

Florida Department of Transportation Wildlife Crossing Guidelines

These guidelines have been developed for use by the Florida Department of Transportation Districts to determine the **appropriateness** of including wildlife crossings (upland or wetland) and/or exclusionary devices (fencing, walls, temporary barriers, etc.) on proposed District projects or on existing roadways as retrofits. These guidelines also establish **criteria** that should be considered during design of wildlife crossings and/or exclusionary devices. These guidelines should be utilized as early as possible in the project planning process and prior to project design.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have regulatory authority and are the recognized wildlife experts for listed and non-listed wildlife species within the State of Florida and nationally. These guidelines have been developed in consultation with the FWC.

The Districts should only determine if a wildlife crossing and/or exclusionary device is appropriate based on the coordination and recommendation of the FWC or USFWS.

- **For a proposed project:** Wildlife crossings and/or exclusionary devices should only be considered when the project is a capacity improvement that involves the addition of travel lanes.
- **For a requested retrofit project:** Districts should require entities requesting a wildlife crossing and/or exclusionary devices to provide documentation or studies to substantiate their requests. Districts should also pursue funding partnerships with requesting entities.

In cases where data does not exist to adequately address the guidelines, it may be necessary to perform studies or additional research to obtain the data. The FWC and/or USFWS should have an active role in the review and development of any studies; and in the review and evaluation of the results.

The following guidelines should be utilized in determining if a wildlife crossing and/or exclusionary device is appropriate.

- The FWC and/or USFWS have expressed a science-based need for a wildlife crossing for a target species
- There are listed species documented within the project area and the project area has been shown to be utilized by these species.
- There are documented recent road kills of listed species within the project area.

- The project is within the primary or secondary range of a listed species (e.g., panther, black bear).
- The project crosses a documented landscape level habitat linkage for the target species.
- The project is within a known area of wildlife/vehicle strikes (motorist safety).
- Public lands or lands under perpetual conservation easement are present (or will be present at the time of design) in sufficient amounts, on both sides of the road (adjoining and contiguous) where the crossing will be located in order to ensure future land use is compatible with the target species' needs.

Data collected or provided to address the above guidelines should serve as the basis of decision for determining whether or not a wildlife crossing and/or exclusionary devices are appropriate.

In addition, this data should also serve as a basis in the determination of the target species and in the selection of a crossing design.

The specific design (type, size, and location) of the crossing should be determined by the District through coordination with the FWC and/or USFWS.

Criteria which should be utilized in the determination of a crossing design should include, but are not limited to:

- The crossing cannot compromise any state or federal safety criteria.
- The crossing cannot restrict access to adjacent property owners.
- The crossing cannot negatively impact adjacent properties (e.g., provide access for people and/or wildlife to private properties where none presently exist).
- The crossing cannot have the potential to negatively impact existing drainage patterns or flood off-site properties.
- The crossing utilizes the most cost-feasible design for the target species.
- Significant additional habitat (e.g., upland and/or wetland) impacts cannot result from the construction of the crossing.
- The addition of the crossing cannot result in significant modifications to the proposed project (e.g., excessive increases in roadway grade, etc.).