

# Panther Position FAQs

**Q:** Why did the FWC create a panther position paper?

**A:** The FWC approved a panther position paper at its September Commission meeting to provide strategic direction to staff moving forward with panther management and conservation efforts. Florida panther conservation has reached major milestones and is an impressive success story. FWC staff have played leading roles in panther research, rescue, management, education and outreach and have benefitted from strong and effective partnerships over the years, primarily with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Park Service (NPS). This position paper reaffirms the FWC's commitment to work with partners to conserve and protect panthers.

**Q:** What is the purpose of the panther position paper?

**A:** The position paper identifies the need to update panther recovery objectives in light of current and emerging science so the FWC can better align agency resources to the highest priority management and research needs. Chief among those needs is dealing successfully with human-panther conflicts so that broad public support for panther conservation can be maintained.

**Q:** How does this position paper change the FWC's management of the Florida panther?

**A:** The FWC has been a leader in panther research and management for the past four decades and the position paper will only serve to focus our agency resources on key priorities. Those priorities include addressing panther management challenges and human-panther conflicts within the core breeding population, restoring lost or degraded habitat on publicly owned conservation lands and supporting incentives to preserve privately owned panther habitat.

**Q:** Is the FWC proposing that panthers be removed from the endangered species list?

**A:** The FWC is not suggesting or proposing to remove the panther from the endangered species list: The determination of panther status is the purview of the USFWS.

**Q:** Does the FWC propose to allow killing panthers?

**A:** No. The recently approved position paper makes it clear that all the legal protections for panthers remain in place. This includes the legal prohibitions of shooting, injuring or killing a panther.

**Q:** Is the recent FWC plan in conflict with the Endangered Species Act?

**A:** No. The FWC worked closely with the USFWS on the development of the panther position statement and the USFWS spoke in support of the position at the recent FWC Commission meeting.

**Q:** What steps are being taken to address how the development of privately owned lands might impact panther habitat?

**A:** The USFWS and the FWC are working with local government, environmental advocacy groups, and private land owners to plan proactively for the use of private lands in a way that preserves large, contiguous parcels of native habitat for the long term. By working collectively under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act to balance conservation with land use, significant acreage of quality panther habitat will be set aside and managed in perpetuity.

**Q:** What are the next steps for Florida panther conservation?

**A:** The FWC will continue working cooperatively to implement successful panther conservation efforts in a manner that maintains and enhances the support of Floridians, especially those who live and work in panther country.

The FWC will continue to minimize conflicts and work closely with private landowners as necessary steps to continue conservation success and achieve sustainable coexistence with people.

The USFWS will be the lead agency exploring possibilities of panther range expansion into other parts of Florida and out of state. The FWC will continue to partner with USFWS on these efforts within available staff and budgetary resources.

While panthers occupy all currently suitable habitat in south Florida, there are large areas of public land that, with improved management, could provide additional habitat for panthers and other wildlife. The FWC will continue to work with partners to improve management of these lands for panthers and all wildlife.