

## FLORIDA'S STATE WILDLIFE GRANTS PROGRAM

### ANNOUNCEMENT OF FLORIDA'S STATE WILDLIFE GRANTS CYCLE

June 26, 2014

**TO:** Conservation Partners

**FROM:** Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

**SUBJECT:** Florida's State Wildlife Grants Cycle Notice

Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative staff is pleased to invite you to submit applications for Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program. Applications are due by **12:00 p.m. Eastern time July 28, 2014**. Applications should be prepared in accordance with Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program Guidelines and instructions in this document. Applicants will be notified about selected projects by **February 13, 2015**. Selected projects will start no earlier than **July 1, 2015**.

Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative is seeking applications for the following projects.

- **Data Gaps**
  - **Project:** Filling Data Gaps to Address the Management of the Sanibel Island Rice Rat (*Oryzomys palustris sanibeli*)
- **Marine**
  - **Project:** Turf Algae, Sedimentation, and Community Structure and Processes
- **Climate Adaptation**
  - **Project:** Community-based oyster reef restoration and living shoreline

These projects are being developed to address the goals of Florida's State Wildlife Action Plan. Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative has identified the project need and objectives. Applicants are asked to submit project proposals that detail the approach best suited to meet the stated objectives.

To be considered, applicants must submit a completed State Wildlife Grant application, fully developed scope of work, budget and match commitment letter that specifically relate to the needs and objectives of these projects.

Should you have any questions regarding the grant cycle or application requirements, please contact Andrea Alden, the State Wildlife Grants Coordinator, at [Andrea.Alden@MyFWC.com](mailto:Andrea.Alden@MyFWC.com) or Robyn McDole, the Assistant State Wildlife Grants Coordinator, at [Robyn.McDole@MyFWC.com](mailto:Robyn.McDole@MyFWC.com).

cc: Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative Standing Team

## **Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program Application Process**

### **Introduction**

Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative is a program designed to create a strategic approach for conserving all of Florida's wildlife, including fish and invertebrates, with the aim of averting future declines and keeping common species common. The three main components of the Initiative are: 1) Florida's State Wildlife Action Plan, a strategy for managing all wildlife in Florida; 2) partnership development, through which resources are pooled to address wildlife conservation across the state of Florida; and 3) Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program, to support partnership building and Wildlife Action Plan implementation by providing funding opportunities. For more information, please visit [Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative](#).

The U.S. Congress appropriated over \$47 million for the State Wildlife Grants Program in federal fiscal year 2014. The funds are distributed to the states based on a formula that includes land area and population. No state may receive more than five percent or less than one percent of the available funds.

### **The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Role**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is the designated state agency that receives and manages State Wildlife Grants Program funds. Funds are to be used in accordance with Congressional intent and [Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program Guidelines](#).

### **Submittal Guidelines**

In order to be considered, applications must address one of the three projects detailed in this document and must be prepared in accordance with the [Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program Guidelines](#).

Applications should be submitted electronically in Microsoft Office Word, Excel or Adobe to the State Wildlife Grants Program, at [Wildlife.Legacy@MyFWC.com](mailto:Wildlife.Legacy@MyFWC.com) by **12:00 p.m. Eastern time July 28, 2014**. Applications also must be copied to the authorizing official from the applicant's organization via carbon copy in the email application submission.

These three documents comprise an application:

- State Wildlife Grant Application available at <http://www.myfwc.com/conservation/special-initiatives/fwli/grant/apply/>
- Scope of Work, to include an introduction, project objectives, approach, methodology and schedule; biographical sketches for the Principal Investigator and other key project personnel; budget narrative; match commitment letter; and appendices, if needed.
- Budget, to include three spreadsheets, available at <http://www.myfwc.com/conservation/special-initiatives/fwli/grant/apply/>

Please use the following naming convention for electronic files, using the last name of the Principal Investigator:

- Application: Lastname\_Application.doc, Lastname\_Application.docx or Lastname\_Application.pdf
- Scope of Work: Lastname\_Scope.doc, Lastname\_Scope.docx or Lastname\_Scope.pdf
- Budget sheets: Lastname\_Budget.xls or Lastname\_Budget.xlsx

## Criteria

Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative has identified the relevance, need, and objectives of the following three projects. Applicants are requested to develop the best approach to achieve the objectives of the project. Additional detail about each project is available following the frequently asked questions.

