



Center for Public Issues Education
IN AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
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Executive Summary

Public Opinions of Endangered Species in Florida

Introduction

Given the impact that humans have on biodiversity, the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education (PIE Center) initiated a study to explore the attitudes, opinions, and knowledge of Floridians around the issue of endangered species. This survey explored what the Florida public thinks of (1) the importance of endangered species, (2) how to prioritize conservation, (3) the rights and responsibilities toward endangered species, (4) willingness to pay and engage in activities to protect endangered species, and (5) overall attitudes towards the environment.

Key Findings

Main highlights from the study include

- Florida residents do not consider the issue of endangered species as important as other Florida issues, such as the economy and healthcare. Endangered species ranked 11 out of 15 of key Florida issues.
- Florida residents consider themselves to be slightly or fairly knowledgeable about issues affecting endangered species but do not consider themselves to be highly or extremely knowledgeable about these issues.
- Respondents were more likely to consider species such as plants, fish, and mammals worthy of being conserved than microorganisms, invertebrates, and reptiles.
- Roughly 60% of respondents think that citizens at the national and state level have too little influence on public policy impacting endangered species, and roughly 40% believe that state and national political leaders have too much influence.
- 78% of respondents agree or strongly agree “the use and development of land should be restricted to protect endangered species.”
- 66% of respondents reported that they think the endangered species act should be strengthened.
- Protecting native species from non-native, invasive species was more important to Floridians (83% reported it was highly or extremely important to them) than people having the opportunity to hunt in Florida (43% reported it was highly or extremely important).
- 54% agree or strongly agree that they have a choice to participate in environmental programs established by the government, while 39% agree or strongly agree with the statement “I feel the government imposes its environmental strategies on us.”
- When asked a series of questions about their willingness to engage in pro-environmental behaviors, respondents reported they were more willing to avoid harmful activities than to engage in environmental civic behaviors.