

## **Panther Recovery Implementation Team (PRIT)**

### **Transportation SubTeam**

#### **Meeting Minutes**

January 26, 2017

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 1 Office, Bartow, FL

#### Attendees:

Katasha Cornwell  
Amber Crooks  
Elizabeth Fleming, phone  
Terry Gilbert, phone  
Darrell Land, phone  
Nancy Payton  
Gwen Pipkin  
Don Scott, phone  
Brent Setchell  
Dan Smith, phone  
John Wrublik, phone  
David Shindle, phone, FWS

#### Members of the Public and other Guests:

Chris Daley, RS&H  
Mark Easley, KCA  
Martha Hodgson, FDOT  
Gary Ritter, Florida Farm Bureau  
Tom Pride, RK&K

#### Welcome, Meeting Minutes, Communications

- Elizabeth provided an update on the January PRIT core team meeting
  - Kipp Frohlich and Larry Williams would like a better understanding of our methodology for the hotspots model.
  - New Florida population estimate coming soon.
  - Mapping out a revision to habitat zones and also habitat north of the Caloosahatchee River. This change may occur in the next year or two. South of the river might come out sooner.
  - Eastern cougar delisting is being finalized. May have more information on this issue in the next few months.
  - Discussion about private lands incentive programs
- David Shindle also provided an update.
  - Recovery Criteria SubTeam has no currently scheduled meetings.
  - Core team next meeting has no currently scheduled meeting, but planning for April.
  - Inventory and Monitoring SubTeam doesn't have regular meetings.

- Elizabeth asked about Secretary Boxold of FDOT resigning, as Nick Wiley of FWC and Larry Williams had regular meetings. Katasha reported that staff has not received any direction to change what they have been doing.
- Minutes from the last meeting are posted.

### Southwest Florida Hot Spots

- Map of hot spots should include existing crossings.
  - There was a discussion about whether or not we should change the hot spot segment itself or note in writing if a crossing did not fully resolve the mortalities in that area. There was a question about whether or not we would be able to show the fencing associated with the crossings.
- There was a discussion about how the hot spots would be utilized and how priorities of the hot spots may be changed if specific funding becomes available.
  - Amber said she saw this document as a step in the group's work. The FDOT Crossing Guidelines are amended, the SubTeam would identify hot spots, and then in a next step would work on identifying funding opportunities and constraints specific to each crossing need.
  - Brent said that the hot spots document will provide a basis for prioritization based on severity of mortalities, but said that additional coordination with stakeholders and SubTeam will be needed if funding became available.
- Mark spoke about how development could change the landscape and how that would impact the hotspots.
- Document and map should include some additional geographic labels (e.g. Golden Gate Estates).
  - Elizabeth suggested an additional introductory paragraph.
  - Katasha suggested more information be added for each of the hot spot areas re the status of the FDOT PD&E, what District of FDOT it falls, etc. Brent or Gwen could be able to provide.
  - Katasha also suggested the SubTeam provide fuller details for each of the hot spots, such as recommended solution ideal for that area, opportunities and constraints.
    - Nancy will add detail to the top five (red) hotspots.
    - Amber will do maps and also do introductory paragraph.
  - Brent made the suggestion of keeping Golden Gate segment to the list as an orange with about 8 deaths in that area. There was a discussion about whether or not a crossing was appropriate there, given the pattern of development in this area. There was a consensus that it be included in the document and be given a identifying map location letter, but to include notes and GIS layer that describe why a crossing structure may not be the top priority improvement.
  - The GIS layer should include all relevant comments and notes about each segment.
    - Amber will add comments to GIS shapefile once they are complete.
- Tom Pride asked about hot spots use in ETDM. Katasha says FDOT is working on a layer of wildlife features; it does not currently include these hot spots.

- A call with Kipp and Larry to get further clarification on this project will be coordinated. David, Darrell, Elizabeth, Brent, Katasha, Nancy, and Amber expressed interest in participating.

### Cost Surface Mapping

- Traffic volume and number of lanes are factors that will help us further decipher the “cost” to panthers of crossing a roadway.
- Speeding traffic on rural two lane roads, as well as hilly roads that limit views, could also be considered in the cost.
- At the next meeting Dan predicted that he will have revised costs for the model.
- Structures indicated by yellow icon are District 5 crossings; those sites in green are existing crossings from Darrell. Those sites in red are potential opportunities that are within in bear and panther habitat.
- Brent requested kmz file of candidate culverts/structures [in red]. Brent can help provide information about conditions at each of the sites. Some of these may be too wet for wildlife to use (for example, Fisheating Creek area near Lykes is likely too wet).
- Green and yellow sites will likely keep the value of the adjacent habitat. Dan will want to review and confirm the value of the sites in red, as they will likely have more modest value (the structure will have less cost than the roadway itself, but not likely significantly different in order to preserve the model’s ability to have land cover drive the pathway results).
- Fencing is to be included, meaning that the barrier along the area with the fencing will receive the highest cost.

### Funding Opportunities

- Report back from side call that interested SubTeam members had (Don, Brent, and Amber) regarding funding ideas at local, state, federal, and private levels.
- Don is scheduling a meeting with local impact fee coordinator to bring back information to the group. Some counties have impact fees, some don't.
  - Katasha suggested developing rationale with local fee coordinator more closely.
- Regarding the idea to provide funding based on a traffic-generating project that adds trips in or into the panther consultation area.
  - There was some discussion about development along US41 east of Naples.
  - Mark asked if local governments would also be subject to the assessment.
- Next steps continue off-line phone calls
  - Next agenda should also include speed zone enforcement funding.

### Other Issues

- Gary asked Elizabeth about Gene Lollis presentation to be made available from last meeting. He also asked about panther deaths/available structures along I-75 and Tamiami Trail.
- Amber asked about gap in fencing that is being constructed along I-75 Alligator Alley west of Everglades. Brent states that it is their intention to fence the entirety of that area. Elizabeth asked about north side making progress without progress from south side. Brent mentioned that this was likely due to coordination with contractors working on the guardrail project along this same area of roadway.

- Amber asked for informational purposes information about upcoming projects, including local projects like Wilson Benfield and Corkscrew Road studies. Amber and Don will report back on status of these projects in the future.
- Dan asked about SR70. SR70 widening and potential crossings are under PD&E.
- SR29 fencing gap is being repaired.
- Nancy stated that Senator Nelson announced infrastructure prioritization for rural roads. Nancy states that Florida Wildlife Federation's top priority is replacement bridges with terrestrial wildlife ledges east of SR29 in the OK Slough.

Next meeting is scheduled for April 13, 2017.