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Executive Summary

Public Opinions of Endangered and Invasive Species in Florida

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Introduction

Managing invasive species and endangered species populations in a way that maintains biodiversity and ecological health are key issues for a tourism-heavy and natural-resource rich state like Florida. This survey captured responses from 515 Florida residents to explore the Florida public's opinions, attitudes, and knowledge about (1) general endangered species and invasive species topics, (2) how to prioritize efforts related to conservation, and (3) management practices for endangered and invasive species populations.

Key Findings

- Sixty-seven percent of respondents considered environmental conservation to be highly or extremely important. Compared to nine other Florida issues, environmental conservation ranked sixth out of 10.
- Eighty percent of respondents were likely or very likely to vote to support land conservation programs and seventy-two percent of respondents were likely or very likely to vote for candidates who support environmental conservation.

Endangered Species

- Few participants (15% or less) considered themselves either highly or extremely knowledgeable about threats to endangered species, how to prevent endangerment, and what species are currently endangered.
- Fifty-five percent of respondents believe the Endangered Species Act should be strengthened.
- Eighty-nine percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed it is important to conserve mammals compared to 49% who agreed or strongly agreed it is important to conserve microorganisms.
- When asked whether they thought Florida state leaders and agencies had the right amount of influence to impact policies affecting endangered species, respondents indicated they thought Florida citizens had too little influence (65%) and 47% indicated they thought political leaders in Florida had too much influence.
- Ninety-percent of respondents would support or strongly support imposing fines on those who harm endangered species in Florida and 89% would support or strongly support imposing fines on those who harm endangered species' habitats in Florida.
- Eighty-two percent of respondents would support or strongly support restricting residential development of areas that are habitat for endangered species, and 85% would support or strongly support restricting commercial development of the same areas.

- Eighty percent of respondents would support or strongly support the state of Florida purchasing endangered species' habitat so it can be protected.
- Seventy percent of respondents would like to learn more about the types of species that are endangered.

Invasive Species

- Sixty-two percent of respondents reported they felt they were either not knowledgeable or only slightly knowledgeable about the topic of invasive species.
- Sixty-three percent of respondents considered themselves not knowledgeable or only slightly knowledgeable about the types of invasive species living in Florida and 66% were not knowledgeable or only slightly knowledgeable about how they could prevent invasive species from entering Florida.
- Half of the respondents believed “we should use management strategies to control invasive species only in areas that are most affected” while 47% believed “we should do all we can to completely eradicate invasive species.”
- Fifty-five percent of respondents would support a 1% sales tax increase to prevent and eradicate invasive species in Florida, but only 18% would support a 5% sales tax increase for the same purpose.
- Seventy-three percent of respondents indicated they thought the restriction on owning and selling Burmese pythons as pets should be strengthened.
- Sixty-four percent of respondents would like to learn about the types of species that are invasive.