

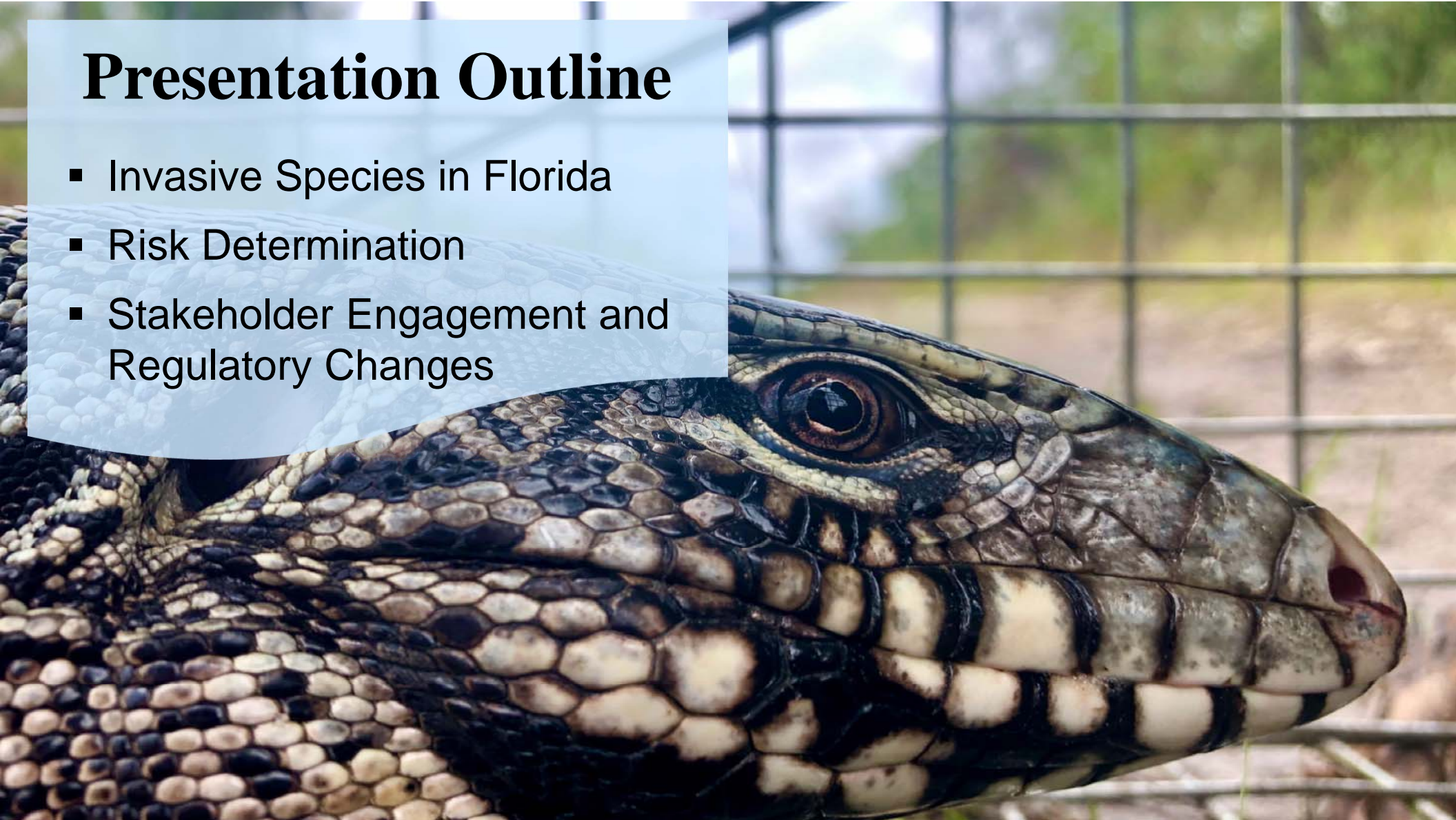
# Addressing Invasive Reptiles in Florida Prevention through Regulatory Change



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Wildlife Impact Management, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation

# Presentation Outline

- Invasive Species in Florida
- Risk Determination
- Stakeholder Engagement and Regulatory Changes

