What’s at Stake for Florida’s Wildlife in 50 Years?
By Tony Young, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s (FWC) report, entitled “Wildlife 2060: What’s at stake for Florida?” is based on a study by 1000 Friends of Florida - a nonprofit organization that monitors our state’s growth.

Florida has the fourth-highest population in the country at 18 million, and this report predicts that by the year 2060, it will double to 36 million. Consequently, an estimated 7 million of the state’s 34 million total acres will be converted from natural or rural lands to urban uses during the next 50 years. Seven million acres is an area the size of the entire state of Vermont.

Black bear and wild turkey habitats may decrease by 2 million acres by 2060. For Florida’s more than 200,000 deer hunters, this estimated loss of 2.7 million acres of native habitat could result in at least 60,000 fewer deer in Florida. On top of that, as much as 25 percent of the private lands that provide most of the hunting leases could disappear by 2060 due to development. Today, the price of hunting leases on private land is in the range of $5 to $20 per acre, depending on the size of the property and quality of the habitat for the target species. If projected changes in land use transpire, we can expect those costs to increase significantly by 2060.

Florida boasts one of the largest wildlife management area systems in the country at almost 6 million acres, but what’s going to happen to it in 50 years? It will undoubtedly be impacted by encroaching development. Many of Florida’s 50,000 public-land hunters already feel the squeeze and complain of areas being overcrowded. How crowded are they going to be when our population doubles?

So what can we do about it? One option is for the state to buy more conservation land. Revenue for this is being generated through certain taxes. Since 1972, 30 Florida counties have voted to tax themselves in the form of real estate “doc stamps,” which has generated more than $2 billion to purchase nearly 375,000 acres of conservation lands. However, this state simply can’t afford to purchase and manage all the land that it wants protected and many private landowners aren’t interested in that option either. So State and Federal agencies are, and will continue to, assist property owners to manage their lands to benefit wildlife through voluntary technical and financial assistance programs.

Growth planning will be essential to minimize the effects of habitat fragmentation and ensure that large areas of conservation lands and wetlands are connected to other public and private natural landscapes. The report estimates that 2 million of the 7 million acres projected to be lost to development by 2060 lie within a mile of existing public conservation lands. This could create “islands” of natural habitat that will isolate wildlife populations from each other. This will have a negative impact on species that require vast tracts of undisturbed land to survive. Fragmentation also will make prescribed burning, a management technique essential for maintaining quality wildlife habitat, even more difficult. By using smart-growth initiatives and planning, we can encourage development that is sensitive to the natural infrastructure, versus haphazard urban sprawl.

Proactive strategies are best adopted at the local level and include acquiring and protecting large parcels of conservation lands, promoting compatible agriculture, like cattle ranches and timber farms (because they provide wildlife habitat), developing conservation easements, creating tax incentives for conservation and managing urban development with large-scale, land-use planning in mind.

The full report “Wildlife 2060: What’s at stake for Florida?” is online at: http://myfwc.com/CONSERVATION/FWC2060_index.htm. We might not be able to slow down growth in our state, but I encourage you to join the FWC and other organizations working together to find solutions to make a brighter future for our wildlife.

This article was reprinted from the Florida Forest Stewardship Newsletter Vol. 17, No. 1, with permission from Tony Young.
Public Perceptions of Using Woody Biomass as a Renewable Energy Source
Plate, RR; MC Monroe; A Oxarart; 2010. Journal of Extension 48:3 3FEA7

Woody biomass is an energy source that may play a significant role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. One barrier to using wood for energy is public perceptions. This article describes the results of a needs assessment survey that was used to develop a public outreach program. Survey responses from 298 residents of Alachua County, Florida suggest that respondents do not know about using wood for energy, are willing to be engaged in the decision-making process, and are generally in favor of using waste wood as an energy source. Respondents are most concerned about sustaining nearby forests and air quality.

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Special Announcements!

The 2010 CFEOR Annual Report is here!

Some of this year’s highlights include a graduate fellowship program, new partnerships with outreach/education organizations, and a handbook in groundcover restoration. We are also happy to announce that the CFEOR Outreach Committee received the 2009 USFS Regional Forester’s Honors Award in the field of Technology Transfer. The annual report also includes research project reports and updated lists of Sponsored and Endorsed Projects. You can electronically download this report as well as archived annual reports at the CFEOR website, www.sfrc.ufl.edu/CFEOR/Publications.htm.

Announcing new changes to CFEOR website!

The CFEOR website www.sfrc.ufl.edu/CFEOR has been through a few changes this last year as well. The home page has a new section that features images and links to various Updates articles on a random cycle. Also check out the new drop down menus for easy navigation, updated project lists, new upcoming events/workshops and photos of CFEOR members and the Administrative Team. Still under development is a workshop registration page. Any suggestions or feedback about the website please send to Melissa Kreye at mkreye@ufl.edu.
Upcoming Events

- **Announcing a free new field guide for web technologies for bird conservation.** Southeast Partners in Flight is pleased to announce the launch of a new field guide to web technologies for bird conservation. The guide is targeted at manager and administrator alike and provides simple, one-page summaries of a variety of general web tools (e.g., blogs, news feeds) as well as specific web-based applications (e.g., Facebook, eBird). Users can download the entire guide or individual summaries as PDFs at: [http://webtechguide.sepif.org/](http://webtechguide.sepif.org/)

- **Natural Areas Training Academy Presents Conservation Site Assessment and Planning**
  September 14-16, 2010 at the Ordway-Swisher Biological Station, Melrose, Fl. The workshop will introduce the participant to assessment and planning techniques successfully being used in Florida. Registration is open at [http://nata.snre.ufl.edu/registration.htm](http://nata.snre.ufl.edu/registration.htm).

- **GIS Workshop in Advanced Geospatial Tools and Techniques in Natural Resources: Scripting and Model Building,** October 25-27, 2010 at the Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy, Tallahassee, Fl. To learn more and to register go to [http://nbci.ttrs.org/GISWorkshop/index.html](http://nbci.ttrs.org/GISWorkshop/index.html).

- **Natural Areas Training Academy Presents Managing Visitors and Volunteers in Natural Areas**
  October 19-21, 2010 at the Gold Head Branch State Park, Keystone Heights, Fl. This workshop provides comprehensive guidance for managers on the issues associated with successfully integrating visitors and volunteers into the work of natural areas management. This workshop is relevant for natural areas managers who work in remote wilderness preserves as well as for those managers who work in parks and preserves with more intense visitor use. Registration is open at [http://nata.snre.ufl.edu/registration.htm](http://nata.snre.ufl.edu/registration.htm).