2025 Florida Python Challenge™ Competition Rules

[Download a printable PDF of the general competition rules.](#)

Registration

- Participants are responsible for reviewing the competition rules prior to **Registration** and following all rules during the event.
- To take part in this competition, you must **Register** for the 2025 Florida Python Challenge™ and pay the registration fee.
- The registration fee is $25 and is non-refundable.
- Individuals can register in one of two competition categories:
  1. **Novice**: Most common for members of the public. Includes anyone that does not fall in the "Professional" Category below. Any person who registers under "Novice" that is currently a paid python removal contractor or subcontractor will be moved to the "Professional" category.
  2. **Professional**: Includes current paid python removal contractors and their subcontractors for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Python Action Team Removing Invasive Constrictors (PATRIC) or paid python removal contractors for the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Python Elimination Program (PEP). "Professional" participants must follow their respective contract requirements when participating in the competition as paid contractors/subcontractors. When participating as paid contractors/subcontractors, "Professionals" have special access in the competition locations as allowed by their contracts.
- Active duty and veteran members of the United States Armed Forces may identify their branch of service during registration to be eligible for military prizes.
- Youth under age 18 must have their parent or legal guardian complete their registration. Youth must also be accompanied by a registered adult while participating in the

competition. Parents/legal guardians accept all liability for their children's participation. All participants regardless of age must individually complete the **Required Online Training** and receive their own completion code.

- Before registering for the Florida Python Challenge™ you must take the **Required Online Training**. Please reserve about 30 minutes to complete this learning module. You may take the training as many times as you like. You must complete the training and pass the quiz at the end by scoring at least 85% to register for the Florida Python Challenge™. **Participants will need the completion code from their training certificate to complete registration.**
- Participants are required to retake the **Required Online Training** every year. Completion codes from prior event training may not be used. Codes are unique to individual registrants and may not be used to register multiple participants.
- During registration, Florida Python Challenge™ participants must agree to a statement that all their python submissions and corresponding datasheets will be true and accurate. Any occurrences of fraud may result in criminal prosecution.
- Registration paid to the Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida (FWFF) is non-refundable. Registration funds will support this event and future nonnative species removal activities.
- During **Registration** all participants must agree to a waiver of liability for themselves and any youth accompanying them.
- Once registered for the Florida Python Challenge™, participants will receive an email notification confirming registration was completed successfully. **This email notification, whether printed or digital, must be carried with you while participating.** If you do not receive this confirmation, please email **PythonChallenge@MyFWC.com**.
- Registrants must not have had any prior convictions for fish or wildlife violations or animal cruelty, including violations of

Title 68, Florida Administrative Code, or Chapters 379 or 828, Florida Statutes.

- FWFF, FWC, SFWMD, and National Park Service (NPS) employees may register and participate in the Florida Python Challenge™ but shall not be eligible for any prizes. Similarly, University of Florida (UF) staff collecting official data as part of this event are ineligible for prizes.
- Python removal contractors/subcontractors or volunteer authorized agents who were involuntarily terminated for any reason other than not meeting minimum hour or catch requirements, or failure to follow data submission policies or procedures, are ineligible to register for and participate in the Florida Python Challenge™ and shall not be eligible for any prizes.

Competition Locations

Registered participants may remove Burmese pythons from only the following competition locations and must abide by specific area regulations within these locations:

- **Big Cypress Wildlife Management Area (WMA)**
- **Everglades and Francis S. Taylor WMA**
- **Everglades National Park**
- **Frog Pond North Public Small Game Hunting Area (PSGHA)**
- **Holey Land WMA**
- **Rocky Glades PSGHA**
- **Rotenberger WMA**
- **Southern Glades Wildlife and Environmental Area (WEA)**

Note: Novice participants removing Burmese pythons from Everglades National Park must agree to serve as NPS Public Python Agents and are required to follow all site-specific rules and regulations. For a complete overview of these rules and access to detailed site-specific maps, please visit the official Everglades National Park webpage.