- **Data Gaps**
  - **Project:** Filling Data Gaps to Address the Management of the Sanibel Island Rice Rat (*Oryzomys palustris sanibeli*)
- **Marine**
  - **Project:** Turf Algae, Sedimentation, and Community Structure and Processes
- **Climate Adaptation**
  - **Project:** Community-based oyster reef restoration and living shoreline

All habitats and Species of Greatest Conservation Need that will be studied in the project must be listed, threats that are addressed should be explicitly stated, and references with page numbers should be made to [Florida's State Wildlife Action Plan 2012](#).

Applicants are required to match thirty-five percent of the total project cost and to meet the project objectives within the allotted funds. Match must come from non-federal sources, and can include salaries and wages, indirect costs, volunteers, equipment, materials and supplies. Strong applications will include documentation of match support in the application package. Resources requested for funding must be necessary, reasonable and allowable to meet the project's objectives.

The Principal Investigator and other key project personnel are expected to have the capacity to successfully complete the project.

Strong applications will greatly encourage involvement from partners, such as federal, state and local government agencies; corporations; non-profit organizations; conservation organizations; sporting organizations; and private landowners. Please identify all partners and how they are involved with the project.

Projects are expected to begin no earlier than July 1, 2015 and end no later than June 30, 2018.

## Evaluation

In general, applications will be evaluated based on how well the project criteria are addressed, on the applicant's qualifications, on the technical merit of the proposed approach, on the appropriate use of funds, and verifiable deliverables. Example evaluation forms will also be available from [Florida's State Wildlife Grants](#).

## Schedule

<b>June 27, 2014:</b>	Grant cycle opens
<b>Noon on July 28, 2014:</b>	Grant cycle closes
<b>February 13, 2015:</b>	Announcement of recommended applications
<b>No earlier than July 1, 2015:</b>	Projects begin

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who may apply?

State agencies, local government entities, educational facilities, organizations and individuals can apply. Applications may be submitted from other states and countries as long as the proposed projects involve or are germane to populations of wildlife that inhabit Florida.

### What is the minimum and maximum amount of money I can request in my application?

Each of the three projects has a maximum amount of money that can be requested to meet each project's needs. Applicants can request less money, but they must still achieve all project objectives.

### Which projects are eligible?

Projects must meet the criteria specified in the Notice for the 2014 General Grant Cycle.

### Can Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program fund projects associated with wildlife education or wildlife law enforcement activities?

No, unless the law enforcement or education component is a minor or incidental activity – less than ten percent of total project costs – that is considered critical to the success of a project, directly contributes to the conservation of wildlife species and their habitats with the greatest conservation need, and is consistent with the development or implementation of Florida's Wildlife Action Plan. For example, a proposal may recommend that wildlife education or wildlife law enforcement effort is needed to protect critical wildlife habitat where unauthorized all-terrain vehicle use is endangering a natural community. Some law enforcement attention or educational initiative such as development of brochures and signage may be necessary to discourage all-terrain vehicles in the area, and thus achieve wildlife habitat protection. The State Wildlife Grants Coordinator must approve funding for these types of activities.

### Can Florida State Wildlife Grants be used for projects associated with wildlife recreation?

No.

### Are matching funds required?

Yes. A non-federal match requirement assures local ownership and leverages funds to support added conservation. For the 2014 General Cycle, applicants must provide a non-federal match of at least thirty-five percent of the total project costs. To calculate the total project cost, divide the federal request by 0.65. For example, an application requesting \$100,000 in federal funds must provide \$53,846 of secure match for a total project cost equaling \$153,846 ( $\$153,846 = \$100,000 / 0.65$ ).

