

EVALUATING CHANGES AND PREDICTING IMPACTS TO FRESHWATER FISH COMMUNITIES IN FLORIDA

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The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) collects standardized fish community data from rivers throughout Florida and conducts site-specific research that can be used in support of Minimum Flows and Levels evaluations. This presentation provides an overview of FWC's long-term monitoring program and how it can be used to highlight distinct differences and changes in fish communities based on stratified stream segments and flow patterns. It will also discuss key findings from studies focused on the importance of floodplain connectivity/inundation, the effects of drought on species composition, fish density, and fish biomass, and an overview of habitat suitability projects that demonstrate potential ecological shifts from simulated flow reductions.

PRESENTER BIO: Eric is a Fisheries Research Administrator with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. His research focuses on fish community and sportfish interactions with stream flows and levels, which has been used to support water management decisions throughout Florida. He represents his agency in the Instream Flow Council where he was the Past-President, as well as the Water Subcommittee of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.