



COMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION & STATE LANDS

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2008
11:00 AM – 12:45 PM
216 THE CAPITOL**

**Marco Rubio
Speaker**

**Rep. Will Kendrick
Chair**

Committee Meeting Notice

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Speaker Marco Rubio

Committee on Conservation & State Lands

Start Date and Time: Wednesday, March 05, 2008 11:00 am

End Date and Time: Wednesday, March 05, 2008 12:45 pm

Location: 216 Capitol

Duration: 1.75 hrs

Workshop on the following:

Policy issues with respect to recommendations for Proposed Council Bill ENRC 08-02 relating to the Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, Consolidation of Chapters 370 and 372, F.S.

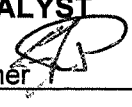

Consideration of recommendations with respect to Proposed Council Bill ENRC 08-11 relating to the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Chair Kendrick requests that amendments be submitted to staff no later than 6:00p.m., Tuesday, March 04, 2008.

NOTICE FINALIZED on 03/03/2008 16:22 by SIMS-DAVIS.LINDA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: PCB ENRC 08-11 Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
SPONSOR(S): Environment & Natural Resources Council
TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:**

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1) <u>Committee on Conservation & State Lands</u>	_____	Palmer 	Zeiler 
2) _____	_____	_____	_____
3) _____	_____	_____	_____
4) _____	_____	_____	_____
5) _____	_____	_____	_____

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

This bill specifies certain actions that result in seagrass scarring within aquatic preserves to be violations of the boating laws of Florida and specifies those actions as civil infractions. The bill establishes a penalty schedule for seagrass scarring and provides for the disposition of collected fines. The bill creates definitions for the terms "seagrass scarring" and "seagrasses".

The bill provides for confiscation and disposition of illegally taken wildlife, freshwater fish and saltwater fish and provides, upon conviction of the offender or sooner in accordance with a court order, for forfeiture of those wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish to the investigating law enforcement agency. The bill specifies how the investigating law enforcement agency may dispose of the forfeited wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish. However, all live, unlawfully possessed wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish seized by a law enforcement agency are to be documented as evidence and then returned to their habitat unharmed, except that non-native species may be released only as allowed by rules of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

The bill provides that photographs of illegally taken wildlife, freshwater fish, and saltwater fish shall be deemed competent evidence admissible in judicial proceedings to the same extent as if the physical items themselves were introduced as evidence. The photographs are to be attached to a written description, made under oath, and the photographs are to be signed by the photographer.

The bill repeals s. 372.107, F.S., which creates the Federal Law Enforcement Trust Fund.

Fines are established for seagrass scarring and monies collected are to be deposited into the Internal Improvement Trust Fund for specified uses. The bill allows the sale of forfeited wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish with proceeds being deposited to certain trust funds. Investigating law enforcement agencies would avoid current administrative and transportation costs associated with transporting, securing, and managing evidence; FWC estimates that the commission would save as much as \$40,000 annually.

The bill would become effective on October 1, 2008.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

Provide Limited Government: The bill limits the burden on government to maintain physical evidence and the associated costs of maintaining such evidence.

Promote Personal Responsibility: The bill adds to boating regulations to further protect the state's resources from careless vessel operation and provides penalties for those violations.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation

Seagrass Scarring

Sections 258.35-258.46, F.S., establish aquatic preserves within the state's waters. An aquatic preserve is an exceptional area of submerged lands and its associated waters set aside for being maintained essentially in its natural or existing condition. This designation includes seagrasses and seagrass meadows. It is the intent of the Legislature that aquatic preserves be set aside for the benefit of future generations.

Seagrasses are flowering plants that grow in the marine saline environment. They are called grasses only because most species superficially resemble terrestrial grasses. Because these plants must photosynthesize, they are limited to growing submerged in the photic zone and most occur in shallow and sheltered coastal waters anchored in sand or mud bottoms and can form extensive beds or meadows. In temperate areas these meadows are usually composed of few differing species whereas tropical beds are usually much more diverse with many species intermixing. Seagrass beds are highly productive ecosystems and can harbor species from all phyla, for example juvenile and adult fish, epiphytic and free-living macroalgae and microalgae, shellfish, worms, and nematodes. It was once thought that few associated species fed directly on seagrass leaves but recent scientific studies with improved measurement techniques have revealed that seagrasses are a highly important link in the food chain with many species feeding on seagrasses, including manatees, fish, birds, sea urchins and crabs. Seagrasses, in part, create their own habitat – the leaves slow down water currents increasing sedimentation and the seagrass roots and rhizomes stabilize the seabed. Their importance for associated species is due to provision of shelter and for their extraordinarily high rate of primary production. They also provide coastal zones with a number of benefits such as spawning areas, fishing grounds, wave protection, oxygen production, and protection against coastal erosion.¹