### If I am awarded a grant, do I get all the money right away?

No. You will be reimbursed on an invoice schedule for the money spent on achieving the project objectives. For more information, see the [Program Guidelines](#).

### What are the reporting requirements if I am awarded a grant?

Typically, no more than three progress reports and one annual report will be required during the fiscal year. Grantees will be provided a copy of the Report Guidelines as guidance for the preparation of progress, annual and final reports.

### What are the scoring criteria for submitted applications?

Submitted applications are evaluated on a variety of criteria, including relevance to Florida's State Wildlife Action Plan, partner involvement, and sound methods and approaches. To see example evaluation forms, visit [Florida's State Wildlife Grants](#).

## **Project Criteria: Filling Data Gaps to Address the Management of the Sanibel Island Rice Rat (*Oryzomys palustris sanibeli*)**

Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative has identified the relevance, need, objectives, and expected benefits for the following project. Applicants are asked to develop an approach that is best suited to achieve these objectives. To be considered, applicants must submit a completed State Wildlife Grants application, fully developed scope of work, budget and match commitment letter that specifically relate to the needs and objectives of this project. All documents should be prepared in accordance with the [Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program Guidelines](#).

### **Partnerships**

Expected partnerships include the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (Terry Doonan, Mammal Taxa Coordinator and the Mammal Projects Biologist), Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF; Amanda Bryant), and the Ding Darling Wildlife Refuge (DDNWR; Tara Wertz). Applicants may identify additional partnerships.

### **Relevance**

Data gaps in species knowledge were identified as a key conservation challenge in Florida's State Wildlife Action Plan (FWC 2012). To address this, the Legacy program developed a priority goal and objective to reduce data gaps for species by moving priority species up at least one [knowledge level \(FWLI 2011\)](#). The Sanibel Island rice rat (*Oryzomys palustris sanibeli*) is a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) with a Biological Score of 23 in FWC's species ranking system (Millsap et al. 1990). During the Biological Status Review in 2010, the SIRR triggered 3 listing criteria and will be listed as Threatened when the Imperiled Species Management Plan is completed (currently listed as a Species of Special Concern).

The SIRR is ranked at a level 1 on the Wildlife Legacy Initiative's Knowledge Level Table; taxonomic relationships with mainland rice rats are understood, but area of occupancy, population trends, and life history information are not known. SIRR occurs only on Sanibel Island on properties managed by SCCF and DDNWR. The SIRR has been documented only within freshwater marsh communities on the island. These areas typically are dominated by cordgrass (*Spartina* spp.), leather fern (*Acrostichum danaeifolium*), and other herbaceous species. The related silver rice rat (*O. p. natator*), which occurs in the Florida Keys, typically uses freshwater marshes, saltwater marshes, and transitional mangrove habitats (United States Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS] 1999). Mangrove habitats on Sanibel Island have not been surveyed for rice rats. Surveys by staff of DDNWR and SCCF in historically occupied freshwater marshes indicate a patchy distribution; however, the full area of occupancy is not known. In addition, factors affecting presence of SIRR in these marshes has not been studied. Surveys for presence are conducted by SCCF and DDNWR, although the methodologies are different. Thus, it is difficult to determine population trend. Addressing these data gaps will move the SIRR up 2 levels on the Knowledge Level Table, and will allow for improved management of the SIRR.

### **Need**

Information on the full area of occupancy and population trend for SIRR is limited, and filling these data gaps is needed to improve status assessment and conservation planning. A Species Action Plan has been developed and high priority research actions include developing a consistent survey protocol, identifying all potentially suitable habitat patches and field testing the protocol, and identifying causes of decline of the SIRR. Improving knowledge of area of occupancy, population trend, and habitat-related threats will help management agencies understand and address the needs of the SIRR.

