

## Public Comment Deadline Nears on Florida's Imperiled Species Management Plan in Contemplation of April 2016 Vote

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The **Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (Florida FWC)** is taking comment until January 20, 2016, on changes proposed by the agency on its approach to endangered and threatened species management in Florida. Specifically, the FWC is proposing an **Imperiled Species Management Plan (ISMP)** that, “[f]or the first time,” provides published conservation objectives and the actions needed to achieve those objectives for Florida’s listed species. The ISMP focuses on 2 primary areas : “filling data gaps necessary to improve conservation and management, and maximizing conservation benefits through directed communication, outreach, and management.” Given these goals, the Florida FWC notes that “the importance of **private lands** in supporting conservation for imperiled species cannot be undervalued.” The ISMP includes a 10-year timeline for implementation, commencing this year.

Implementation of the ISMP will also require a number of rule changes, the most significant of which include listing status changes, possession limits, and clarification of certain language. The ISMP also contemplates the preparation of Species Conservation Measures and Permitting Guidelines for all 57 listed species. [ Of the 57 species enumerated on Florida’s Endangered and Threatened Species List, 37 are listed as Threatened, five are listed as Species of Special Concern , and 15 have been removed]. Among other things, these Guidelines will specify : i) the circumstances when a permit is required, ii ) activities that are allowed without a permit, iii) buffer zones or seasonal restrictions, and iv) as applicable, options to avoid and minimize impact to the species and preempt the need for a permit.

Interested individuals may review the ISMP at [MyFWC.com/Imperiled](http://MyFWC.com/Imperiled) and transmit your comments using [Imperiled@myfwc.com](mailto:Imperiled@myfwc.com). The Florida FWC staff will review the public comments on the proposed ISMP and, based upon the comments, determine if changes are needed. The Commission itself is scheduled to vote on the ISMP at its meeting on April 13-14, 2016. Stay tuned here for additional developments.

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