Seagrasses and seagrass meadows are particularly susceptible to damage by scouring and chopping caused by boat props or propellers. This type of damage leaves linear, disturbed bottom areas that require a long period of time for seagrasses to recolonize. The statutes do not currently authorize enforcement action against persons who operate boats in a careless manner that results in seagrass scarring.

¹ Hemminga, M.A. and Duarte, C. 2000. *Seagrass Ecology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 298 pp.
Short, F.T. and Coles, R.G.(eds). 2001. *Global Seagrass Research Methods*. Elsevier Science, Amsterdam. 473 pp.

Confiscation and Disposition of illegally taken Fish and Wildlife

- Saltwater Fish

Section 370.061, F.S., provides for the seizure and forfeiture of saltwater fish obtained by unlawful commercial harvesting. However, no provision exists in the statutes for the seizure or forfeiture of unlawfully obtained, recreationally harvested, perishable saltwater fish – except for trout, snook or redfish when the harvest exceeds three times the legal bag limit.

When an arrest is made and illegal, perishable saltwater fish taken or landed by a commercial harvester are confiscated, the defendant may post bond or a cash deposit in an amount determined by the judge to be the fair value of the confiscated products. The defendant then has twenty-four hours to transport the fish outside the limits of Florida for sale or other disposition. Should no bond or cash deposit be given within the time fixed by the judge, the judge may order the sale of the confiscated saltwater fish at the highest price obtainable.

Proceeds from the sale of confiscated saltwater fish, or cash deposit or bond posted by the defendant are received by the judge and remitted to the FWC to be deposited into a special escrow account to be held in trust pending the outcome of the trial of the defendant. In the event of acquittal, the proceeds of a sale or the bond or cash deposit are returned to the defendant. In the event of a conviction, the proceeds are deposited into the Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund to be used for law enforcement purposes.

Any municipal or county law enforcement agency that enforces or assists the FWC in enforcing the provisions of s. 370, F.S., when enforcement results in a forfeiture of commercially harvested saltwater products, is entitled to receive all or a share of that property based upon its participation in the enforcement, pursuant to s. 370.061(6)(a), F.S.

- Game and Freshwater Fish

Section 372.73, F.S., provides for the seizure and forfeiture of any unlawfully obtained game or freshwater fish. When an arrest is made and game or freshwater fish are confiscated, those game or freshwater fish are to be held as evidence until the trial of the defendant, unless the court orders an earlier disposal. Upon conviction of the offender, or sooner if the court so orders, confiscated game or freshwater fish are forfeited and are to be given to some hospital or charitable institution. However, all forfeited furs, hides or fur-bearing animals are sent to the FWC, which shall sell them and deposit the proceeds of the sale to the State Game Trust Fund.

Evidence

According to FWC, in the majority of cases, game and freshwater fish that are seized are seldom presented as evidence at trial and become severely freezer burned and unwholesome after being stored in the evidence freezers for an extensive amount of time. After a case is closed, the items retained as evidence are no longer useful to the court, charity, or the defendant and are disposed at a landfill.²

Currently, game and freshwater fish are being seized and stored at a faster rate than they are being removed from evidence by court order. All evidence facilities must be in compliance with accreditation standards and expanding evidence facilities often requires the installation of fencing and other security measures. Often, local police and sheriff departments that seize game and freshwater fish do not have adequate freezers to accommodate this evidence and use FWC's freezers for storage. This puts an

² FWC, Division of Law Enforcement, 2008. Confiscation and disposition of illegally taken wildlife. freshwater fish and saltwater fish.

additional administrative burden on the FWC staff for processing this additional evidence. The FWC has also had to purchase and maintain additional freezers.³

Effect of Proposed Change

The bill amends s. 253.04, F.S. It defines seagrass scarring as damage caused by the operation of a vessel in waters supporting seagrasses, resulting in the destruction of roots, shoots, or stems of seagrass plants, which causes denuding of vegetation in tracks of sediment commonly referred to as prop-scars or propeller scars. Seagrasses are defined to be Cuban shoal grass (*Halodule wrightii*), turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*), manatee grass (*Syringodium filiforme*), star grass (*Halophila engelmannii*), paddle grass (*Halophila decipiens*), Johnson's seagrass (*Halophila johnsonii*), or widgeon grass (*Ruppia maritima*).

