

Implementation of the Invasive Exotic Animal Assessment and Strategy Recommendations—NEATT Directive

Background: The South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (TF) and Working Group (WG) identified invasive exotic plants and animals as important restoration issues. The Working Group designated a subgroup (subsequently undesignated) to develop a strategy to address these issues. The Fish and Wildlife Service submitted a preliminary concept document which targeted plants [Carroll, 1994 #1]. The WG annual report also addressed the issue of invasive exotic organisms that again emphasized plants [SFERWG, 1994 #2]. Additional reports have been done by various TF and WG member agencies that address the general issues of invasive exotic organisms, see [FFWCC, 1999 #5; SFWMD, 1999 #3; FWS, 1999 #4], and others. These reports are general in nature and do not provide an assessment of the overall problem nor approaches on how to begin to manage invasive exotic animals. These reports generally concluded the following were needed:

- a lead organization or group to plan, coordinate and integrate
- a comprehensive, ecosystem management plan and strategy
- an integration of plant and animal efforts, policies and strategies
- effective and targeted legislation and policy
- research
- sufficient funds
- education

In 1999 the WG authorized an additional report on invasive exotic animals to provide a broad picture of the status of species, what work or research is being done on their management, and what WG agencies are doing to manage or control them [Goodyear, 2000 #6]. To date this is the most comprehensive report on invasive exotic animals for south Florida, yet it is primarily a literature review, and summary of information provided directly by agencies. Of the thousands of exotic animals in Florida this report identifies the following number of animals and animal groups as notable.

	Total # identified	# considered serious threats
Mammals	12	5
Birds	14	1
Reptiles	28	6
Amphibians	4	1
Fish	23	11
Insects	27	4
Other invertebrates	12	4

In 1998 the WG established the Noxious Exotic Weed Task Team (NEWTT) and directed them to develop a comprehensive assessment and strategy for the

management of invasive exotic plants. NEWTT has completed the assessment and strategy and is now developing an implementation plan to assist in the development, implementation and follow-through on the planning effort. No such effort has been started for invasive exotic animals even though they have been identified as serious threats to restoration.

Recommendations: The WG should establish a similar group to NEWTT for invasive exotic animals for the purpose of developing a comprehensive assessment and strategy for the control and management of nonindigenous animals. We recommend it be called the Noxious Exotic Animal Task Team, NEATT (John Ogden mentioned the word harmful – perhaps the Harmful Exotic Animal Task Team (HEATT)).

Guidance:

1. The WG should appoint a chair and co-chair to identify and recommend agency representatives to the group.
2. Initially the team should develop and complete a comprehensive assessment of the status of invasive exotic animals using the Goodyear report [Goodyear, 2000 #6] as a starting point. The comprehensive assessment should provide individual species information called for in the Goodyear report [Goodyear, 2000 #6], and follow same basic outline and approach as the NEWTT Assessment on Invasive Exotic Plants [Doren, 2001 #7].
3. After completion of the assessment the team should proceed to develop a comprehensive interagency strategy for management of the priority species and for prevention of the spread of existing species or introduction of new possibly invasive species.
4. The NEATT will work with NEWTT to help develop approaches and strategies that are in common with both plants and animals and to ensure integration with the overall concerns at the State and Federal government levels regarding invasive species planning and approaches.
5. Upon completion of the reports the NEATT will provide sufficient support to develop a web page related to this topic on the TF web site.

Administrative Constraints:

1. All team meetings will be open to the public and if appropriate time will be included in the agenda for public comment. Meetings will be advertised in accordance with the public affairs procedures developed by the WG.
2. Co-chairs will appoint a public affairs representative that will be responsible for providing public notice of meetings, facilitating public comment and providing a brief summary for each meeting that is suitable for publication on the TF web site.