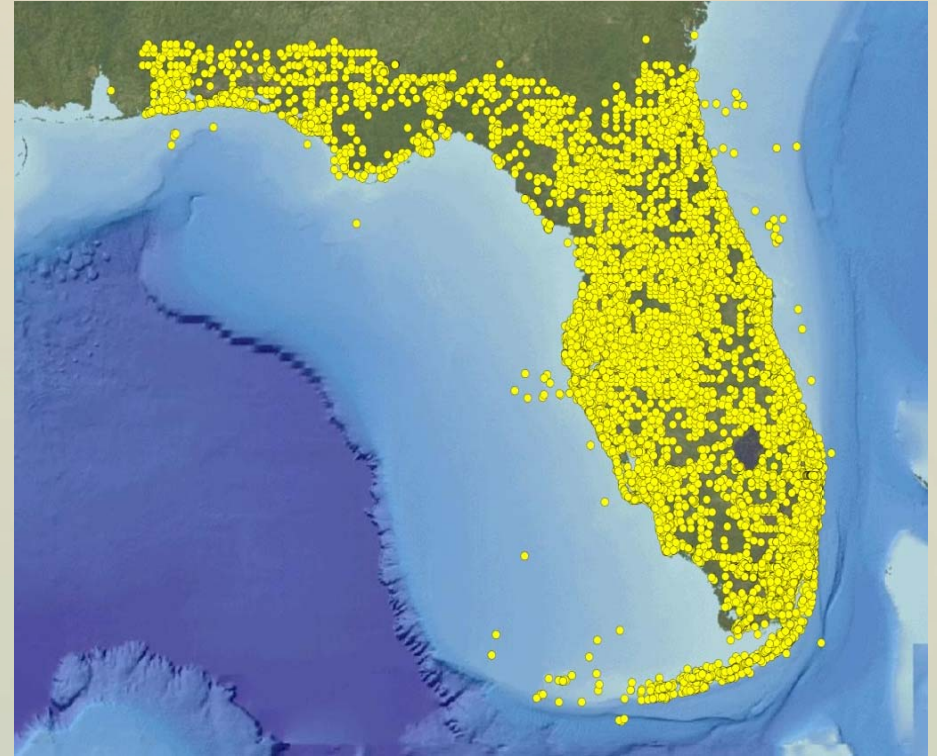


**Invasive Species:** Nonnative plants, animals or diseases occurring outside their natural range that cause or are likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health



# Invasive Fish and Wildlife in Florida

- Florida is susceptible to invasive species
  - Subtropical climate
  - Multiple ports of entry
  - Live animal trade industry
- Minimizing adverse impacts from invasive species is a high priority for FWC



*FWC 1924 – Present  
(excludes lionfish observations)*



# Invasive Species Establishment Factors

- Biology of the species
- Climate and habitat
- Opportunity
  - Potential for introduction
  - Rate of introduction
  - Numbers introduced locally and statewide



Locations of Nile monitor observations and removals reported to the FWC



# Presentation Outline

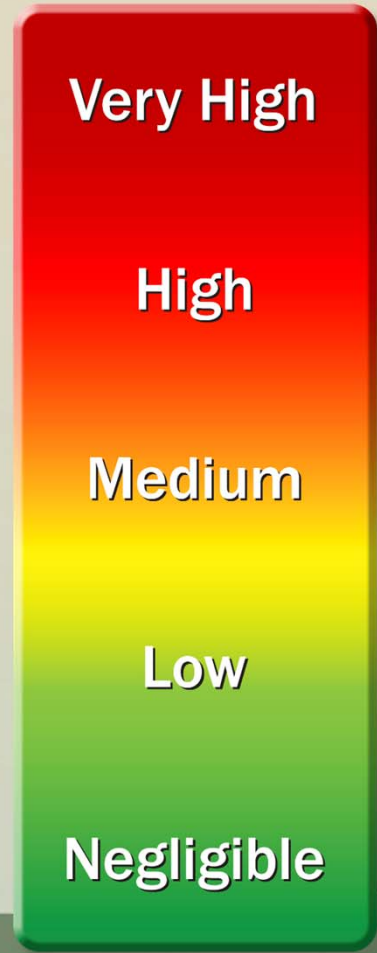
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# Risk Determination

## RISK FACTORS:

- Species Competition
- Invasion History
- Listed Species Impacts
- Dispersal Ability
- Health and Human Safety
- Disease Vector
- Reproductive Potential
- Detectability
- Economic Impacts



# Tegu Risk

- Consume native species, including Threatened species
- Burrow over-winter and survive further north than Florida
- Established in 4 areas of Florida
- Popular in pet trade

