

Over the River and Through the Woods: Next Steps in Florida Panther Recovery



Photo by Carlton Ward Jr. / Path of the Panther



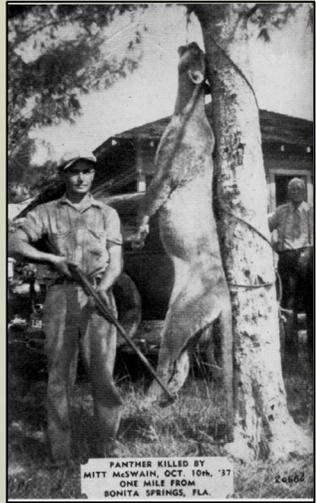
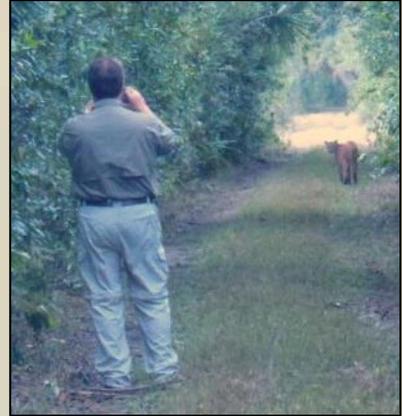
Carol Rizkalla, Marc Criffield, Mark Lotz, Maia Molina-Varela, Dave Onorato,
Chris Satter, Sierra Scauzillo, Peter Sebastian, and Zachary Wardle