## Objectives

1. Develop a consistent survey protocol that can be implemented by management agencies and will allow for the detection of population trends.
2. Determine the full area of occupancy of the SIRR by mapping suitable habitat and conducting surveys in all suitable habitat patches.
3. Determine habitat characteristics that affect the presence of SIRR and develop habitat management recommendations on a site specific basis.

## Expected Benefits

Development of a monitoring protocol would allow FWC and partners to determine area of occupancy and assess population trends for the SIRR, and adjust conservation actions accordingly. Understanding habitat associations for the SIRR will improve the ability of the agency and partners to implement conservation actions that target the management of rice rat habitat. This project will address 2 levels in the Knowledge Level Table, and closing these gaps will begin the implementation of the [SIRR Species Action Plan](#).

## Additional Project Considerations

A competitive proposal is sought to achieve the objectives identified above. A successful proposal will need to incorporate multiple methods and these may include live trapping of rice rats, use of camera traps in logistically difficult areas, and searches for rice rat lodges, and mark-recapture studies. The trapping protocol will need to address seasonality, wet versus dry season trapping, habitat variation, and effort needed to assess trend. Habitat parameters will need to be collected at all sites. Use of GIS analysis and occupancy modeling may be necessary to address questions related to the population trend and habitat associations of the SIRR. Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply additional details found in FWC's [Species Action Plan for the SIRR](#) (Research and Monitoring Section) in the development of their proposal.

Grant funds will be used to fund a successful proposal. Potential costs associated with the study may include limited graduate student funding (typically not tuition), OPS funds for field technicians, equipment costs (traps, cameras, etc), travel, and temporary housing for technicians and researchers in south Florida. Intern housing may be available through DDNWR, but these costs cannot be used as match.

## Expected Project Period

Projects cannot start prior to July 1, 2015 and cannot exceed three years. Justification should be offered in the scope of work if the time frame included in the approach differs from the proposed time period.

Start Date: July 1, 2015

End Date: June 30, 2018

## Expected Project Location

Project will occur in Sanibel Island, Lee County, Florida. Exact locations for surveys are to be identified by the applicant.

## Area of Interest or Target Species

Sanibel Island rice rat (*Oryzomys palustris sanibeli*)

## Cost

Available federal funds: \$ 91,000

Available FWC match: \$ 28,425 As FWC is expected to serve as a partner in the project, match will be available in the form of staff time/salaries, vehicle use, and supplies. The match amount is an estimate based on expected project needs and availability is dependent upon FWC resources.

Applicant-supplied match: \$ 20,575 (minimum)

**Total cost: \$ 140,000**

## **Project Criteria: Turf Algae, Sedimentation, and Community Structure and Processes**

Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative has identified the relevance, need, objectives, and expected benefits for the following project. Applicants are asked to develop an approach that is best suited to achieve these objectives. To be considered, applicants must submit a completed State Wildlife Grants application, fully developed scope of work, budget and match commitment letter that specifically relate to the needs and objectives of this project. All documents should be prepared in accordance with the [Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program Guidelines](#).

### **Partnerships**

Suggested partnerships include the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, the Nature Conservancy, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, and Nova Southeastern University. Applicants may identify additional partnerships.

### **Relevance**

Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative recently revised Florida's [State Wildlife Action Plan](#) (Action Plan; FWC 2012). Upon completion of the revised Action Plan, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) worked with partners to set new goals for implementing the plan from 2012-2017. The new goals include a [marine goal](#) focused on addressing coral reef restoration. Coral reefs are a critical habitat for 140 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), including 8 Federally listed species and 13 Keystone species. As part of this goal, the Marine Goal Team identified as a priority the need to develop research projects focused on the extent and effect of algal turf dominance or sedimentation on coral reef structure and processes (e.g., recruitment and grazing).

This project will address Very High ranked stresses identified in the Action Plan: Altered species composition, Missing key communities or functional guilds/trophic shift, and Keystone species missing or lacking in abundance (FWC 2012). The project will assist in understanding the extent and effect of algal turf dominance and potential associated sedimentation on Florida's coral reef processes and will help to inform critical management strategies.

