

Panther Recovery Implementation Team (PRIT)
Transportation Sub-team
Meeting Minutes Summary

November 17, 2015
Electronic GoTo Meeting

Attendees:

Katasha Cornwell
Amber Crooks
Elizabeth Fleming
Terry Gilbert
Darrell Land
Nancy Payton
Gwen Pipkin
Don Scott
Brent Setchell
John Wrublik
Laurie Macdonald

Members of the public:

Niki Cribbs, Faller, Davis & Associates, Inc.
Kristin Caruso, Scheda Ecological Associates
Mark Easley, Kisinger, Campo & Associates

Meeting minutes approved.

Communications

- PRIT liaison, Laurie Macdonald
 - Next PRIT meeting will be January 13 in St. Petersburg, FL. Laurie provided an update from the PRIT October 15 meeting, which included an update from the Transportation Subteam.

Hotspots Recommendation Format

- Darrell expressed concerns with putting location of crossing structures on the maps. He believes it is more appropriate to identify hotspot segments of highways. Terry agreed and voiced that the recommendation should be to protect the entire hotspot segment.
- Amber said that the subteam should do both, as some areas may have entire segments that are hotspots, but if biological information (roadkills, telemetry, etc.) supports that crossing is needed, it would be appropriate to recommend crossing at that pinpoint location.
- Laurie stated that the subteam should be careful in providing recommendations, to avoid prescribing requirements. Laurie and Brent mentioned that conditions may change after the subteam's recommendations and should caveat that the document is based on best information and variables, including opportunities and constraints, could change over time.

- Amber said that the PRIT objective asks the subteam to not only to identify high mortality areas, but also recommend risk reduction measures. This should be as detailed as possible, utilizing the expertise of the subteam and not just replicating existing literature.
- Nancy stated that the subteam should not be too detailed as the process may take too long.
- Brent made refinements to the document that will be incorporated; the map should depict zone of needed protection instead of the previously-recommended structure point. Existing culverts and bridges will be retained as an opportunity.

Compendium

- Elizabeth and Laurie suggested that a statement be added at the top of the document about other non-target species using the crossing. Nancy wanted more detail of unique species that have been documented, if possible.
- Darrell stated that some of the crossing sites don't have long term monitoring. Knowing all of the species that have been documented to use a crossing may take a lot of work to wade through hundreds of photos.
- Elizabeth stated that she did not want to focus on single species.
- Brent would like to see panther, black bear, and deer use to be stated. If those species are using the crossing, likely other species are using it as well.
- Brent would like to see the functional use of the crossing to be incorporated into Dan's cost surface study. (If a crossing is fully used, it would receive a '0' as a least cost. If not, it may receive a '2' depending on use.)

FDOT Crossing Guidelines

- The PRIT provided suggestions were incorporated. Discussion was needed regarding the sentence "There are documented roadkills of wildlife within the project area."
 - There was consensus regarding changing the sentence to read "There are documented roadkills within the area that indicate the site is of significant conservation value for species at risk and for habitat connectivity." Laurie will discuss this change with PRIT.

I-75 Alligator Alley Fencing

- John mentioned that there are unresolved issues related to the project regarding Picayune fire management and panther crossing structures within the area to be fenced.
- Brent explained the details of the project, including some logistical issues to figure out.
- Brent inquired with Darrell if it would be possible to do 1-2 mile segments at a time instead of the entire length of one side and then the other (as is normally done), to help minimize wildlife getting caught in the road. Darrell will consider and get back with Brent.

Next meeting date, time, and agenda TBD. Agenda may include cost surface mapping, as well as gaps in the fencing due to FP222 who got hit on Alligator Alley where panther fencing exists by squeezing through small gap.