Florida Panther Story



No management

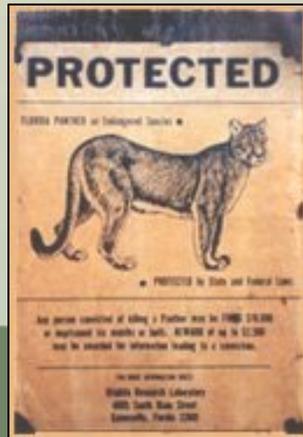
Abundant



Over-exploited



Conflict management
Sustainable co-existence



Rare

Recovery
management



More numerous



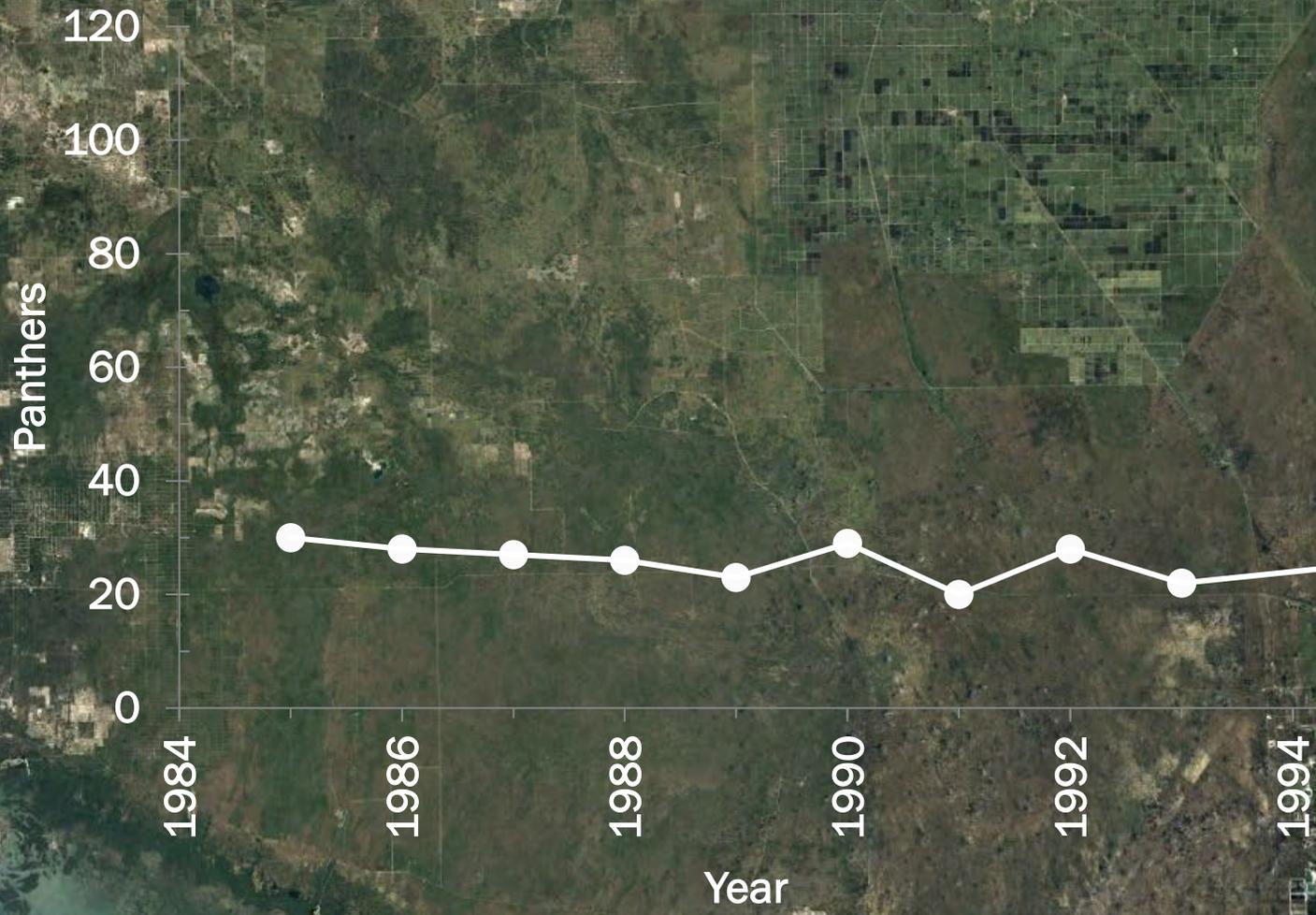
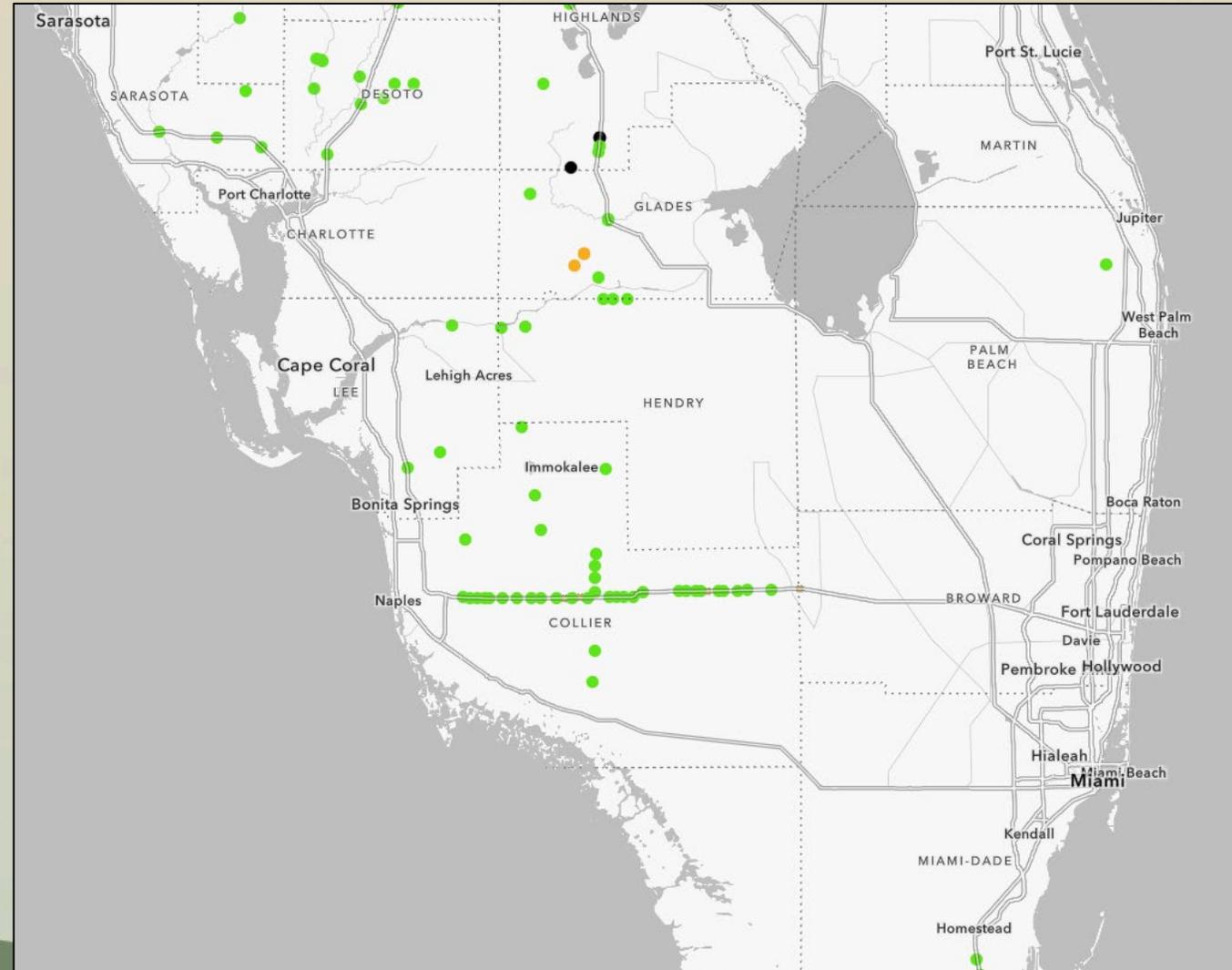
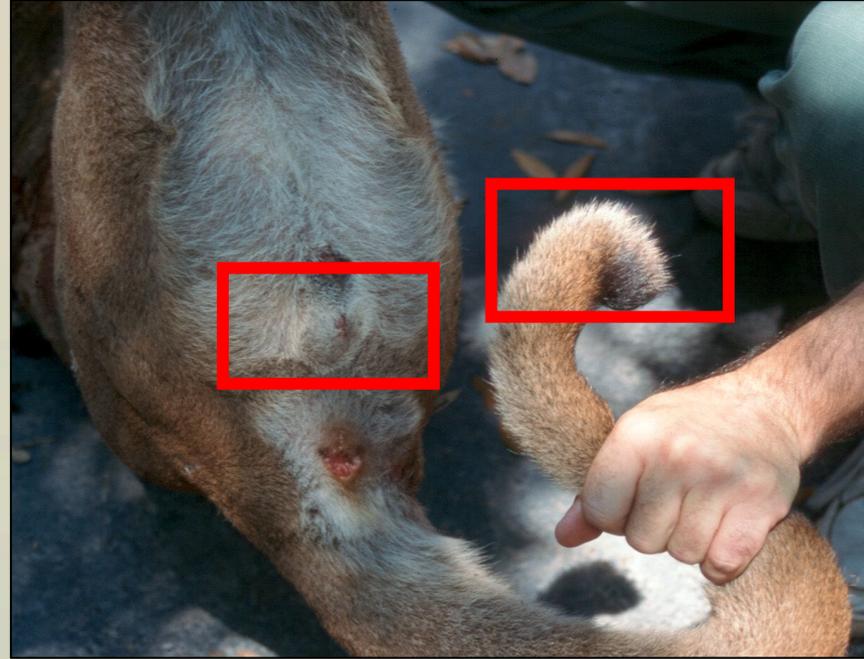
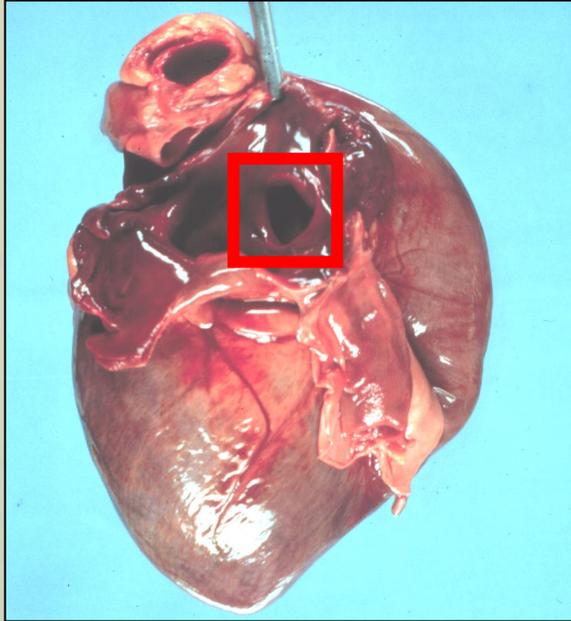