### **Need**

In the last 20 years, Florida reefs have experienced both local and global stressors that have shifted a stony coral-dominated system to one with a highly variable, sometimes dominant, macroalgae component. These shifts are often associated with reduced coral cover and diversity, reductions in coral survival and recruitment of coral larvae, and increases in tissue mortality. A reef dominated by turf and/or macroalgae serve different functions than a reef dominated by coral. A resilient coral-dominated system is governed by a balance between top down (i.e., grazing) and bottom up (i.e., nutrients, sedimentation) controls. Turf and macroalgal cover is controlled by a suite of grazers that serve specific purposes with some species feeding on mature macroalgae, while others feed on turf. Although many Caribbean coral species are tolerant to sedimentation perturbations, chronic and excess sedimentation affect the structure and function of the coral reef ecosystem by altering the governing processes, including a reduction in the survival and recruitment of coral larvae. Recovery of coral-dominated reefs and their subsequent ecosystem functions will be contingent upon reversing the processes enabling turf or macroalgal dominance while strengthening the coral-dominated resilience. To reverse the shift, the governing processes and balances need to be examined and understood.

**Objectives**

Develop a research project focused on the extent and effect of algal turf dominance or sedimentation on coral reef structure and processes (e.g., recruitment and grazing). The project is expected to represent processes throughout the Florida Reef Tract.

**Expected Benefits**

Understanding the extent and effect of algal turf dominance and potential associated sedimentation on Florida's coral reef processes will help to inform management strategies that will be part of a Comprehensive Coral Reef Restoration Strategy being developed by FWC and partners.

**Additional Project Considerations**

This grant announcement and project description is intended to be very general and therefore the approach will vary by proposer. The only requirements are that the project is focused on the extent and effect of algal turf and potential associated sedimentation on coral reef processes (e.g. grazing and recruitment). The resultant study should adequately represent processes occurring throughout the Florida Reef Tract.

**Expected Project Period**

Projects cannot start prior to July 1, 2015 and cannot exceed three years. Justification should be offered in the scope of work if the time frame included in the approach differs from the proposed time period.

Start Date: July 1, 2015

End Date: June 30, 2018

**Expected Project Location**

Project is expected to encompass the upper, middle, and lower Florida Keys and the southeast Florida coast.

**Area of Interest or Target Species**

140 Species of Greatest Conservation Need, including eight federally listed species and thirteen keystone species

**Cost**

Available federal funds: \$ 130,000

Applicant-supplied match: \$ 70,000 (minimum)

**Total cost:** **\$ 200,000**



## **Project Criteria: Community-based oyster reef restoration and living shoreline**

Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative has identified the relevance, need, objectives, and expected benefits for the following project. Applicants are asked to develop an approach that is best suited to achieve these objectives. To be considered, applicants must submit a completed State Wildlife Grants application, fully developed scope of work, budget and match commitment letter that specifically relate to the needs and objectives of this project. All documents should be prepared in accordance with the [Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program Guidelines](#).

### **Partnerships**

Partners to be determined by the applicant and included in the Application.

### **Relevance**

Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative recently revised Florida's [State Wildlife Action Plan](#) (Action Plan; FWC 2012). Upon completion of the revised Action Plan, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission worked with partners to set new goals for implementing the plan from 2012-2017. The new goals include an objective for addressing [climate adaptation](#) planning and developing pilot "on the ground" adaptation projects. To address the need for pilot adaptation projects, we are soliciting ideas for a living shorelines project. The project will demonstrate an erosion control/wave attenuation technique through restoration of oyster reefs. The project will enhance the resilience of ecosystems to increasing erosion from sea level rise (SLR), storm surge, and storm tides. The project will demonstrate oyster restoration and living shorelines as alternatives to shoreline armoring, which has already resulted in the loss of coastal habitats in Florida. The project will serve as a model to other communities and should incorporate community involvement to raise awareness of climate change, SLR, and the use of living shorelines.

