

Southeast Region Coastal Species of Concern

Predator Management Plan/ Programmatic Environmental Assessment

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

March 2017



The National Park Service (NPS) Southeast Region is developing a programmatic environmental assessment to analyze methods for the protection of coastal species of concern from the threat of predators, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

The programmatic environmental assessment will provide a broad-level analysis of general environmental issues relating to the proposed Species of Concern Predator Management Plan. It will be governed by the same regulations and guidance that apply to site-specific National Environmental Policy Act reviews. By having impacts analyzed at the programmatic level, the tiered efforts can be conducted more efficiently and consistently and allow the parks to focus more on issues relevant to their park.

Coastal parks in the Southeast Region include parks in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. Many coastal parks in the region have coastal and dune habitats that support species of concern, which are especially vulnerable during their breeding season. Some parks are in need of a strategy to better protect species of concern, which includes both federally listed threatened and endangered species and state listed species—examples include snowy plover, piping plover, loggerhead sea turtle, green sea turtle, Kemp’s Ridley sea turtle, leatherback sea turtle, southeastern beach mouse, and Perdido Key beach mouse, from such predators as coyote, raccoons, fox, feral hogs, and others. The programmatic plan will be applicable to all coastal parks in the region where the species of concern included in the plan are present.

The NPS has developed a proposed action for protecting species of concern, which is the initial NPS proposal to address the purpose and need for taking action. It represents one alternative that will be considered during the environmental assessment process. The NPS will also analyze the effects of additional preliminary alternatives identified in this scoping brochure, and other alternatives that are suggested during the scoping period, as appropriate. The NPS will not select an alternative for implementation until after the environmental assessment is completed. We invite you to participate in the planning process. We hope you will join us in this important discussion by attending public informational webinars, submitting comments regarding issues of concern, and by providing us with suggestions for and comments on the preliminary alternatives we have developed.

Thank you for your interest and participation in the Species of Concern Predator Management Plan!



American Oystercatcher



Snowy plover



Piping plover
All photos above by NPS

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this action is to establish a plan/programmatic environmental assessment to support protection of coastal species of concern, including shorebirds, sea turtles, and beach mice through predator management within the NPS Southeast Region.

The environmental assessment will analyze which approach would be most effective in meeting the goal of protecting coastal species of concern from predators.

Preliminary Alternatives

The NPS has developed four preliminary alternatives. The no action alternative is the continuance of current management. Three action alternatives are being considered to protect coastal species of concern through predator management.

Alternative A: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, the individual parks would continue current management actions for protecting coastal sea turtle, shorebird, and beach mice species of concern from depredation. Procedures would vary by park, and would continue to be implemented based on best professional judgement of priorities and current park-specific needs. The compliance for the predator control methods would vary based on the park's actions. These procedures could include a range of methods including trapping, shooting, exclusion fencing and screening, and relocation within parks.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, the NPS would implement a comprehensive program for coastal species of concern protection through predator management. The development of a programmatic plan at the regional level would make it easier for parks to meet compliance requirements through tiered documents ultimately giving parks a wide range of tools to effectively protect coastal species of concern. The program would involve year-round management of predators allowing for use of lethal and nonlethal tools.

Alternative C: Nonlethal Control Only

Alternative C would be similar to Alternative B in that parks would implement a programmatic, comprehensive, year-round predator management program. However, tools would be limited to nonlethal methods only. Methods could include trap and release, exclosures, use of deterrents, or other nonlethal methods.

Alternative D: Threshold-Based Management

Under Alternative D, a predator management program would be implemented. However, species-specific thresholds for each park would be developed before predator management would occur. Both lethal and nonlethal methods would be available to protect coastal species of concern.



Project Timeline

Planning Phase	Estimated Timeline
Internal scoping meetings	January 2016
Preliminary Alternatives	March 2016
Public scoping webinars/comment analysis Happening now!	Winter/Spring 2017 Opportunity for public involvement
Alternatives refinement	Spring 2017
Development of Programmatic Environmental Assessment	Summer – Fall 2017
Publish Programmatic Environmental Assessment	Winter 2017/2018 Opportunity for public involvement
Public webinars	Spring 2018
Public comment analysis/response	Spring 2018
Anticipated Finding of No Significant Impact	Spring 2018
Anticipated signed Finding of No Significant Impact	Summer 2018



Public Webinar Schedule

The NPS will be holding two informational public scoping webinars to present information related to the project, including the preliminary alternatives. To register for the webinars, visit: <https://parkplanning.gov/sero> and click on the “Meetings” link for the project. Since the NPS would like as much input as possible, recorded sessions can be accessed at: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/sero> under the project link for Coastal Species of Concern Predator Management Plan.

Date	Registration Information
April 4, 2017	https://parkplanning.nps.gov/sero
April 6, 2017	https://parkplanning.nps.gov/sero



How to Comment on the Programmatic Environmental Assessment

The National Environmental Policy Act requires the NPS to obtain public input on the programmatic environmental assessment and you are invited to submit comments on the Species of Concern Predator Management Plan/ Programmatic Environmental Assessment. Your input will help guide the planning team in developing the programmatic environmental assessment, including consideration of the proposed action and preliminary alternatives. Additional opportunities for public input will be announced as the planning process progresses.

Before including your address, telephone number, electronic mail address, or other personally identifying information in your comments, you should be aware that your entire comment (including your personally identifying information) may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us to withhold your personally identifiable information from public review, we can't guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Ways to Provide Comments:

Submit comments online at:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/sero>

Mail comments to :

National Park Service

Planning and Compliance Division

Attn: SERO PEA

100 Alabama Street

Atlanta, Georgia, 30303

Please submit comments by **April 15, 2017**.

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