Image Landsat / Copernicus

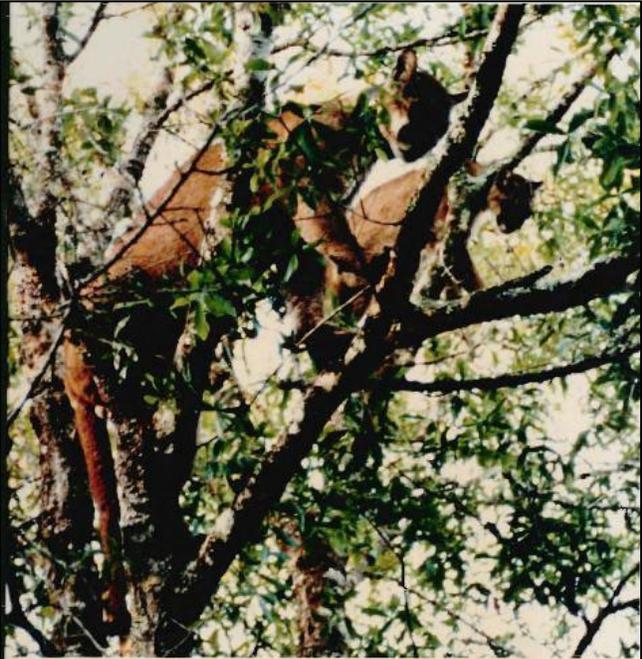
Protection Efforts



Manifestations of Florida Panther Inbreeding

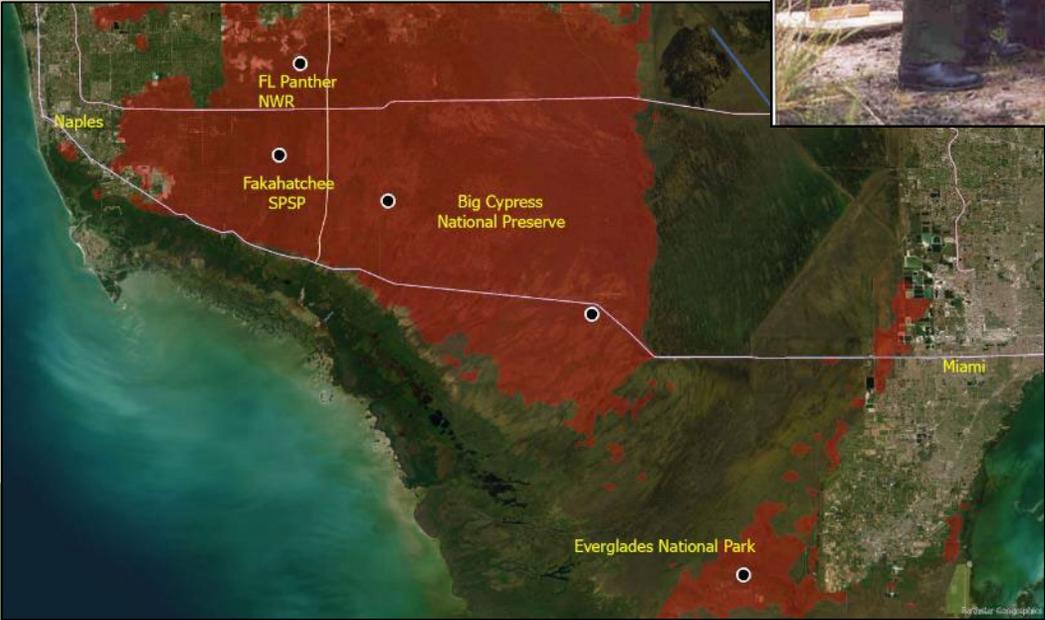
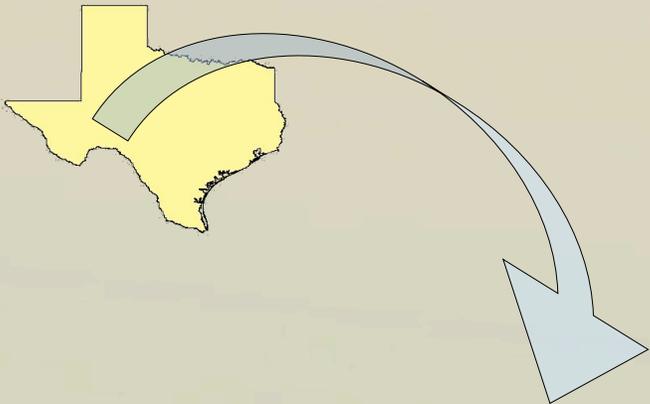