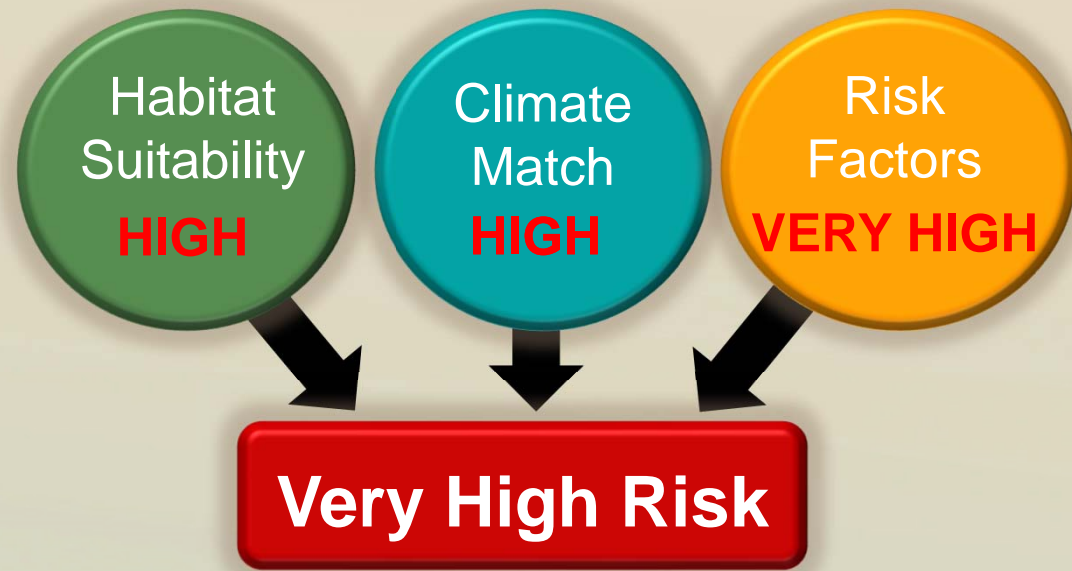


Image: University of Florida

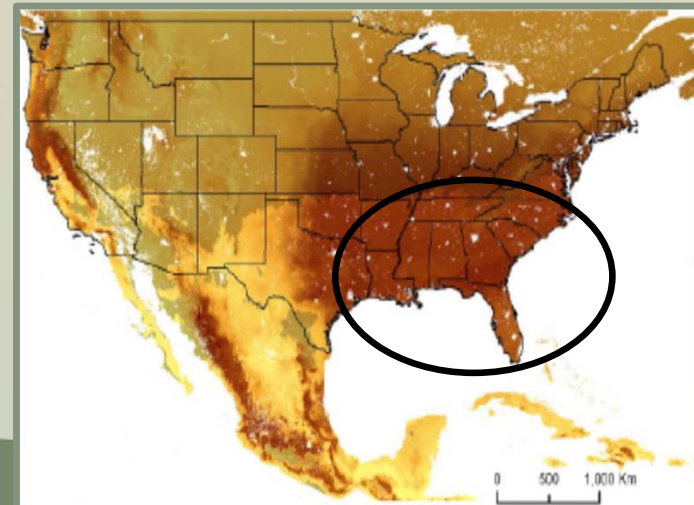


Image: Jarnevich et al. 2018



# Risk of Nonnative Reptiles Proposed for Prohibited Status

Very High

- Nile Monitor
- Northern African Python
- Reticulated Python
- Burmese Python
- Green Anaconda
- Tegus (all species)

