**Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**
**Budget Status Report** – Week 8
Fiscal Year 2016/17 Legislative Budget Request
Charlotte Jerrett, March 4, 2016

The Budget Conference held an organizational session last week after the House and Senate reached agreement on the Conference budget allocations. Senate and House members were appointed to serve on Conference committees shortly before Conference meetings began. The House is hosting Conference negotiations this year since the Senate hosted Conference negotiations during last Session. The subcommittee handling the FWC budget is the General Government/Agriculture & Natural Resources Budget Conference Committee (GG/ANR), which includes 6 Senate members and 14 House members. There are also a number of "at large" members on both sides who may participate in any of the budget conference committee meetings.

The work of the GG/ANR Conference Committee came to a close late Monday evening, with only 4 unresolved issues for FWC. Those issues, along with other unresolved GG/ANR issues were "bumped" to the House and Senate Appropriations Committee Chairs. The House and Senate Appropriations Chairs met late Thursday evening and agreed upon most "bumped" issues for the GG/ANR subcommittee. Details of the agreed upon FWC budget issues are available below and on the attached side-by-side comparison spreadsheet.

While the majority of budget issues that impact FWC have been agreed upon at this time, several subject areas within the state budget remain open. Accordingly, no conference bills are available at this time.

<u>New Issues:</u> The agreed up budget includes funding for following FWC Strategic Initiative Support funding: enhancements for Water and Land Conservation programs, Black Bear Conflict Reduction, Critical Wildlife Area Monitoring, Enhanced Monitoring of Imperiled Species to Support Management of Conservation Lands, Derelict Vessel Removal, Lionfish Management, Babcock Ranch Preserve Management & Public Use, Enhanced Wildlife Disease/Public Heath Surveillance, Florida Boating Improvement Program, and the Blackwater Fisheries Research and Development Center Water Supply Reservoir Renovation.

The following Operational Support Initiatives were funded: Personal Locator Beacon's for Law Enforcement Officers and Vessels, Statewide Information Technology Upgrades, Recreational Licensing Services, Farris Bryant Building Fire Safety Equipment, Critical Vehicle Replacement, Southwest Regional Office Parking Lot Repair, FWRI roof replacement and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Enhancements. A fund shift from the Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund to the Land Acquisition Trust Fund was also made.

The following Federal and Grant Funding initiatives were funded: Gulf Restoration – Deepwater Horizon, United States Fish & Wildlife Service Boating Access, Artificial Reef Construction and Assessment, and the Palm Beach Recreational Shooting Park.

The following projects were also funded with General Revenue (GR), Non-Recurring: Technology Research and Advisory Services, Florida Conservation & Technology Center for Conservation, Lowry Park Zoo, Fostering Success Pilot Program, Python Management and Parker Manatee Aquarium.

Reductions: $330,000 reduction for general operations, $71,495 reduction for savings associated with Law Enforcement Consolidation, $4,140,000 reduction in federal budget authority due to no supporting revenues, and $1,260,000 reduction from previously unspent budget authority.

Trust Fund Sweeps: Potential cash sweeps remain unresolved at this time.

Budget Conforming Bills: Budget conforming bills are bills traveling with the General Appropriations Act (GAA) that contain substantive changes to law that are necessary to support the budget as approved in the GAA. At this time conforming bills remain outstanding.

**Next Steps**

House and Senate Appropriations Chairs will continue to negotiate other unresolved state budget issues for final resolution. Employee benefits are usually also negotiated by the Appropriations Chairs. Once all issues are agreed upon, the Conference bills will be printed and delivered to members to review during a 72 hour “cooling off” period prior to final passage. The House and Senate will then take up the Conference budget bills and, when passed (the budget is the only bill required to pass each Session), will send them to the Governor for final action. After the Governor completes his line item veto list, the State will have its beginning budget for Fiscal Year 2016/17.