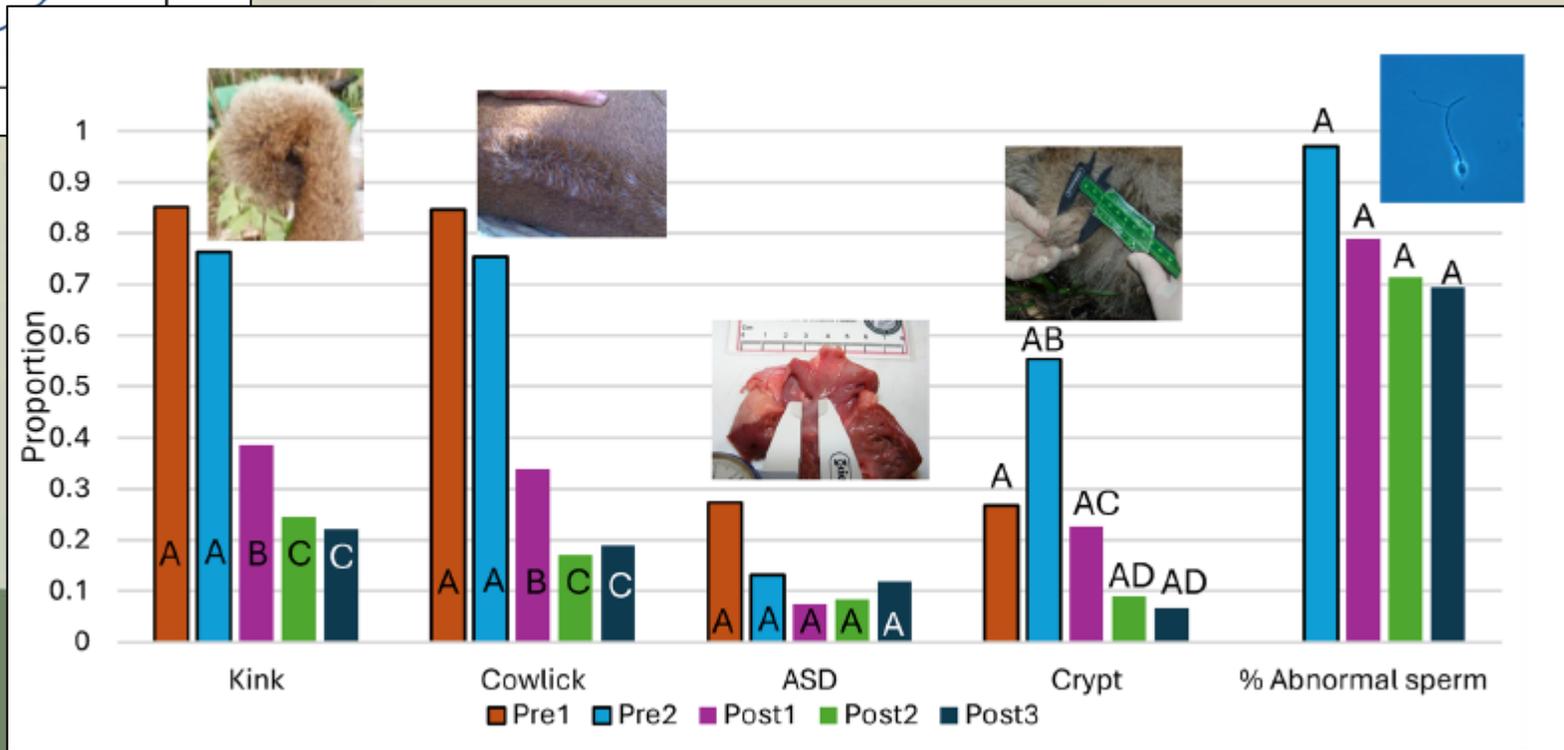
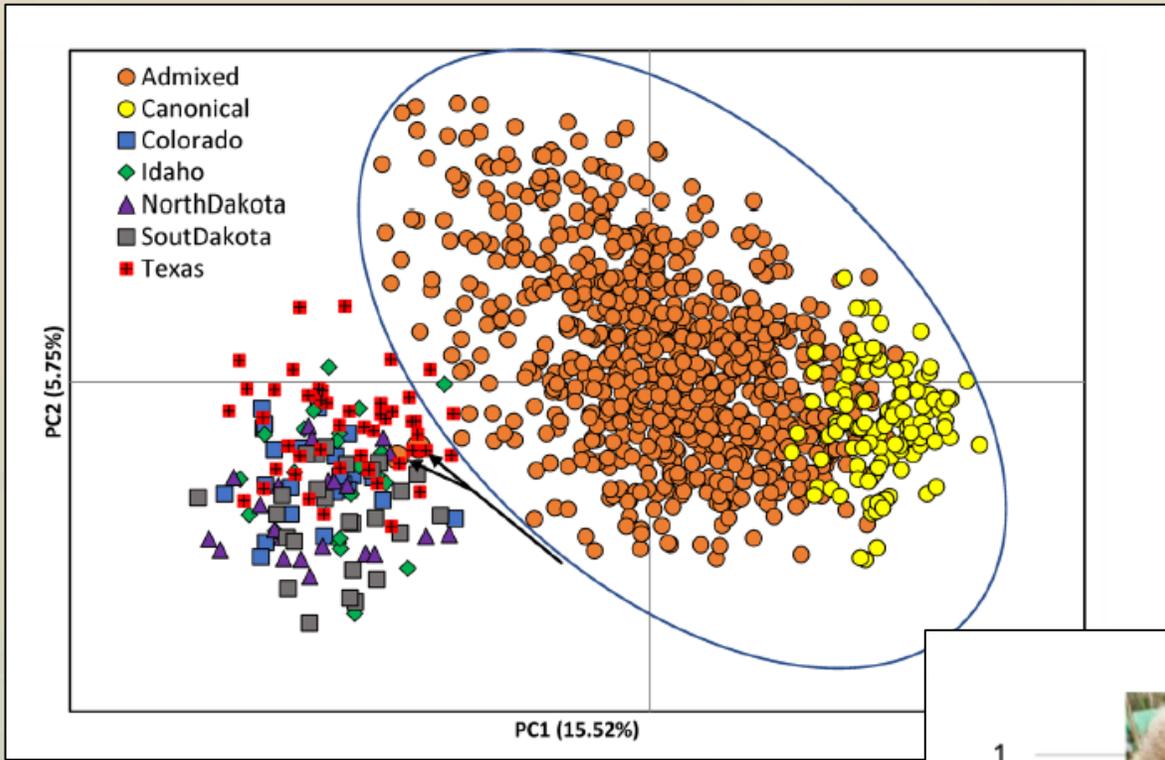
Genetic Rescue