High

- Green Iguana
- Southern African Python
- Scrub Python
- Amethystine Python

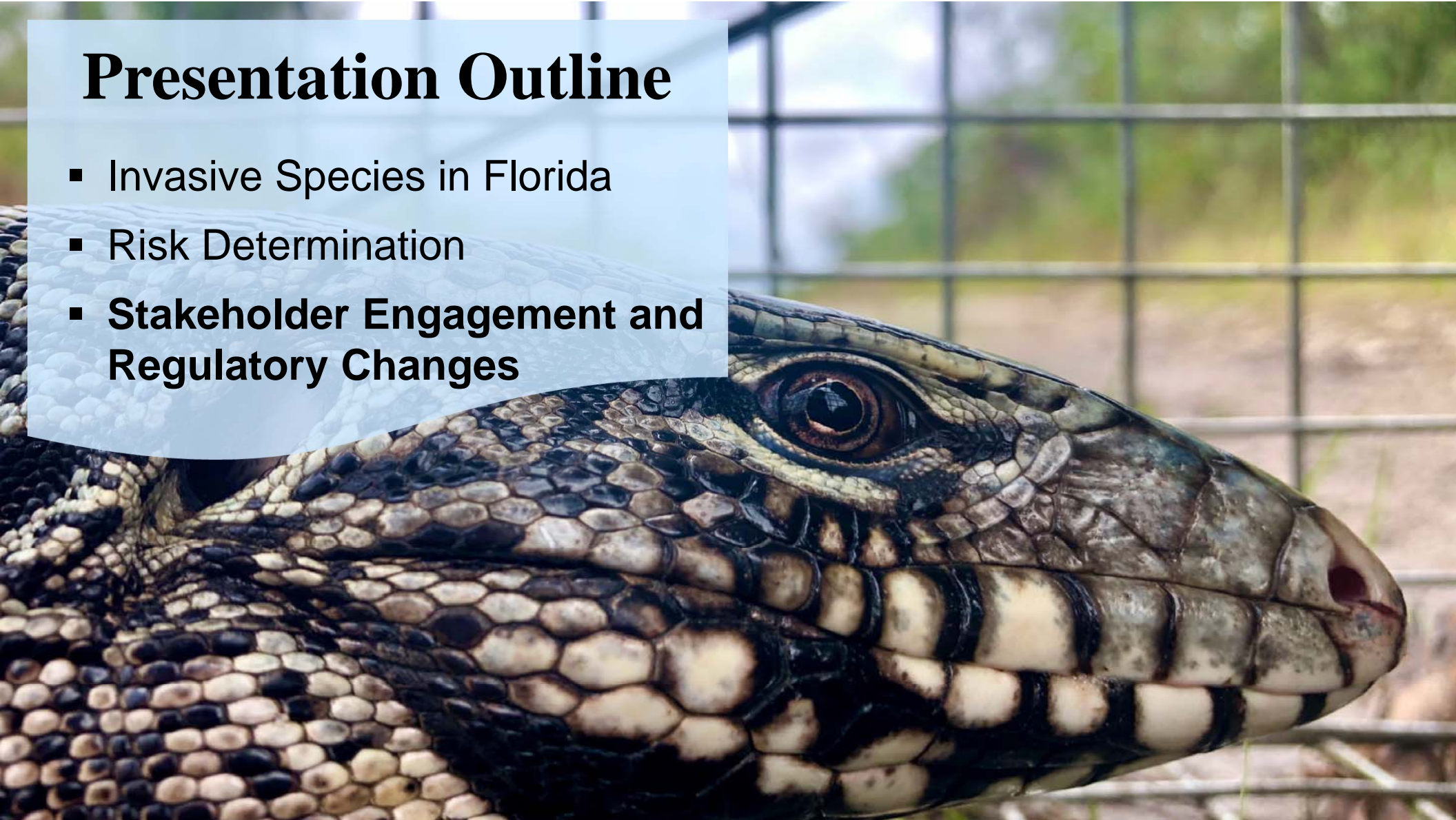


# Regulatory Classification of Nonnative Reptiles

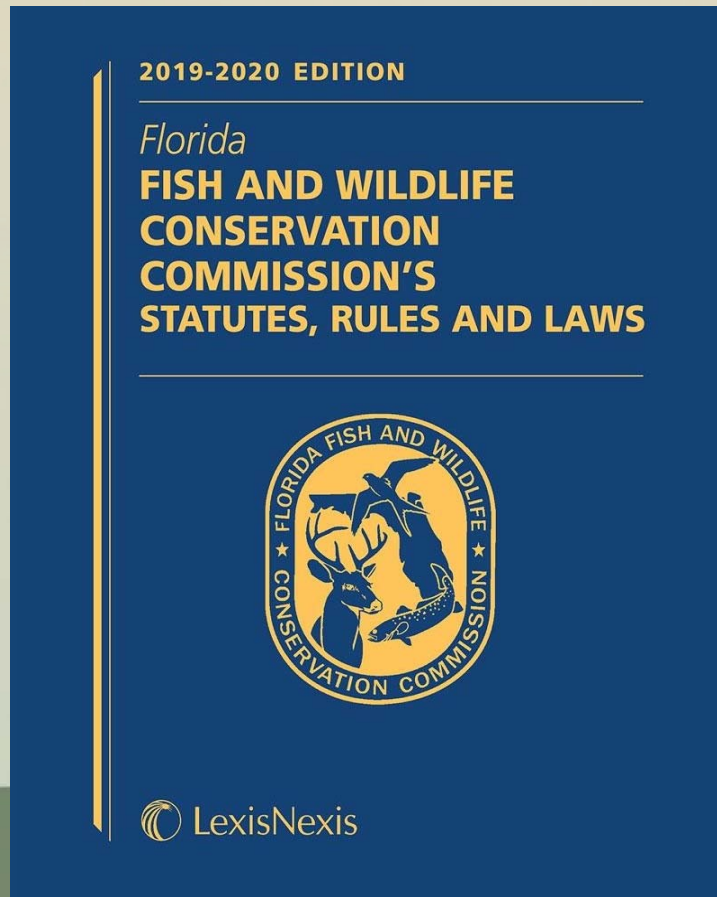
| Activity  | Class III Reptiles | Conditional Species | Prohibited Species        |
|---|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Allowed as pets   | Yes<br>(no permit) | No                  | No                        |
| Import and possess for breeding for the purposes of commercial sale | Yes                | Yes                 | No                        |
| Import and possess for exhibition                                   | Yes                | Yes                 | Yes<br>(limited breeding) |
| Import and possess for research                                     | Yes                | Yes                 | Yes<br>(limited breeding) |

