

Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society

Wildlife Policy Statement – Non-native Species

Non-native species have been introduced throughout the world for hundreds of years, and current estimates are that thousands of non-native microbes, plants, and animals are established in the United States. While many introductions have been valuable (e.g., in the realms of agriculture, fisheries, and biological pest control), some poorly planned, inadvertent, or incidental introductions have resulted in undesirable effects (e.g., feral hogs, common carp), causing substantial ecological and/or economic costs. Potentially adverse impacts from introduced taxa can include competition with and predation on native species, habitat alteration, changes in species richness and diversity, genetic contamination, and introduction of disease.

The value and complexity of native ecosystems mandate a precautionary approach to non-native species introductions based on comprehensive risk analysis. Wildlife managers should strongly discourage the movement of non-native plants and animals by non-professionals, and encourage a thorough examination of the pathways by which such species are accidentally released. Equally important, wildlife professionals, as well as botanists and agronomists, should not view non-native species as management tools without careful consideration of the potential impacts, using a transparent scientific framework. Similarly, the risk analysis framework should be employed to exclude from importation or possession species that are likely to result in significant adverse impacts, and to mandate risk mitigation for species of moderate potential impact.

Prevention of unplanned releases and escapes is the most cost effective measure to minimize the undesirable effects of non-native species. Regulation, education, interdiction, and pathway intervention all play a role in the management of non-native species. Where species introductions occur in spite of prevention programs, early detection networks in conjunction with rapid assessment and response capabilities are crucial to minimize impacts to native wildlife communities.

The policy of The Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society regarding non-native species is:

- 1. Promote the conservation of native wildlife species and their requisite habitats by agencies, organizations, and individuals.**
- 2. Support regulations that assess risks to native ecosystems as a basis for possession and exhibition of non-native wildlife and plants.**
- 3. Support increased funding for research and development of control methods for established populations of introduced species, including monitoring the success of these control methods as an integral part of the program plans.**
- 4. Encourage the adoption of risk analysis to assess proposed species introductions and to set priorities for control of established populations of non-native species.**
- 5. Support national, regional, state, and local outreach programs discouraging the release or transport of non-native species.**
- 6. Encourage the pet industry to educate customers considering purchases of non-native pets about the care of the animals, and the potential harm to native wildlife and the environment caused by accidental or intentional releases.**

- 7. Support public school science curricula that emphasize the concepts of native wildlife communities and ecological risks of unplanned species introductions.**
- 8. Promote regional and local networks for the early detection of introduced species.**
- 9. Support increased funding at the national, state, and local levels for rapid response programs to assess and, if appropriate, remove or eradicate incipient populations of non-native species.**
- 10. Encourage regional and intra-state cooperation in the prevention and control of non-native species introductions.**
- 11. Support increased inspection at significant ports of entry.**

Approved during Fall Business Meeting, September 14, 2006, Coconut Grove, Fl