A Plan for Genetic Restoration and Management of the Florida Panther (*Felis concolor coryi*)

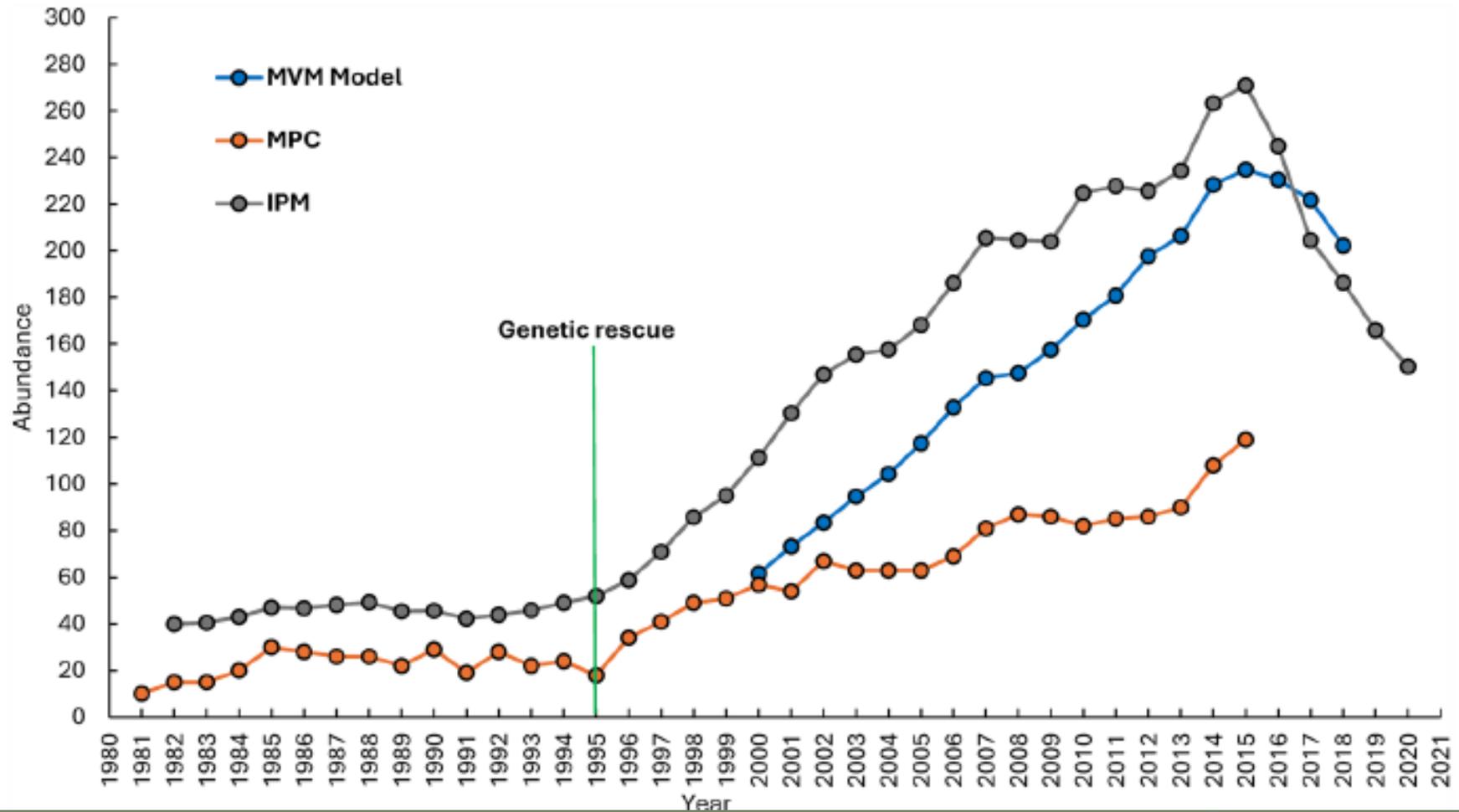
11-13 September 1994
Yulee, Florida

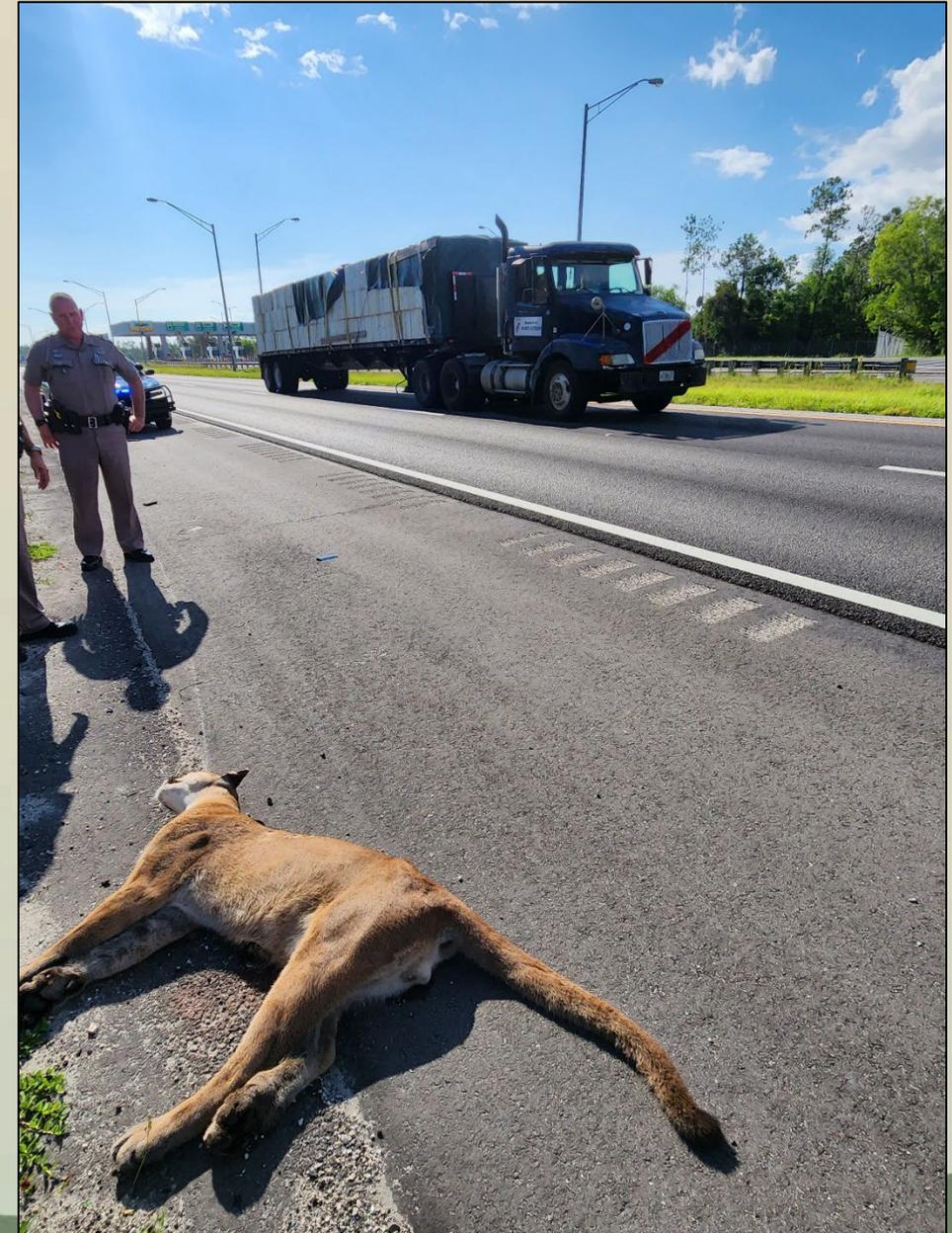




Population Estimate

2015: 120-230 in South Florida

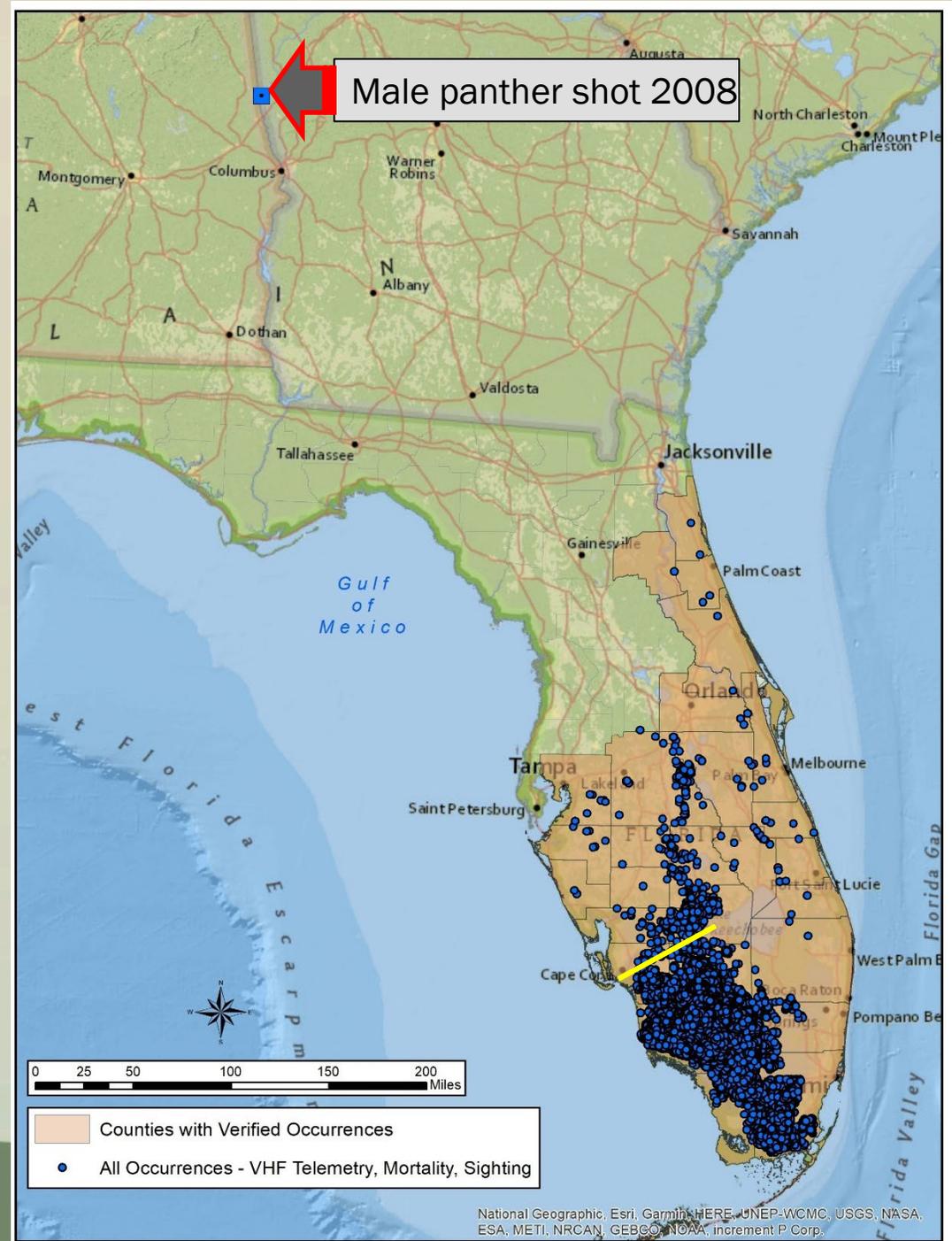




26° 23' 56.51" N 81° 35' 14.01" W 6/22/18 3:51:32 PM Copyright CARLTON WARD with FWC Do Not Publish

Florida Panther Occurrence

- Breeding range is generally south of Lake Okeechobee
- Male panthers can disperse long distances and have been documented throughout peninsula, one making it to Georgia
- No females north of Caloosahatchee River between 1973 - 2017



Florida Panthers and Ranch Lands

- Pienaar and Kreye (2015) evaluated 4 types of incentives:
 - Per acre payment for habitat
 - One time reduction in estate tax
 - Depredation compensation
 - Safe Harbor
- Preferred annual payments
- Preferred short duration programs





Panther Depredation Compensation Pilot Program

Panthers and Cattle

The Florida panther occasionally preys on livestock, such as free-ranging cattle. These depredations are natural behaviors but impose costs on producers.

Compensating for Cattle Loss

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) *Panther Depredation Compensation Pilot Program* pays cattle producers for calf deaths caused by panthers.

Who is Eligible?

All commercial cattle ranchers are eligible. A field visit is required to evaluate panther involvement in a cattle depredation. Payment without a carcass is possible with adequate supporting evidence.

