

By Representative Livingston

House Resolution

A resolution supporting the concepts and objectives of "The Florida Panther & Private Lands" and "Private Habitats: Haven for Threatened and Endangered Species" projects.

WHEREAS, Florida has more endangered species than any state in the Union except Hawaii and California and has been rated as a state in which threatened and endangered species are at risk as a result of continued habitat destruction, and

WHEREAS, Florida has launched the nation's most aggressive public land acquisition program and has provided more annual funding over the past decade than any other state or the Federal Government to pay for public land purchases and enter into less-than-fee protection options with private landowners, including the enactment of conservation easements on private lands to protect wildlife habitat, wetlands, water resources, and farmland, and

WHEREAS, the state cannot afford to buy or manage every tract of land that contributes to its environmental welfare, nor can it hope to outlaw all destructive uses of these lands without further limiting the lawful uses of private property and placing unfair burdens on private property owners, and

WHEREAS, the "Florida Panther & Private Lands" and "Private Habitats: Havens for Threatened and Endangered Species" projects being conducted by the not-for-profit organization Florida Stewardship Foundation, in cooperation with University of Florida--IFAS, private landowners, environmental groups, and all levels of government throughout the state, offer a practical, workable means to add to, supplement, and extend many of the major conservation efforts

1 and expenditures of the state on behalf of environmental
2 protection, and

3 WHEREAS, these projects are based on the premise that
4 provision of a reduction in operating costs and a reliable
5 revenue stream for maintaining and enhancing natural or
6 constructed habitats will offset the economic incentives a
7 landowner might have for converting these habitats to other
8 uses, and

9 WHEREAS, the concepts behind these incentive-driven
10 projects will emphasize the important contributions private
11 landowners can make to habitat enhancement and protection and
12 reward private landowners for acting as responsible stewards
13 of wildlife habitats and other natural resources on their
14 properties, and

15 WHEREAS, these concepts will encourage private
16 landowners not only to maintain and protect habitats that are
17 essential for the continued survival of threatened and
18 endangered species and species of special state concern, but
19 to take additional steps wherever possible to restore and
20 improve these habitats so they will support additional
21 indigenous and keystone species, and

22 WHEREAS, a key objective of these projects is to create
23 new cost-effective and affordable conservation options that
24 will appeal to large numbers of private landowners, as well as
25 to environmental interests and government agencies, and that
26 will work effectively in providing habitat for threatened and
27 endangered species, and

28 WHEREAS, these conservation options will be based upon
29 sound scientific evidence and designed to encourage large
30 numbers of landowners to commit to long-term management plans
31 to ensure that essential habitats are not destroyed as a

1 result of ever-encroaching urban development or the need to
2 intensify and expand agricultural and forestry operations so
3 they can remain competitive and profitable, and

4 WHEREAS, these options will ensure that essential
5 habitats are well-managed so they can maintain their
6 ecological functions in a manner equal to or better than they
7 are today, and

8 WHEREAS, many thousands of acres of habitat that exist
9 today on private lands may never be protected through any
10 other means nor prevented through any law, rule, regulation,
11 or limitation on private property rights from being converted
12 to uses which could destroy most or all of their habitat
13 value, NOW, THEREFORE,

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15 Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of
16 Florida:

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18 That the House of Representatives supports the
19 premises, concepts, and objectives embodied in the "Florida
20 Panther & Private Lands" and "Private Habitats: Havens for
21 Threatened and Endangered Species" projects, and urges all
22 appropriate state agencies, water management districts, and
23 other divisions of government in the state to cooperate to the
24 fullest extent possible in implementing these premises,
25 concepts, and objectives and to offer technical,
26 administrative, and other support to the degree that is
27 possible and appropriate.

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