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# Goal of New Rules for Invasive Reptiles

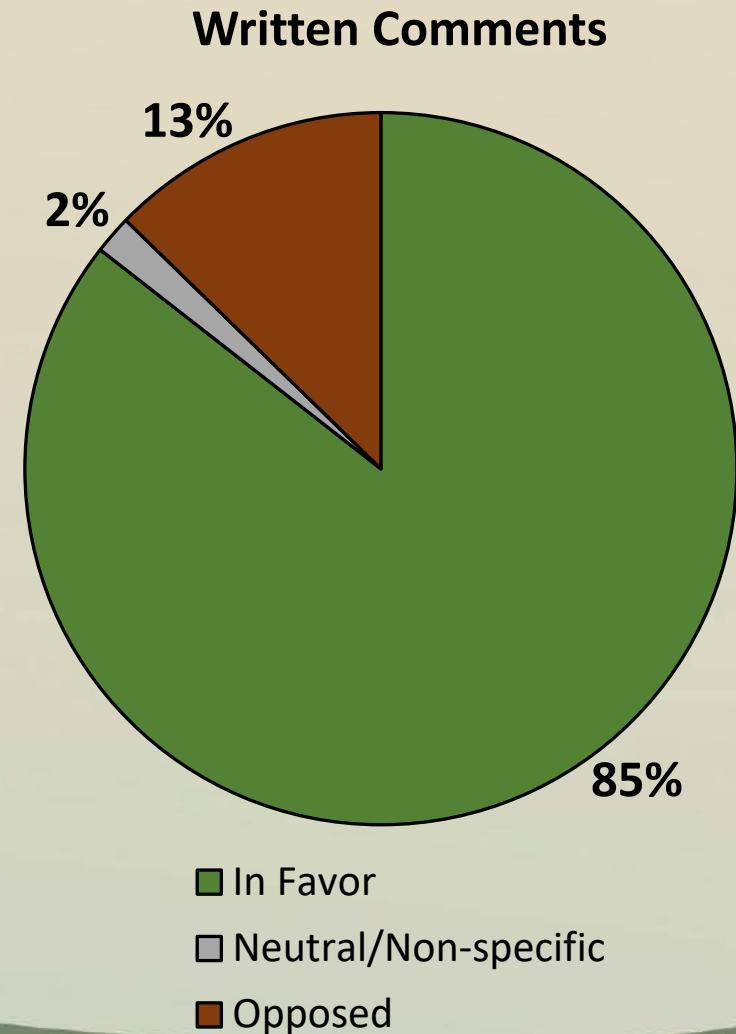


*Eliminate commercial breeding and pet ownership of high-risk reptiles to protect Florida's environment and economy*



# Stakeholder Feedback

- Polarized stakeholder feedback
  - Majority of Florida residents generally supported changes
  - Reptile industry and hobbyists generally opposed to Prohibited status
- Staff made extensive revisions to rule language based on feedback



