

Charlotte County Habitat Conservation Plan



In 1983 Congress adopted Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as a way to promote "creative partnerships between the public and private sectors and among governmental agencies in the interest of species and habitat conservation". Section 10 of the ESA authorizes states, local governments, and private landowners to apply for an

Incidental Take Permit for otherwise lawful activities that may harm listed species or their habitats. To obtain a permit, an applicant must submit a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) outlining what he or she will do to "minimize and mitigate" the impact of the permitted take on the listed species. The *underlying principle* of the Section 10 exemption from the ESA is that some individuals of a species or portions of their habitat may be expendable over the short term, as long as enough protection is provided to ensure the long term recovery of the species.

In an effort to reduce the regulatory burden of this process, Charlotte County is developing the County-wide Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for the

Federally listed Florida Scrub-jay. The HCP will define a land reserve network and



establish a mitigation credit system for alleviating some of the regulatory burden on citizens and for mitigating impacts. The County-wide HCP development, in part, is being funded by a Federal grant. The grant funding has allowed the County to hire one of the leading scrub-jay researchers in the state. The HCP process is a complicated scientific conservation planning tool, and provides regulatory certainty for Charlotte County land owners.

