wetlands in Northwest Florida through the wetland permitting program.
- Assess known or suspected contaminant problems affecting fish and wildlife resources in northern Gulf of Mexico drainages and estuaries, and recommend ways to resolve.

- Provide guidelines to evaluate instream flow needs of aquatic resources.
- Help to develop, fund, and implement habitat restoration measures following hurricanes.
- Actively participate in ecosystem management partnerships for northwest Florida bays and estuaries.
- Assist in funding the restoration of stream and riparian habitats in the watersheds of the northern Gulf of Mexico.
- Coordinate the recovery of plants endemic to northwest Florida.
- Consult with Federal land managers (military bases, National Forest, National Park, and Corps of Engineers) on activities that may affect endangered or threatened species and find opportunities for species protection consistent with project objectives.
- Provide technical assistance for fishery management on national wildlife refuges, military bases and other Federal lands in Florida, Alabama, and south Georgia.
- Work with private landowners to achieve common conservation objectives.
- Assist public land managers in red cockaded woodpecker recovery.
- Develop geographic information system (GIS) tools to improve decisionmaking affecting fish and wildlife resources.
- Conduct public education and outreach activities in support of fish and wildlife conservation.
- Work with the State of Florida to protect migratory birds (waterfowl, wading birds, neotropicals, etc.) and the habitats they depend upon.

Questions and Answers

If there is an endangered species on my property, are there restrictions on what I can do?

There may be. It is illegal to harm or harass an endangered species. Continuing your normal activities is no problem. If you are planning construction work or other major changes, it is best to check with our office before proceeding. You will need a special permit from the Service and/or the state if your work will harm a Federal or state protected species.

Can I still grow pine trees for silviculture purposes and help red-cockaded woodpeckers?

Yes. The Service has been working with private landowners in the southeast to provide guidance and management recommendations that allow silviculture activities and conservation of red-cockaded woodpeckers. Management work includes conducting certain forestry activities outside the bird's breeding season, protecting the bird's nesting tree cluster, and using other forestry activities that benefit forestry production and the woodpecker such as prescribed burning.

Where can I obtain information on endangered species?

There are several sources. On the INTERNET, the Service has information at www.fws.gov.

Information can also be obtained from our field office, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Can I help in the recovery of endangered species and if so, how?

First, start out at home, by being a good land steward on your property. Landscape using only native plants; they benefit local wildlife and save you money because they require less care and maintenance. Support community involvement in conservation of wetlands, bays, rivers, forests and coastal habitats. These areas provide habitat for wildlife species as well as enjoyable recreational opportunities, drinking water supplies, and economic benefits including tourism and some industry.

Where can I get information about taking care of my private fish pond?

From the University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service and the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Is there money available to help wildlife on my land?

There are opportunities for cost-sharing partnerships through several Federal programs.

Assistance and information on these programs are available through our office.

Can I, and how do I go about importing wildlife from outside the U.S.?

Contact our office for referral to the proper authority in Atlanta or elsewhere.

What does the Gulf sturgeon look like and where does it live?

The fish is easily recognized by a row of bony plates, or scutes along the body. It can grow longer than nine feet and weigh more than 300 pounds. It has a suction type mouth located beneath its head. The Gulf sturgeon lives in the northern Gulf of Mexico, bays, estuaries, and in major rivers in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Florida. It is an anadromous fish, migrating into freshwater from saltwater to spawn.

Can you still fish for Gulf sturgeon?

No, the Gulf sturgeon is listed as a threatened species by the federal government and a species of special concern by the state of Florida. Recreational and commercial fishing is prohibited by the states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

Can I volunteer at the Panama City Field Office?

Yes, volunteers are valuable to the management of our Nation's fish and wildlife resources. Volunteers perform a variety of tasks, including fish and wildlife surveys, public outreach, clerical and administrative duties, and computer work. Anyone under 18 years must have written parental approval.