The bill specifies that the operation of a vessel outside lawfully marked channels that causes seagrass scarring within an aquatic preserve – except for the Lake Jackson, Wekiva River and Rainbow Springs Aquatic Preserves which are freshwater – is a civil infraction. However, seagrass scarring that occurs whenever a vessel is being operated in a reasonable, prudent and non-negligent manner is not considered a violation. A seagrass scarring violation is determined to be a violation of the boating laws of this state and shall be charged on a uniform boating citation. Refusal to post bond or sign a boating citation is specified to be a misdemeanor of the second degree.

The bill amends section 327.73, F.S., providing a civil infraction penalty schedule for seagrass scarring in certain aquatic preserves. The schedule is:

- \$50 upon conviction for a first offense;
- \$250 upon conviction for a second offense occurring within twelve months of a prior conviction;
- \$500 upon conviction for a third offense occurring within thirty-six months of a prior conviction;
- \$1,000 upon conviction for a fourth or subsequent offense.

All civil penalties collected pursuant to this bill are to be deposited into the Internal Improvement Trust Fund and used solely to implement, administer, and enforce the provisions of this bill, provide for seagrass restoration, conduct a program to educate vessel operators about the need to protect seagrasses from damage caused by the operation of vessels, and to fund marking of seagrasses.

The bill amends s. 372.73, F.S., to provide for forfeiture, upon conviction of the offender or sooner in accordance with a court order, of unlawfully obtained wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish seized by a law enforcement agency to that law enforcement agency. The investigating law enforcement agency may dispose of the forfeited wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish by:

- retaining it for the agency's official use;
- transferring it to another unit of state or local government for official use;
- donating it to a charitable organization;
- selling it at public sale, pursuant to the provisions of s. 705.103, F.S.; or
- destroying it if none of the other options are practicable, or if it is unwholesome or otherwise not of appreciable value.

However, all live, unlawfully possessed wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish seized by a law enforcement agency is to be documented as evidence and then returned to its habitat unharmed, except that non-native species may be released only as allowed by rules of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

The proceeds of any sale of seized wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish is to be remitted to the Department of Revenue which is to credit the State Game Trust Fund or the Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund, as applicable.

³ Id.

The bill creates s. 372.731, F.S., providing that a photograph of illegally taken wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish may be deemed competent evidence of such property and may be admissible in judicial proceedings to the same extent as if the property itself were introduced as evidence. The photographs are to be attached to a written description, to be made under oath. The photographs are to be signed by the photographer.

Game and freshwater fish law enforcement officers and marine resource officers are often patrolling in remote areas and may need to travel a significant distance to an evidence storage facility. Providing for photographic evidence would allow officers to work more efficiently in the field and focus their efforts on patrolling the woods and waters of the state.

The bill repeals s. 372.107, F.S. This section creates the Federal Law Enforcement Trust Fund within the FWC. This trust fund was terminated in 2005.⁴

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Amends s. 253.04, F.S.; providing certain actions in aquatic preserves to be either civil infractions or misdemeanors of the second degree; providing for the disposition of collected fines; providing definitions.

Section 2: Amends s. 327.73, F.S.; providing a civil infraction penalty schedule for seagrass scarring in designated aquatic preserves.

Section 3: Amends s. 372.73, F.S.; providing for confiscation and disposition of illegally taken wildlife, freshwater fish and saltwater fish.

Section 4: Creates s. 372.731, F.S.; providing photographs of illegally taken wildlife, freshwater fish, and saltwater fish shall be deemed competent evidence admissible in judicial proceedings.

Section 5: Repeals s. 372.107, F.S.; which creates the Federal Law Enforcement Trust Fund.

Section 6: Creates an effective date of October 1, 2007.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

See Fiscal Comments

2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

See Fiscal Comments

2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments

⁴ Chapter 2005-17, L.O.F.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

The private sector would be required to pay escalating fines for the careless operation of a vessel outside lawfully marked channels that causes propeller scarring within an aquatic preserve.