Collecting Burmese Pythons

- The Florida Python Challenge™ python removal competition occurs from 12:01 a.m. Friday, July 11, 2025, to 5:00 p.m. Sunday, July 20, 2025.
- Participants must carry a printed or digital copy of their Florida Python Challenge™ registration notification email in their possession when participating in the competition.
- Youth under the age of 18 must have their parent or legal guardian complete their registration. Youth must also be accompanied by a registered adult while participating in the competition. Parents/legal guardians accept all liability for their children's participation. All participants, regardless of age, must individually complete the **Required Online Training** and receive their own completion code.
- Only Burmese pythons removed from the **competition locations** during the Florida Python Challenge™ are valid entries for the competition.
- **There is no established firearm season during the event timeframe. The use of firearms to take pythons is prohibited during this competition.**
- **The use of dogs or other animals to search for, capture, or kill pythons is prohibited for participants during this competition.**
- Pythons captured by Novices must be **humanely killed** immediately at the site of capture. **Novice participants may not transport live pythons at any time.**

- **Air guns and captive bolts may be used to humanely kill pythons at any time of day or night**.
- Participants will be disqualified if they kill a native snake or damage, destroy, or remove eggs of a native species.
- Taking pythons with an air gun on, from, or across levees or the right-of-way of roads is prohibited.
- The use of a gun and light at night is prohibited.
    - Artificial light, such as flashlights and headlamps, may be used at night to aid in locating and capturing pythons.
- Python carcasses must be kept chilled or frozen, and turned in at the nearest accessible **Florida Python Challenge™ check station** within 24 hours of capture.
- **Check stations** are open daily beginning Friday, July 11, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. On the last day of the competition, Sunday, July 20, 2025, the check stations will be open from 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. Research agencies are managing a team of **Burmese pythons that are implanted with radio transmitters** to learn about their reproduction, movement, and habitat use. These "**scout snakes**" are located throughout **Big Cypress National Preserve and Everglades and Francis S. Taylor, Holey Land, and Rotenberger WMAs**. **Do not harm or remove these snakes**. To receive competition credit for a captured scout snake, **take a picture of the external fluorescent orange or pink tag (near the head or tail) with the identification number and release the animal alive at the site of capture**. Submit the photograph of the tag number with capture location (GPS) and date to **bicy_python@nps.gov** or **melissamiller@ufl.edu** within 24 hours of capture to receive credit for the capture. Participants do not need to measure the scout snake; the research agencies will provide the known lengths of any captured scout snakes.
- Novices must adhere to Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) requirements that apply to the general public. Those requirements can be found at **Off-Road Vehicle Use - Big Cypress National Preserve (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov)**. Big Cypress

National Preserve has an annual 60-day ORV closure during this event. No ORV use is allowed.

- Removing pythons from rights-of-way is subject to the rules of the **specific areas** in which they are located.
- Drones/Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) are prohibited for participants during the Florida Python Challenge™.
- Commercial activities, such as but not limited to, airboat rides, guide services, and other tourist services are prohibited in Conservation Area 3A South (south of I-75 and west of the Miami Canal) in Everglades and Francis S. Taylor WMA, unless authorized by the Miccosukee Tribe, which has the exclusive right to provide such services in the leased area.
- Commercial filming in Big Cypress WMA and Everglades National Park may require a permit from National Park Service in advance of conducting these activities. For more information visit: **gov/bicy/planyourvisit/filmingandphotograpy-permits.htm** and **https://www.nps.gov/ever/learn/management/filmingpermits.htm.**
- Commercial activities in Big Cypress WMA and Everglades National Park, including tours and guide services, require a Commercial Use Authorization from NPS in advance of conducting these activities. Commercial activities include providing python removal or survey tours or guided python hunting. Currently, guided python hunts and tours are not allowed in Big Cypress WMA and Everglades National Park. For more information visit: **https://www.nps.gov/bicy/learn/management/commercial-visitor-services.htm** and **https://www.nps.gov/ever/learn/management/commercialuse.htm**
- Commercial activities are prohibited on SFWMD lands, per **Public Use Rule 40E-7**, without a written agreement. These include, but are not limited to, airboat rides, guide services,

and media productions. For media authorization on SFWMD lands, contact Randy Smith (**rrsmith@sfwmd.gov**).

- Parking or driving airboats or other vehicles on tree islands or the surrounding fringe vegetation is prohibited. Cutting, damaging, or removing any natural, manmade, or cultural resources is also prohibited, including cutting down vegetation on tree islands. Do not remove anything from the Florida Python Challenge™ competition locations other than Burmese pythons or other nonnative reptiles as authorized by **Executive Order 23-16**.
- Road-killed Burmese pythons are ineligible for the competition, but the FWC would like to receive reports of any pythons observed. Please provide the roadkill data to **IveGot1.org**.
- Snake hooks, snake tongs, snake bags, noose poles, and long-handled non-motorized tools may be used to capture Burmese pythons by hand.
- Use of traps, bait, explosives, chemicals, smoke and motorized tools to capture pythons are prohibited.
- Florida state statutes require that harvested pythons must be **killed humanely**. For more information, please refer to **828.12 (F.S.)**, which prohibits inhumane treatment of animals.
- All participants are required to follow the Florida Python Challenge™ protocol for **humane methods for killing pythons** found in the **Required Online Training**.

