

REGION 4
INTRA-SERVICE SECTION 7 BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION FORM

Originating Person: Mary Peterson
Telephone Number: 772-469-4327
Date: 2/12/2019

E-Mail: Mary_Peterson@fws.gov

Section 7 Consultation No.: 04EF2000-2019-I-0513

PROJECT NAME (Grant Title/Number): Florida Grasshopper Sparrow 5-year Strategic Vision

I. Service Program:

- Ecological Services**
- Federal Aid**
 - Clean Vessel Act**
 - Coastal Wetlands**
 - Endangered Species Section 6**
 - Partners for Fish and Wildlife**
 - Sport Fish Restoration**
 - Wildlife Restoration**
- Fisheries**
- Refuges/Wildlife**

II. State/Agency: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

III. Station Name: South Florida Ecological Services office.

IV. Description of Proposed Action (attach additional pages as needed):

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, with input and feedback from the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow (FGSP) Working Group, developed a draft 5-year Strategic Vision to guide management actions for the FGSP (attached). The goal of the vision is to stabilize and grow the wild population over the next five years through habitat management, wild population management, and captive rearing and release, while identifying management actions that can reverse the population decline and reduce and eventually eliminate the need for future captive rearing.

The actions proposed for the first 3 Objectives and the captive management portion of Objective 4 of the 5-year Strategic Vision have been previously analyzed in Service's Biological Opinion addressing effects of changes to the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow Captive Breeding Plan, and proposed research and monitoring of Florida Grasshopper Sparrows dated March 17, 2016 (Service Consultation Code: 4EF2000-2015-F-0194), and Biological Opinion addressing effects

of changes to the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow Captive Breeding Plan, and proposed research and monitoring of Florida Grasshopper Sparrows dated April 10, 2018 (Service Consultation Code: 04EF2000-201 8-F-0523). Therefore, the effects of these actions will not be considered further in this consultation.

The purpose of this Intra-Service Consultation is to evaluate the effects of the proposed release of FGSP described in Objective 4 and the associated Appendices. The releases are being carried out by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission under the *Cooperative Agreement between the United States Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for the Conservation of Endangered and Threatened Fish and Wildlife* (https://www.fws.gov/northflorida/Guidance-Docs/FWC_Section_6/20120514_ca_FWS_FWC_2012_S6_CA_signed_web.pdf) in cooperation with the Service. For details on the proposed release activities please see attached Florida Grasshopper Sparrow 5-year Strategic Vision, Third Draft, February 13, 2019 (Vision). The Vision is considered a living document and will be updated in an adaptive management framework. Additional consultation will be initiated as warranted.

V. Pertinent Species and Habitat:

A. Include species/habitat occurrence map: Attach a map that identifies species locations with the project area and the action area.

B. Complete the following table:

SPECIES/CRITICAL HABITAT	STATUS ¹
Florida Grasshopper Sparrow (<i>Ammodramus savannarum floridanus</i>)	E / N o CH
Audubon’s crested caracara (<i>Polyborus plancus audubonii</i>)	T / N o CH
Eastern indigo snake (<i>Drymarchon couperi</i>)	T / N o CH
Florid bonneted bat (<i>Eumops floridanus</i>)	E / N o CH
Gopher tortoise (<i>Gopherus Polyphemus</i>)	C / N o CH

¹STATUS: E=endangered, T=threatened, PE=proposed endangered, PT=proposed threatened, CH=critical habitat, PCH=proposed critical habitat, C=candidate species, XE=experimental essential, XN=experimental non-essential

VI. Location (attach map):

A. Ecoregion Number and Name: Ecoregion 53; South Florida

B. County and State: DeSoto, Highlands, Polk, Okeechobee, Osceola, Florida

C. Section, township, and range (or latitude and longitude): N/A

D. Distance (miles) and direction to nearest town: N/A

E. Species/habitat occurrence: See attached map

VII. Determination of Effects:

A. Explanation of effects of the action on species and critical habitats in item V. B (attach additional pages as needed):

SPECIES/ CRITICAL HABITAT	IMPACTS TO SPECIES/CRITICAL HABITAT
Florida Grasshopper Sparrow	The release of captive-reared FGSP into the wild at Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area is being carried out as a recovery action, and is being used to augment the population that has experienced rapid declines. This action is considered beneficial to the species as a whole but it does have the potential to adversely affect FGSP if captive- reared sparrows released carry pathogens/disease that are novel to the wild population. (See below for minimize measures that are expected to reduce adverse effects and support the conclusion that the proposed action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect FGSP.) MAY AFFECT, NOT LIKELY TO ADVERSELY AFFECT
Audubon's crested caracara	Caracaras occur within the project action area; however the FGSP recovery actions are not anticipated to have an effect on the caracara. NO EFFECT
Eastern indigo snake	Eastern indigo snakes (EIS) likely occur within the project action area; however the FGSP recovery actions are not anticipated to have an effect on the EIS. NO EFFECT
Florid bonneted bat	Florida bonneted bats (FBB) likely occur within the project action area; however the FGSP recovery actions are not anticipated to have an effect on the FBB. NO EFFECT
Gopher tortoise	Gopher tortoises occur within the project action area; however the FGSP recovery actions are not anticipated to have an effect on the gopher tortoise. NO EFFECT

B. Explanation of actions to be implemented to reduce adverse effects:

Project modification ideas may be found in recovery plans. Although section 7 of Act prohibits only those actions by Federal agencies which are likely to jeopardize listed species or adversely modify critical habitat, the Service has a commitment to recover listed species and try to prevent the need to list additional species.

