CHAPTER 2: PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS

During its development, this HCP was subject to stakeholder input, review and comment. Drafts were posted on the County's website for broad distribution and hard copies were made available to those without internet access.

Steering Committee

In accordance with its USFWS grant, a Steering Committee was formed to guide the development of this HCP. The Committee was composed of representatives from various County departments, the FDEP, FWC, and USFWS. It was facilitated by Ecological Associates, Inc. (EAI), the County's prime consultant for preparing the HCP and other documents needed to support the County's ITP application.

The Steering Committee held its initial kickoff meeting on May 1, 2007 and then met every two to three months thereafter until a complete draft document was finalized. The last meeting was convened on April 13, 2009.

Stakeholder Input

Stakeholder participation was achieved primarily through a series of public workshops, as noted below. Copies of all drafts were made available to the public, and stakeholders were encouraged to provide written comments to the County for consideration. All drafts of the document were posted on the County's HCP website. In addition, considerable stakeholder input was provided during preparation and adoption of a Wildlife Lighting Ordinance, the primary mitigation proposed for the ITP.

Public Workshops

Two initial public workshops (October 20, 2009 and May 10, 2010) were held to present the HCP to the public and to receive stakeholder comments. The draft HCP then progressed to the Walton County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) where public concerns were addressed and guidance provided on key Plan elements during two public hearings (August 10 and November 9, 2010). At the direction of the BOCC, two additional public workshops were held on December 1 and 7, 2010. A final public hearing was held on January 11, 2011, at which time the BOCC approved the Plan and authorized staff to forward it to the USFWS and proceed with the ITP application.