FWC and other law enforcement agencies would be able to donate to non-profit organizations forfeited wildlife, freshwater fish and saltwater fish, upon the conviction of the offender or sooner in accordance with a court order.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

All civil penalties for seagrass scarring collected pursuant to this bill are to be deposited into the Internal Improvement Trust Fund. These funds to be used solely to: implement, administer, and enforce the provisions of this bill; provide for seagrass restoration; and conduct a program to educate vessel operators about the need to protect seagrasses from damage caused by the operation of vessels.

Upon conviction of a violator, the proceeds from the sale of confiscated wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish, or a cash deposit or bond posted are deposited into the Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund to be used for law enforcement purposes. Any municipal or county law enforcement agency that enforces or assists the FWC in enforcing the provisions of the bill is entitled to receive all or a share of that property based upon its participation in the enforcement.

Allowing photographic evidence would save time and costs associated with officer's transporting, securing, and managing evidence. FWC reports that in the three month period, from August 1, 2006 to October 31, 2006, there were ninety-eight evidence numbers issued for the seizure of saltwater products. Seventy-three of those were for recreational cases. The transportation costs average \$44.00 per case involving seizure. The average officer's time involved in transporting and checking in the evidence is approximately two and one-half hours at an average per officer rate of \$33.93 per hour. The total positive fiscal impact for FWC could exceed \$40,000 annually. Local police and sheriff departments would be able to reduce the amount of evidence that is held in FWC evidence freezers and avoid current administrative and transportation costs associated with transporting, securing, and managing evidence. Also, confiscated products would not have to remain in evidence freezers so long that their usefulness is lost.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable because this bill does not appear to require cities or counties to spend funds or take actions requiring the expenditure of funds, nor does it appear to reduce the authority that cities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate, nor does it appear to reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with cities or counties.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

While no rulemaking authority is granted, additional rulemaking may be necessary to implement the provisions of this bill .

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

Additional rulemaking authority may be necessary to implement the provisions of this bill.

The bill provides that forfeited wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish are to be the property of the investigating law enforcement agency. However, the bill also provides that all proceeds from the disposal of forfeited wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish are to be deposited into the State Game Trust Fund or the Marine Resources Trust Fund, which are FWC trust funds.

Section 372.107, F.S., is repealed but there references to this section ss. 370.021, 370.061, 372.9901, 372.9904, 932.7055, F.S.

D. STATEMENT OF THE SPONSOR

IV. AMENDMENTS/COUNCIL SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to wildlife, freshwater fish and marine
 3 resources; amending s. 253.04, F.S.; providing that
 4 careless operation of a vessel outside a marked channel
 5 that causes seagrass scarring within certain aquatic
 6 preserves is a civil infraction; defining the terms
 7 "seagrass scarring" and "seagrasses"; providing that
 8 refusal to post bond or sign a boating citation is a
 9 misdemeanor of the second degree; requiring that civil
 10 penalties collected for seagrass scarring be deposited into
 11 the Internal Improvement Trust Fund and used for specified
 12 purposes; amending s. 327.73, F.S.; providing civil
 13 penalties for seagrass scarring; amending s. 372.73, F.S.;
 14 providing forfeiture of unlawfully obtained wildlife,
 15 freshwater fish or saltwater fish to investigating law
 16 enforcement agency; providing that law enforcement agency
 17 to dispose of forfeited wildlife, freshwater fish or
 18 saltwater fish in specified manner; providing unlawfully
 19 possessed wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish be
 20 documented as evidence and returned to native habitat;
 21 providing that non-native species may be released only as
 22 allowed by rules of the commission; creates s. 372.731,
 23 F.S.; providing photographs of illegally taken wildlife,
 24 freshwater fish or saltwater fish may be deemed competent
 25 evidence to the same extent as the wildlife, freshwater
 26 fish or saltwater fish; providing photographs shall bear
 27 specified written description; providing the written
 28 description to be made under oath; providing photograph to

29 be signed by photographer; repealing s. 372.107, F.S.;

30 abolishing the Federal Law Enforcement Trust Fund within

31 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission;

32 providing an effective date.

33

34 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

35

36 Section 1. Subsection (4) of section 253.04, Florida

37 Statutes, is amended to read:

38 253.04 Duty of board to protect, etc., state lands; state

39 may join in any action brought.--

40 (4) Whenever any person or the agent of any person

41 knowingly refuses to comply with or willfully violates any of

42 the provisions of this chapter so that such person causes damage

43 to the lands of the state or products thereof, including removal

44 of those products, such violator is liable for such damage.

