Florida Python Challenge® Competition Rules

Download a printable PDF of the general competition rules.

Registration

- To take part in this competition, you must **register online** for the 2023 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. <u>Professional</u>: Includes current paid python removal contractors for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Python Action Team Removing Invasive Constrictors (PATRIC) or 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. When participating as paid contractors, "Professionals" have special access in the Competition Locations as allowed by their contracts.

2. <u>Novice</u>: Includes anyone that does not fall in the "Professional" Category (most common for members of the public).
   - Any person who registers under "Novice" that is currently a paid python removal contractor will be moved to the "Professional" category.

- <u>Additional United States of America Military Recognition</u>: Active Duty Military Personnel and Veterans may be eligible for additional 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.

<u>NOTE</u>: Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida (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.

- 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 accept all liability for their children's participation.
- Upon completion of the **Required Online Training,** all participants must agree to a waiver of liability for themselves and any youth accompanying them.
- Once registered for the Florida Python Challenge®, you will receive an email notification confirming your registration was completed successfully. **This email notification, whether hard copy or electronic, 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.

<u>NOTE</u>: If you have been involuntarily terminated as a python removal contractor or volunteer authorized agent for any reason other than not meeting minimum hour or catch requirements or failure to follow data submission policies or procedures, you are ineligible to register for and participate in the Florida Python Challenge® and shall not be eligible for any prizes.

- 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.**

- 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 FWFF is non-refundable. Registration funds will support this event and future nonnative species removal activities.

Competition Locations

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

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

Check Station Locations and Hours

Area Maps

Collecting Burmese Pythons

- The Florida Python Challenge® python removal competition occurs from 12:01 a.m. Friday, August 4, 2023 to 5:00 p.m. Sunday, August 13, 2023.
- You must carry a copy of your Florida Python Challenge® registration notification email in your possession,

- either paper or electronic, 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 accept all liability for their children's participation.
- Only Burmese pythons removed from the **competition locations** during the Florida Python Challenge® are valid entries for the competition.
- Registered participants are responsible for reviewing and following all competition rules.
- **The use of firearms to take pythons is prohibited during this competition.**
- **Air guns and captive bolts may be used to humanely kill pythons at any time of day or night**. Air guns may not be used to for the take of any native wildlife at night.
- 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, may be used at night to aid in locating and capturing 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.
- **Check stations** are open daily beginning Friday August 4, 2023 from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. On the last day of the competition Sunday, August 13, 2023, the check stations will be open from 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.
- Participants must adhere to 2023 Competition Location road closures within Big Cypress WMA which include closure of Birdon Road from US HWY 41(**25.901547, -81.310739**) to lower Wagon Wheel Road (**25.965198, -81.311478**) and

includes Pine Oak Road (**25.927962, -81.310813**). Bass Lake Road (**25.901234, -81.294523**) will also be closed for the competition. Participants may not access these roads by vehicle or on foot to hunt for pythons.

- 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 the eastern portion of Everglades and Francis S. Taylor WMA**. **Do not harm or remove these snakes**. If you capture a scout snake, **take a picture of the external orange 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 **smith@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 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)**. Participants registered as Professionals must adhere to the requirements in the NPS terms and conditions for python removal contractors for the FWC PATRIC or SFWMD PEP programs.

- 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 considered aircraft under state and federal law and are subject to federal (**https://www.faa.gov/uas**) and state (330.41, 330.411, 934.50, F.S.) regulations, including air space restrictions. There are also additional local drone rules in specific locations. Drones are specifically prohibited in Big Cypress WMA/ Big Cypress National Preserve (**https://www.nps.gov/subjects/sound/uas.htm**) and all **SFWMD properties** (40C-9.320, F.A.C.). In locations where

drones are allowed to be used, they may not be used to take, attempt to take, herd, or drive any game animals or crows. Florida Python Challenge® registrants may not use drones to take any nonnative species during the Challenge.

- Commercial recreational activities, such as but not limited to airboat rides, guide services, or 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 may require a permit from NPS in advance of conducting these activities. For more information visit **https://www.nps.gov/bicy/planyourvisit/filmingandphotograpy-permits.htm**.
- Commercial activities in Big Cypress WMA, including tours and guide services, require a Commercial Use Authorization from NPS in advance of conducting these activities. For more information visit **https://www.nps.gov/bicy/learn/management/commercial-visitor-services.htm**.
- Commercial activities are prohibited on SFWMD lands. 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 20-17**.
- Participants will be disqualified if they kill a native snake or damage, destroy, or remove eggs of a native species.

- Road-killed Burmese pythons are not counted towards 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 is 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.
- 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 **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 location data. Participants must record the location where the capture occurred and enter it on the datasheet prior to submission.

- 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 should 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 be notified to pick up the Burmese python carcass from the UF Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center in Davie.

Prize Determination

- All prize determinations will be conducted by the FWFF in coordination with the FWC and SFWMD, at their sole discretion. All prizes will be provided 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.
- Burmese pythons submitted **after** 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 13, 2023 shall not be considered for prizes.
- All Burmese pythons will be verified, measured and weighed using a standardized protocol. These 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 will need to 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

- You **will be disqualified** from the competition and ineligible to win any prizes if you:
    1. Submit false information on your 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 python originally possessed as a pet.
    6. Submit a python originally possessed for commercial use or exhibition.
    7. Are found to have inhumanely killed a snake.
    8. Are found to have kept any live snake.
    9. Post inhumane photos or videos or otherwise inappropriate videos or photos related to the Florida Python Challenge®on social media or traditional media outlets.
    10. Are found to have used live pythons for any type of public or private exhibition without appropriate permit(s).

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.