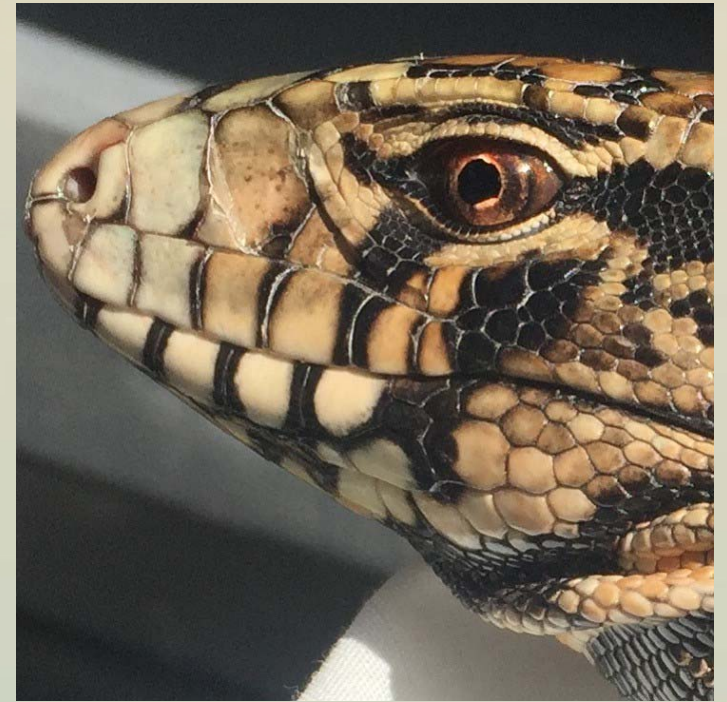
# Final Rules for Invasive Reptiles

- Approved on February 25, 2021
- Rule changes:
  - Added 16 high-risk reptiles to Prohibited list
  - Allow pet owners to keep their green iguanas and tegus
  - Provide limited exceptions for some entities
  - Define new eradication/control permit



# New Prohibited Species

- 16 high-risk nonnative reptiles added to the Prohibited list:
  - Burmese python
  - Reticulated python
  - Northern and Southern African pythons
  - Scrub and Amethystine pythons
  - Green anaconda
  - Nile monitor
  - Tegus (all species in *Tupinambis* or *Salvator*)
  - Green iguana





## Personal Use (Pet) Permits

- No major changes to the current language in 68-5.007(5)
- People with pet tegus or green iguanas possessed prior to Prohibited listing are eligible
- Pets must be PIT tagged
- Annual permit
- No new pet constrictors or Nile monitors



# Rules Changes – Commercial Sales



- Limited exceptions for sales of tegus and green iguanas
  - No importation
  - Sunset commercial breeding of tegus and green iguanas by June 30, 2024
- Limited sale of wild-caught tegus and green iguanas
- Eliminates commercial breeding and sale of large constrictors and Nile monitor

# Rule Changes – Eradication and Control



- New permit type for eradication and control efforts
- Required for anyone transporting live Prohibited species for the purposes of eradication efforts
- If catching and humanely killing on site, do not need this permit
- No eggs may be removed intact from the field



# Rules Changes – Public Exhibition



- Public exhibition allowed with a permit
- Limited exceptions for entities previously exhibiting tegus and green iguanas at residential properties
  - No breeding
  - No new acquisitions



# Rule Changes – Biosecurity



- Outdoor housing allowed, with conditions
- No breeding Prohibited reptiles outdoors
- PIT tags required
- 90-day grace period for people to come into compliance
- 180-day grace period for people to adjust outdoor enclosures to come into compliance





# Breeding

- New language states that Prohibited reptiles shall not be bred except:
  - Permitted educational exhibition facilities that are AZA or ZAA accredited or certified
  - Permitted research
  - Permitted commercial sale facilities with green iguanas/ tegus under limited exception (through 6/30/2024 only)



## Breeding

- Any other males and females must be caged separately, unless the individual animals have been sterilized.
- If a facility can't determine the sex of an individual animal, that animal must be caged separately



# Implementation and Next Steps

- Rules effective April 29<sup>th</sup>
- Grace periods:
  - 90 days to come into compliance with new rules
  - 180 days to bring outdoor caging into compliance
- Outreach
  - FWC website includes permit applications
  - Social media promotion
  - PIT tagging events
- Technical assistance group

# Resources



Risk assessments, permit applications, FAQs, and more are available at:  
<https://MyFWC.com/wildlifehabitats/nonnatives/rule-development/>



Exotic Pet Amnesty Program help:  
[PetAmnesty@MyFWC.com](mailto:PetAmnesty@MyFWC.com)