What is the Payment Rate?

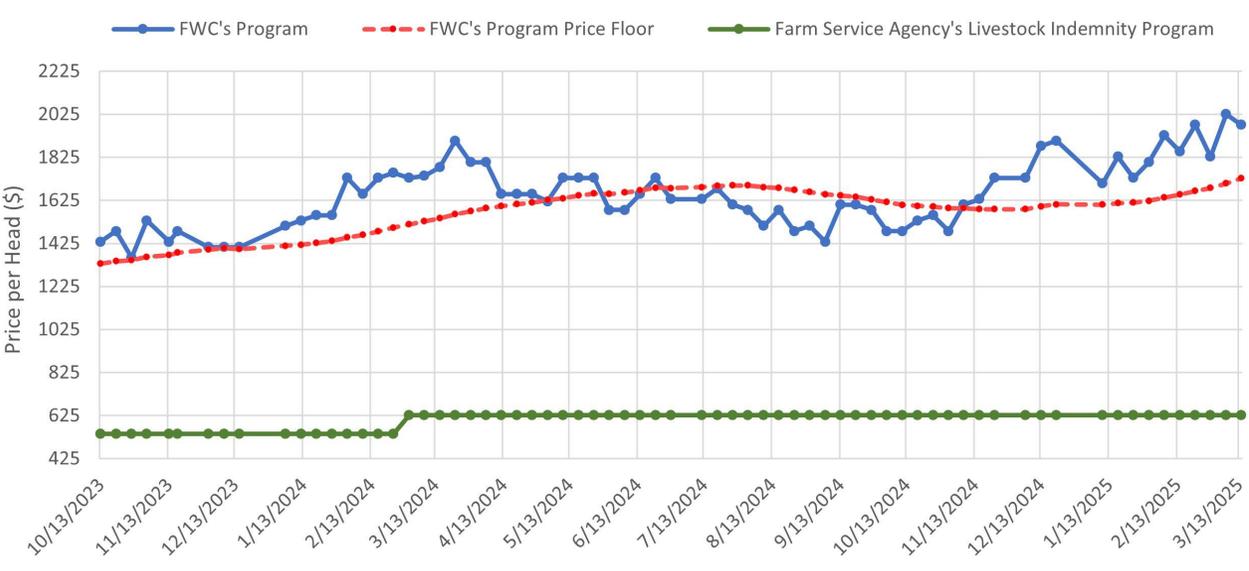
Payment rates are tied to current Florida auction prices. Valuation is based on the statewide maximum weekly auction price for a 450-495-lb feeder steer regardless of calf sex. A rolling 6-month average of previous values provides a price floor.

How Do I Apply?

FWC approval is integrated into the field investigation — there's no additional process. Ranchers with evidence of a panther-caused loss who meet the eligibility criteria qualify for compensation with minimal paperwork.

Most calves killed by panthers are 0-3 months old and <200 lb

Compensation Rates for Depredated Beef Calves



If you have a suspected panther depredation

Preserve Evidence
Minimize disturbance
(May cover carcass & tracks)

Call the Wildlife Alert Hotline
888-404-3922
Fresh evidence = more information

FWC Investigates
Field visit to document evidence
Assess panther involvement

Receive Compensation
If panther involvement is probable
Timely payment at market rate



Learn more at [MyFWC.com/PantherDepredations](https://www.myfwc.com/PantherDepredations)

Payment for Ecosystem Services

- Reward private landowners that provide habitat for panthers and other wildlife
- Improve and encourage panther conservation on private lands
- Strengthen partnerships with landowners
- Contribute to landscape connectivity critical for panther recovery