Submitting Burmese Pythons

- Pythons captured by Novices must be **humanely killed** immediately at the site of capture. **Novice participants may not transport live pythons at any time.**
- Python carcasses must be kept chilled or frozen, and turned in at the nearest accessible **Florida Python Challenge™ check station** within 24 hours of capture.

- There are no official check stations in Everglades National Park. Participants must submit their python carcasses to one of the three official Florida Python Challenge™ check stations.
- Python carcasses should be in no more than two pieces (e.g., the head removed from the body). The head of the python must be included as part of an official submission.
- A legible **datasheet** must be completed and submitted with each Burmese python upon submission to the check station. Burmese pythons submitted without the completed datasheet will not be included in the competition. Datasheets must be printed by the participant and filled out in the field with appropriate capture, location and humane killing method data.
- Participants in the Florida Python Challenge™ are encouraged to voluntarily submit datasheets for pythons that were observed but not captured.
- Official measurements on all Florida Python Challenge™ pythons will be conducted by UF. All pythons submitted will be held by UF until the end of the competition. Participants who wish to keep the skin of a captured Burmese python must indicate this preference by checking the box for carcass return on the **datasheet**. After the python is measured for official entry into the Florida Python Challenge™ and the entry window has ended, participants will receive a single email notifying them to schedule a time to pick up the Burmese python carcass(es) from the UF Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center in Davie. The email that UF will use to contact participants is the email address listed on the datasheet. It is the participant's responsibility to check their email for this notification from UF.

Prize Determination

- Results from UF data collection and prize determination are final and cannot be challenged. All prize determinations will be conducted by the FWFF in coordination with the FWC and

SFWMD, at their sole discretion. All prizes will be issued by the FWFF.

- Staff members of the FWC, SFWMD, NPS, FWFF, or UF staff collecting official data as part of this event are ineligible for prizes.
- Florida Python Challenge™ participants may only win one prize. If an individual is eligible for more than one prize, they will be awarded the prize of the highest value, and the next qualifying participant in place for that category will be awarded the remaining prize.
- Burmese pythons submitted **before** 12:01 a.m. on Friday, July 11, 2025, and/or **after** 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, July 20, 2025, shall not be considered for prizes.
- All Burmese pythons will be verified, measured, and weighed using a standardized protocol. This data will be used to determine competition winners, and all decisions will be finalized before the Florida Python Challenge™ Awards Ceremony.
- To be eligible for the longest Burmese python prize, pythons should be in no more than two pieces (e.g., the head removed from the body). The head of the python must be included as part of an official submission.
- In the event of a tie for the most pythons, the award will be given to the participant with the longest total length of all pythons captured by that participant. In the event of a tie in the category for longest python, the award will be given to the participant with the python that is the longest and weighs the most.
- Participants that win monetary prizes must fill out and submit an IRS Form W-9 (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification) prior to receiving their winnings. Monetary winners will receive a W-9 form by email and will have 30 days to return the completed form to the FWFF.
- **Monetary winners that do not submit a completed W-9 form within 30 days of receipt will forfeit their prize.**

Disqualifications

- Participants **will be disqualified** from the competition and ineligible to win any prizes if they:
    1. Submit false information on their registration.
    2. Submit a python that has been collected outside of the competition locations or dates of the competition.
    3. Collect and/or submit a native Florida snake.
    4. Are found to have damaged, destroyed, or removed eggs of a native species.
    5. Submit a Burmese python originally possessed as a pet.
    6. Submit a Burmese python originally possessed for commercial use or exhibition.
    7. Are found to have inhumanely killed a snake.
    8. Are a Novice participant found to have kept any live Burmese python.
    9. Are found to have used live Burmese pythons for any type of public or private exhibition without appropriate permit(s).
    10. Are found to have kept any live native snake.
    11. Post inhumane photos or videos, or otherwise inappropriate photos or videos, related to the Florida Python Challenge™ on social media or traditional media outlets.

Any participant or person who has violated or violates any rules of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, South Florida Water Management District, National Park Service, the Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), or Florida State Statutes (F.S.), shall be subject to disqualification from the Florida Python Challenge™ as well as be charged accordingly for said violation. Persons disqualified from the contest will not receive a refund of their entry fee.