



# 8 FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR VOICES ROUNDTABLE



ESTIMATED TOTAL TIME  
75 minutes

- ▶ Grades 9-Adult
- ▶ Biology
- ▶ Civics and Language Arts Connections

In this activity, students begin by recognizing their varied perspectives and values through an active exercise. They then view a clip from *Path of the Panther*, noting different perspectives and values of supporters of the Florida Wildlife Corridor. Students consider additional constituent groups that could influence decision-making and policies at the state level about land use related to the corridor—such as land developers, transportation planners, or new residents moving to Florida. Students work in small groups to explore a constituent perspective. They develop a position that will be valuable in discussing that perspective, then engage in a roundtable discussion to share their perspective, listen, and ask questions. Students then work together to develop a proposal to lawmakers determining the fate of Florida land.

All groups should benefit from the opportunity to have a discussion representing different viewpoints. **Younger audiences** may need some guidance in understanding the different constituent roles, as well as leeway to develop a variety of ideas. **Older audiences** will likely have more life experience to bring to research and discussion, so allowing time to develop their points for discussion will add richness to the roundtable phase.

KEY TERMS

- ▶ collaborative decision-making
- ▶ constituent perspective



## BACKGROUND

Once unlikely allies, a group of business leaders, conservationists, and cattle ranchers gathered at the Nature Conservancy’s Disney Wilderness Preserve to celebrate the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act, signed by Governor Ron DeSantis in July 2021.

In spring 2021, the *Path of the Panther* team, supported by the National Geographic Society, urged state leaders to protect the Florida panther and its habitat. Floridians had shown strong support for conservation in a 2014 ballot initiative. The unanimous passage of the Act advanced a bipartisan vision, prioritizing wild places for both the public and policymakers.

However, passing the Act was just the first step in creating a permanently protected patchwork of lands. A variety of **constituents**, with different

**perspectives** but finding common ground, are using the new legislation to accelerate land conservation and achieve permanent protection of the corridor. Since the Act’s signing, nearly \$1 billion has been committed by state and federal governments for corridor protection.

The survival of the Florida panther is at stake; it needs an expanded range throughout Florida and beyond. Of the corridor’s 18 million acres, eight million—mostly working farms and ranches—are vulnerable to development. Continued **collaborative decision-making** will be critical to realizing the full vision of the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

–Adapted from the book *Path of the Panther*, Chapter 5, by Tori Linder, Managing Director and Impact Producer, 2023.

## STANDARDS

This activity addresses the following:

**NGSS: HS-LS2-7:** Design, evaluate, and refine a solution for reducing the impacts of human activities on the environment and biodiversity.

**Florida NGSS: SC.912.L.17.12:** Discuss the political, social, and environmental consequences of sustainable use of land.

**Florida NGSS: SC.912.L.17.13:** Discuss the need for adequate monitoring of environmental parameters when making policy decisions.

OBJECTIVES

**Students will:**

- identify different constituents or viewpoints related to decisions for land use in Florida;
- develop and discuss a position to support the perspective of a constituent group; and
- design a proposal for Florida land and the Florida Wildlife Corridor that considers the values and perspectives of each constituent group.

PREPARATION

**Gather and/or print materials:**

- Masking tape or rope for “Take a Stand” in Step 1
- Slides: [Florida Wildlife Corridor Voices Roundtable](#)
- Video: [“Saving the Florida Wildlife Corridor”](#) (10:08; also includes link to full film, 27:58)
- Handout: Florida Wildlife Corridor Voices Roundtable (1 per student)
- Handout: Constituent Voices Cards (print and cut enough for one card per student)
- Video: [“Toll Roads”](#) (3:00)
- Chart paper, markers, and sticky notes
- Video: [“The Florida Wildlife Corridor Act”](#) (3:41)

**Set up technology:**

- Each small group will need to share a computer for online research.
- You may choose to have students use presentation software instead of chart paper and markers.



### 5 MIN EXPLORE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

1. Begin with a "Take a Stand" activity to focus students on their own perspectives and values. In an open area such as a hallway, gym, or outdoors, place and secure rope or tape on the ground. One end will represent "strongly agree" and the other end "strongly disagree," with the middle as "neutral." There should be enough room for students to spread out along the line shoulder-to-shoulder. Read a series of statements, below, and have students line up along a continuum based on their own values/perspectives. After reading each, ask for two or three volunteers along the continuum to share why they chose their spot.

- Pepperoni is the best pizza topping.
- Florida's beaches are the best in the world.
- Panthers are the most important animal in Florida.
- I would hike some or all of the 1,400 mile Florida Trail.
- I am connected to the Florida Wildlife Corridor.
- People need to protect as much Florida land as possible from development.
- People should be able to build on land anywhere in Florida for housing, roads, and for other economic purposes.
- Panther range should expand throughout all of Florida.