45 Whenever two or more persons or their agents cause damage, and

46 if such damage is indivisible, each violator is jointly and

47 severally liable for such damage; however, if such damage is

48 divisible and may be attributed to a particular violator or

49 violators, each violator is liable only for that damage and

50 subject to the fine attributable to his or her violation.

51 (a) Any person operating a vessel outside a lawfully marked

52 channel in a careless manner that causes seagrass scarring

53 within an aquatic preserve established in ss.258.39 (except for

54 the Lake Jackson, Wekiva River and Rainbow Springs aquatic

55 preserves), 258.391, 258.392, 258.3925, 258.393, 258.394,

56 258.395, 258.396 and 258.397 commits a civil infraction,

57 punishable as provided in s. 327.73, except as provided in
 58 paragraph (b). Each violation shall be a separate offense. For
 59 purposes of this subsection:

60 1. "Seagrass scarring" means destruction of seagrass roots,
 61 shoots or stems that results in tracks on the substrate, caused
 62 by the operation of a motorized vessel in waters supporting
 63 seagrasses, commonly referred to as prop-scars or propeller
 64 scars;

65 2. "Seagrasses" means Cuban shoal grass (Halodule
 66 wrightii), turtle grass (Thalassia testudinum), manatee grass
 67 (Syringodium filiforme), star grass (Halophila engelmannii),
 68 paddle grass (Halophila decipiens), Johnsons seagrass (Halophila
 69 johnsonii) or widgeon grass (Ruppia maritima).

70 (b) Any violation of this subsection is a violation of the
 71 boating laws of this state and shall be charged on a uniform
 72 boating citation as provided in s. 327.74. Any person who
 73 refuses to post a bond or accept and sign a uniform boating
 74 citation shall, as provided in s. 327.73(3), be guilty of a
 75 misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s.
 76 775.082 or s. 775.083.

77 (c) All civil penalties imposed and collected pursuant to
 78 this subsection shall be deposited into the Internal Improvement
 79 Trust Fund and used solely: to implement, administer, and
 80 enforce this subsection; to provide for seagrass restoration; to
 81 conduct a program to educate vessel operators about the need to
 82 protect seagrasses from damage caused by the operation of
 83 vessels; or to fund marking of seagrass.

84 Section 2. Paragraph (x) is added to subsection (1) of
 85 section 327.73 Florida Statutes, and subsection (8) of said
 86 section is amended to read:

87 327.73 Noncriminal infractions.--

88 (1) Violations of the following provisions of the vessel
 89 laws of this state are noncriminal infractions:

90 (x) Section 253.04(4)(a), relating to carelessly causing
 91 seagrass scarring, for which the civil penalty is:

- 92 1. \$50 upon conviction for a first offense;
- 93 2. \$250 upon conviction for a second offense occurring
 94 within 12 months of a prior conviction;
- 95 3. \$500 upon conviction for a third offense occurring
 96 within 36 months of a prior conviction;
- 97 4. \$1,000 upon conviction for a fourth or subsequent
 98 offense.

99
 100 Any person cited for a violation of any such provision shall be
 101 deemed to be charged with a noncriminal infraction, shall be
 102 cited for such an infraction, and shall be cited to appear
 103 before the county court. The civil penalty for any such
 104 infraction is \$50, except as otherwise provided in this section.
 105 Any person who fails to appear or otherwise properly respond to
 106 a uniform boating citation shall, in addition to the charge
 107 relating to the violation of the boating laws of this state, be
 108 charged with the offense of failing to respond to such citation
 109 and, upon conviction, be guilty of a misdemeanor of the second
 110 degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083. A

111 written warning to this effect shall be provided at the time
 112 such uniform boating citation is issued.

113 (8) Except as otherwise provided, all ~~All~~ fees and civil
 114 penalties assessed and collected pursuant to this section shall
 115 be remitted by the clerk of the court to the Department of
 116 Revenue to be deposited into the Marine Resources Conservation
 117 Trust Fund for boating safety education purposes.