SPECIES/ CRITICAL HABITAT	ACTIONS TO MITIGATE/MINIMIZE IMPACTS
Florida Grasshopper Sparrow	<p>Both captive breeding facilities, White Oak Conservation (WO) and Rare Species Conservatory Foundation have implemented standard best management practices and husbandry to limit the likelihood that any novel pathogen has been introduced to the captive birds while in their care. In early captive breeding years at WO, captive birds likely became infected with filarids, presumably from mosquitos entering the captive breeding pens. Modifications were made to the enclosures and mosquito netting now minimizes the likelihood of such infections, and subsequent mortality from filarids has been eliminated from the captive flock. In addition, birds now also receive vaccinations for Eastern equine encephalitis.</p> <p>To further evaluate whether the release of captive-reared sparrows have a potential to introduce a novel pathogen to the wild population a Disease Risk Analysis (DRA) workshop was conducted following Rapid Risk Assessment Protocol. The workshop was designed and facilitated by under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Conservation Planning Specialist Group. The Draft DRA report is attached. The conclusion of the workshop was the majority of participants agreed that while the proposed action was not risk free, given captive rearing husbandry practices, pre-release treatment, health screening, and preliminary disease results - the risk of introducing a novel pathogen through release was low to moderate (depending on the respondent's risk tolerance). Following the Disease Risk Analysis workshop one coccidia was described (identified) via mitochondrial DNA, and subsequently one participant now advocates that the identified coccidia could be novel to the prairie because it has not been documented in the wild population. Other veterinarians reviewing the same information have stated that this coccidia identification does not change the potential risk, and the biosecurity measures in place and aforementioned disease studies still support a conclusion that the captive-reared birds are not likely to carry novel pathogens and therefore would not pose a risk to migratory birds upon release.</p>
Audubon's crested caracara	N/A
Eastern indigo snake	N/A

SPECIES/ CRITICAL HABITAT	ACTIONS TO MITIGATE/MINIMIZE IMPACTS
Florid bonneted bat	N/A
Gopher tortoise	N/A

VIII. Effect Determination and Response Requested:

SPECIES/ CRITICAL HABITAT	DETERMINATION ¹			RESPONSE REQUESTED
	NE*	NA	AA	
Florida Grasshopper Sparrow		X ²		Concurrence
Audubon's crested caracara	X			N/A
Eastern indigo snake	X			N/A
Florid bonneted bat	X			N/A
Gopher tortoise	X			N/A

¹DETERMINATION/ RESPONSE REQUESTED:

²As previously described in the description of the proposed action, all other activities associated with the 5-Year Strategic Vision, other than release, have been previously analyzed in the aforementioned biological opinions.

NE = no effect/no adverse modification. This determination is appropriate if the proposed action and its interrelated and interdependent actions will not, either positively or negatively, affect any listed, proposed, candidate species or designated/proposed critical habitat. Response Requested is optional but "Concurrence" is recommended for a complete administrative record.

NA = not likely to adversely affect. This determination is appropriate when the proposed action is not likely to adversely impact any listed, proposed, candidate species or designated/proposed critical habitat or there may be beneficial effects to these resources. In other words, effects to the species or critical habitat are expected to be beneficial, discountable, or insignificant. Beneficial effects are contemporaneous positive effects without any adverse effects to the species or habitat. Insignificant effects relate to the size of the impact (and should never reach the scale where take occurs), while discountable effects are those that are extremely unlikely to occur. Based on best judgment, a person would not: (1) be able to meaningfully measure, detect, or evaluate insignificant effects; or (2) expect discountable effects to occur. Response Requested is "Concurrence". If the Ecological Services Office concurs in writing with the Project Leader's determination of "NA", the intra-Service section 7 consultation process is completed.

AA = likely to adversely affect. This determination is appropriate when the proposed action is likely to adversely impact any listed, proposed, candidate species or designated/proposed critical habitat as a direct or indirect result of the proposed action or its interrelated or interdependent actions, and the effect is not discountable or insignificant. In the event the overall effect of the proposed action is beneficial to the listed species or critical habitat, but may also cause some adverse effect on individuals of the listed species or segments of the critical habitat, then the determination should be "AA". Response Requested for listed species and designated critical habitat is "Formal



Figure 1. Study locations.

Consultation". Response requested for proposed and candidate species and proposed critical habitat is "Conference".

Roxanna Hinzman, Field Supervisor
South Florida Ecological Services Field Office
13 February, 2019
see digital signature

IX. Reviewing Ecological Services Office Evaluation:

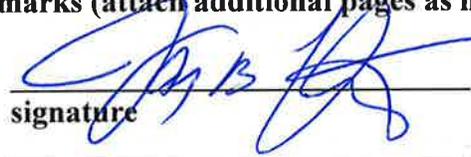
A. Concurrence Nonconcurrency

B. Formal consultation required completed

C. Conference required

D. Informal conference required

E. Remarks (attach additional pages as needed):

	<u>2/14/19</u>	
signature	date	Jay B. Herrington
		Field Supervisor, NFESO
title	office	