### **Need**

Sea levels are rising world-wide, but the south Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the United States have some of the highest concentrations of vulnerable coastlines in the world. Florida's average sea level has risen by around 8" since 1880, in step with global averages. While the historic rate of SLR has been around 1.7 mm/year, over the past 20-30 years this rate has increased to almost 3 mm/year. There will be an increasing need for erosion control and shoreline stabilization options due to SLR, higher high tides, higher storm tides, more intense storms, and more coastal flooding. Habitats of coastal species, such as the gopher tortoise, are overwashed more frequently, as at Kennedy Space Center. Erosion threatens nesting beaches used by diamondback terrapins. Armoring of shorelines (i.e., seawalls) is frequently used to protect property from erosion but excludes terrapins and other coastal species from nesting, roosting, and breeding sites. Armoring can also cause fragmentation and loss of natural habitats, and prevent habitat migration as sea levels rise. Living shorelines are an alternative strategy shown to be effective in many locations. Bivalve reefs have been identified in the Action Plan as in poor and declining condition statewide. FWC and other state agencies, such as FDEP, have also identified a need for oyster reef restoration along the coast of Florida.

### **Objectives**

1. Establish a community based local or regional oyster shell recycling program.
2. Develop at least 0.5 acre total into oyster reef living shoreline that functions to attenuate wave action and ameliorate coastal erosion.
3. Promote the successful construction of the living shoreline(s) as an example project for other communities to emulate.
4. Utilizing the Oyster Reef Restoration Monitoring and Assessment Handbook (Baggett et. al 2014) universal and restoration goal-based metrics, monitor 4 or more metrics to demonstrate success of the project. Required metrics include, 1) reef area, 2) reef height, 3) shoreline loss/gain, and 4) shoreline profile/elevation change. Additional metrics may also be measured.
5. Develop a plan to maintain the living shoreline.

**Expected Benefits**

Living shorelines help to restore functionality of nearby ecosystems which are thereby more resilient to climate change and variability. The successful project will provide a more natural shoreline which offers plant and animal species a better opportunity to move and adapt as sea levels rise. The restored shoreline will also offer enhanced stabilization of the shoreline, wave attenuation, and provide for better erosion protection. By involving citizen scientists in the monitoring of the project site before and after installation of the living shoreline, as well as with the installation, the public will be exposed to an alternative to hardened shorelines as well as the benefits of softer shorelines. Having a recycling program in place to supply shell can reduce time and cost required to complete habitat restoration projects. Additionally, oyster shell recycling builds community awareness of restoration activities and their value, greater understanding of these important resources, and volunteer involvement in restoration efforts. The successful project will provide substrate to increase and improve oyster reefs and/or rakes, which provide a food source for wildlife, improve water quality, and combat habitat loss via erosion.

**Additional Project Considerations**

A successful project will use at least 25% recycled oyster shell, and 100% natural materials native to Florida, to build an oyster reef living shoreline appropriate to the selected location(s). Project proposals must address natural sites that are vulnerable to impacts from erosion, storm surge and tides, or SLR. Please describe why it is important to provide shoreline protection for the proposed site(s), including benefits to natural communities and Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Proposed methods must collect appropriate data to demonstrate changes in the ecosystem after installation of the living shoreline(s) as a means of measuring success. It is expected that key local and state partners will be heavily involved in the creation of the project. Preference will be given to projects that involve citizen scientists or the public.

**Expected Project Period**

Projects cannot start prior to July 1, 2015 and cannot exceed three years. Justification should be offered in the scope of work if the time frame included in the approach differs from the proposed time period.

Start Date: July 1, 2015

End Date: June 30, 2018

**Expected Project Location**

Project will occur within the state of Florida. Exact location(s) to be determined by the applicant.

**Area of Interest or Target Species**

Coastal habitats and all Species of Greatest Conservation Need within those habitats.

**Cost**

Available federal funds: \$ 52,000

Applicant-supplied match: \$ 28,000 (minimum)

**Total cost:** \$ 80,000