118 Section 3. Section 372.73, Florida Statutes, is amended to
 119 read:

120 372.73 Confiscation and disposition of illegally taken
 121 ~~game~~ wildlife, freshwater fish and saltwater fish.--

122 (1) All ~~game~~ wildlife, and freshwater fish, and saltwater
 123 fish seized under the authority of this chapter, any other
 124 chapter, or rules of the commission shall, upon conviction of
 125 the offender or sooner in accordance with a court order ~~if the~~
 126 ~~court so orders,~~ be forfeited to the investigating law
 127 enforcement agency. The law enforcement agency may elect to:
 128 retain the wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish for the
 129 agency's official use; transfer it to another unit of state or
 130 local government for official use; donate it to a charitable
 131 organization; sell it at public sale, pursuant to the provisions
 132 of s. 705.103; or destroy the wildlife, freshwater fish or
 133 saltwater fish if none of the other options are practicable or
 134 if the wildlife, freshwater fish, or saltwater fish is
 135 unwholesome or otherwise not of appreciable value. All live
 136 wildlife, freshwater fish, and saltwater fish, the possession of
 137 which is unlawful, shall be properly documented as evidence as
 138 provided in s. 372.731, and returned to the habitat unharmed,

139 except that non-native species may be released only as allowed
 140 by rules of the commission. Any unclaimed wildlife, freshwater
 141 fish or saltwater fish shall be retained by the investigating
 142 law enforcement agency and disposed of in accordance with the
 143 above provisions. ~~and given to some hospital or charitable~~
 144 ~~institution and receipt therefore sent to the Fish and Wildlife~~
 145 ~~Conservation Commission.~~

146 (2) All furs or hides or fur-bearing animals seized under
 147 the authority of this chapter shall, upon conviction of the
 148 offender, be forfeited and sent to the commission, which shall
 149 sell the same and ~~deposit the proceeds of such sale to the~~
 150 ~~credit of the State Game Trust Fund or into the commission's~~
 151 ~~Federal Law Enforcement Trust Fund as provided in s. 372.107, as~~
 152 ~~applicable.~~ If any such hides or furs are seized and the
 153 offender is unknown, the court shall order such hides or furs
 154 sent to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, which
 155 shall sell such hides and furs.

156 (3) ~~The and deposit the proceeds of any such sale pursuant~~
 157 to this section shall be remitted to the Department of Revenue
 158 to be deposited to the credit of the State Game Trust Fund or
 159 the Marine Resources Conservation Trust Fund, ~~or into the~~
 160 ~~commission's Federal Law Enforcement Trust Fund as provided in~~
 161 ~~s. 372.107, as applicable.~~

162 Section 4. Section 372.731, Florida Statutes, is created
 163 to read:

164 372.731 Photographs of illegally taken wildlife,
 165 freshwater fish, and saltwater fish.--

166 In any prosecution for a violation of Chapter 370, Chapter

167 372 or rules of the commission, a photograph of the illegally
 168 taken wildlife, freshwater fish or saltwater fish may be deemed
 169 competent evidence of such property and may be admissible in the
 170 prosecution to the same extent as if such wildlife, freshwater
 171 or saltwater fish were introduced as evidence. Such photograph
 172 shall bear a written description of the wildlife, freshwater
 173 fish or saltwater fish alleged to have been illegally taken, the
 174 name of the violator, the location where the alleged wrongful
 175 taking occurred, the name of the investigating law enforcement
 176 officer, the date the photograph was taken, and the name of the
 177 photographer. Such writing shall be made under oath by the
 178 investigating law enforcement officer, and the photograph shall
 179 be identified by the signature of the photographer.

180 Section 5. Section 372.107, Florida Statutes is repealed.

181 ~~**372.107 Federal Law Enforcement Trust Fund.**~~

182 ~~(1) The Federal Law Enforcement Trust Fund is created~~
 183 ~~within the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The~~
 184 ~~commission may deposit into the trust fund receipts and revenues~~
 185 ~~received as a result of federal criminal, administrative, or~~
 186 ~~civil forfeiture proceedings and receipts and revenues received~~
 187 ~~from federal asset sharing programs. The trust fund is exempt~~
 188 ~~from the service charges imposed by s. 215.20.~~

189 ~~(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of s. 216.301 and~~
 190 ~~pursuant to s. 216.351, any balance in the trust fund at the end~~
 191 ~~of any fiscal year shall remain in the trust fund at the end of~~
 192 ~~the year and shall be available for carrying out the purposes of~~
 193 ~~the trust fund.~~

194 Section 6. This act shall take effect October 1, 2008.