Students should notice that people hold different perspectives, typically based on a combination of experience, background, interests, or knowledge. Explain that in today's activity, students will explore different perspectives of constituents connected to the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

### 25 MIN DETERMINE THE KEY VOICES AND DEVELOP A POSITION

2. Have students talk in pairs or small groups, making a list of key constituents or influencers they think would have an interest in decision-making related to Florida's land and the Florida Wildlife Corridor.
3. Show the short film (10:08) "Saving the Florida Wildlife Corridor" (scroll down on [this webpage](#)). Ask students to add to their lists the roles of those in the film who take a stand about the corridor and land development.
4. Have a class discussion about the different voices, those they saw in the film and also those from the list made before the film. List "Florida Wildlife Corridor Voices" on the board. The list from the video will include:

- Conservationist / Photographer
- Rancher
- Fishing Guide
- Tourism Operator/Indigenous Leader
- Tree Farmer

More student ideas may include:

- Home Builder
- Commercial Builder
- Transportation Planners
- New Florida Residents

## MORE TO EXPLORE

### VALUES REFLECTION

In small groups, have students come up with more prompts for "Take a Stand" that reflect the perspectives of different constituents. Mix up the prompts and facilitate again. After each prompt, invite a student to share aloud or do a pair-share.



5. Next, distribute one copy of the Florida Wildlife Corridor Voices Roundtable handout and one individual Constituent Voices Card to each student. Organize students into small groups so that each group has the same Constituent Voices Cards. For 10 minutes, students will review their Constituent Voices Card and its resources, and follow **Step 1** in the FWC Voices Roundtable handout. Each group will prepare a 30-second (3-4 sentence) opening statement that summarizes their perspective, including evidence from resources to support their proposed outcomes. They will develop their position using the prompts below (and on the handout) as a guide. Show the model in the slides for a possible Carlton Ward Jr. statement.
- What are three main outcomes your constituent would like to see in a proposal?
  - What is critical/need to have? What is nice to have?
  - Are there any external pressures or constraints that might influence the constituent's perspective?

### 15 MIN DISCUSS POSITIONS AND DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Next, students move to **Step 2** in the handout, where each group presents their 30-second opening statement. Other groups should refrain from making comments but can take notes during this time. After all groups have presented, each student can ask one question of any group.
7. Have students go back to their small group and draft three recommendations from their perspective on how they would like decisions to be made about Florida's land. Each group member will then write all three recommendations on separate sticky notes. (Each student will need their own set of recommendation sticky notes for Step 3.)

### 20 MIN FACILITATE A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION TO DEVELOP A PROPOSAL

8. Direct students' attention to **Step 3** in the handout. Create new groups with one member from each constituent group. Groups bring their notes together to discuss. Using chart paper or a white board, each constituent representative should post their sticky notes with recommendations. Have small groups select one student to organize the sticky notes as the group discusses and comes to consensus on which address all constituent needs.
9. Explain that students will engage in a mediated roundtable. The purpose of this roundtable is for different constituents to listen to the values and perspective of others in an organized way. Ask: *Why do you think the word roundtable might be relevant here?* Point out that a "roundtable discussion" enables all voices to have an equal position at the "table," with no one voice at the "head" of the table. As a group, set expectations and highlight some tools of mediation: empathy, listening, structure, gratitude, and acknowledgment of perspectives/possible biases. Use the slides also to explain your role as mediator.

## MORE TO EXPLORE

### LISTEN TO DIVERSE VOICES ON A HIGHWAY PROJECT

Show the *Path of the Panther* video clip, "[Toll Roads](#)" (3:00) with footage from an actual hearing where different constituents presented their perspectives within the potential of road-building on the Florida Wildlife Corridor and more.



**10.** As part of the roundtable, students collaborate to make a proposal for Florida's land that considers the values and perspectives of each constituent group. As part of their proposal, have students discuss how to prioritize use of state tax funds for land use. They should consider how to allot funds across these necessary industries and programs:

- Transportation
- Land protection and management
- Tourist development
- Endangered species and wildlife monitoring, research, and rehabilitation

Have each group create a simple pie graph to illustrate how they would divide and distribute 100% of a budget across each of these areas. Ask: *Would you divide the tax funds evenly between these four areas? Or divide differently for each? Ask students to be prepared to explain why, and also how their budget relates to the recommendations in their proposal.*

### 10 MIN PRESENT AND DEBRIEF

**11.** Following the roundtable, give each group a few minutes to share their proposal. Then, debrief the experience as a class. Ask:

- Were constituents able to collaborate, even with different perspectives?
- What are some ways that you communicated well as a group? What would you change?
- How did your perspective shift, if at all, after conversation with other constituents?

**12.** If time allows, watch the video clip, "The Florida Wildlife Corridor Act" (3:41), and discuss:

- What do you imagine the constituents were feeling at this moment?
- Which constituent perspective did you connect with most? Why?
- What would be your next steps as that individual?

## MORE TO EXPLORE

### PERSPECTIVES ON A LOCAL ISSUE

Have students identify an issue in their own community related to wildlife and humans. Ask: *Who and what are the different constituents, perspectives, and possible outcomes if constituents collaborate?* Have students research independently or in small groups and create a presentation or poster to teach others about the issue, perspectives, and outcomes.