Pilot Program Overview

Property Attribute	Eligibility Criteria
Land Ownership	Owned by a non-governmental entity (LLC, private individual, or company) or American Indian Tribe for private or commercial use
Geographic Region	Within Broward, Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Okeechobee, Osceola, Polk or Sarasota County AND Within 2 miles of FEGN Priority 1–3 lands (Florida Wildlife Corridor)
Acreage	Minimum 500 contiguous acres of enrollable land All, or only part, of a property may be enrolled
Habitat Conditions	Contains areas of high suitability as identified by the panther habitat model AND Contains native forest and open habitat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum 10% native forested cover AND • Maximum 70% open habitat WITH • Maximum 25% of candidate area dominated by invasive plants



Payment Rates

Habitat Assessment Score	Habitat Quality Tier	Payment Rate
36 - 45	1	\$17 per enrolled acre
24 - 35	2	\$12 per enrolled acre
12 - 23	3	\$7 per enrolled acre

Bonus Payments

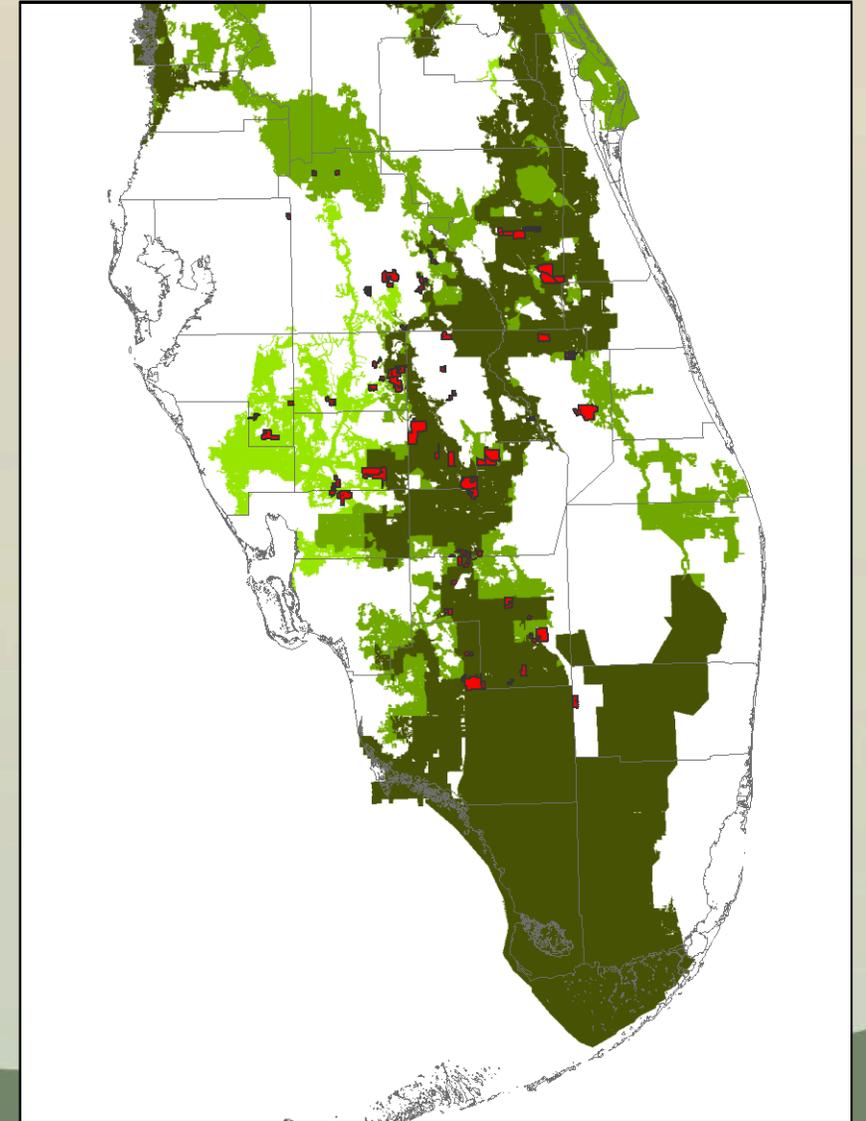
Landowners can receive an additional \$0.50 per enrolled acre for allowing FWC to place one or more wildlife cameras.

Payments may be issued for each dated, timestamped, and georeferenced panther image:

- \$100 per male or undetermined sex
- \$250 per female, and
- \$500 per litter of kitten(s)



Application Status



[MyFWC.com/PESpanther](https://myfwc.com/PESpanther)

Score and Rank

TABLE 2: RANKING BASED ON LOCATION AND PANTHER PRESENCE				
Category	Score Ranking	Desktop Score	Field Score	Final Score
Corridor Location	Located within FEGN Priority 1 lands (8)	4.033	N/A	4.02
	Located within FEGN Priority 2–3 lands (4)			
	Located within 2 mi of FEGN Priority 1–3 lands (2)			
Panther Presence	5 points	5	N/A	5
Total				9.02
TABLE 3: RANKING BASED ON HABITAT ASSESSMENT				
Habitat Category	Score Ranking	Desktop Score	Field Score	Score
Site wide forested cover habitat	60–90% is native forested cover (10)	10	10	10
	>90% is native forested cover (7)			
	25–59% is native forested cover (4)			
	10–24% is native forested cover (2)			
Midstory canopy cover (within forested cover)	25–50% has 5–10 ft midstory height (10)	N/A	9.33	9.33
	5–24% has 5–10 ft midstory height (6.5)			
	>50% has 5–10 ft midstory height (3)			
Site wide open habitat	>75% is native open habitat (8)	N/A	4	4
	50–75% is native open habitat (4)			
	<50% is native open habitat (2)			
Invasive plants	<10% dominated by invasives (4)	N/A	3.33	3.33
	10–25% dominated by invasives (2)			
Total				26.66
Total Score		-	-	35.68
Habitat Quality Tier		-	-	2



Acknowledgments

- Landowner Assistance Program
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida

