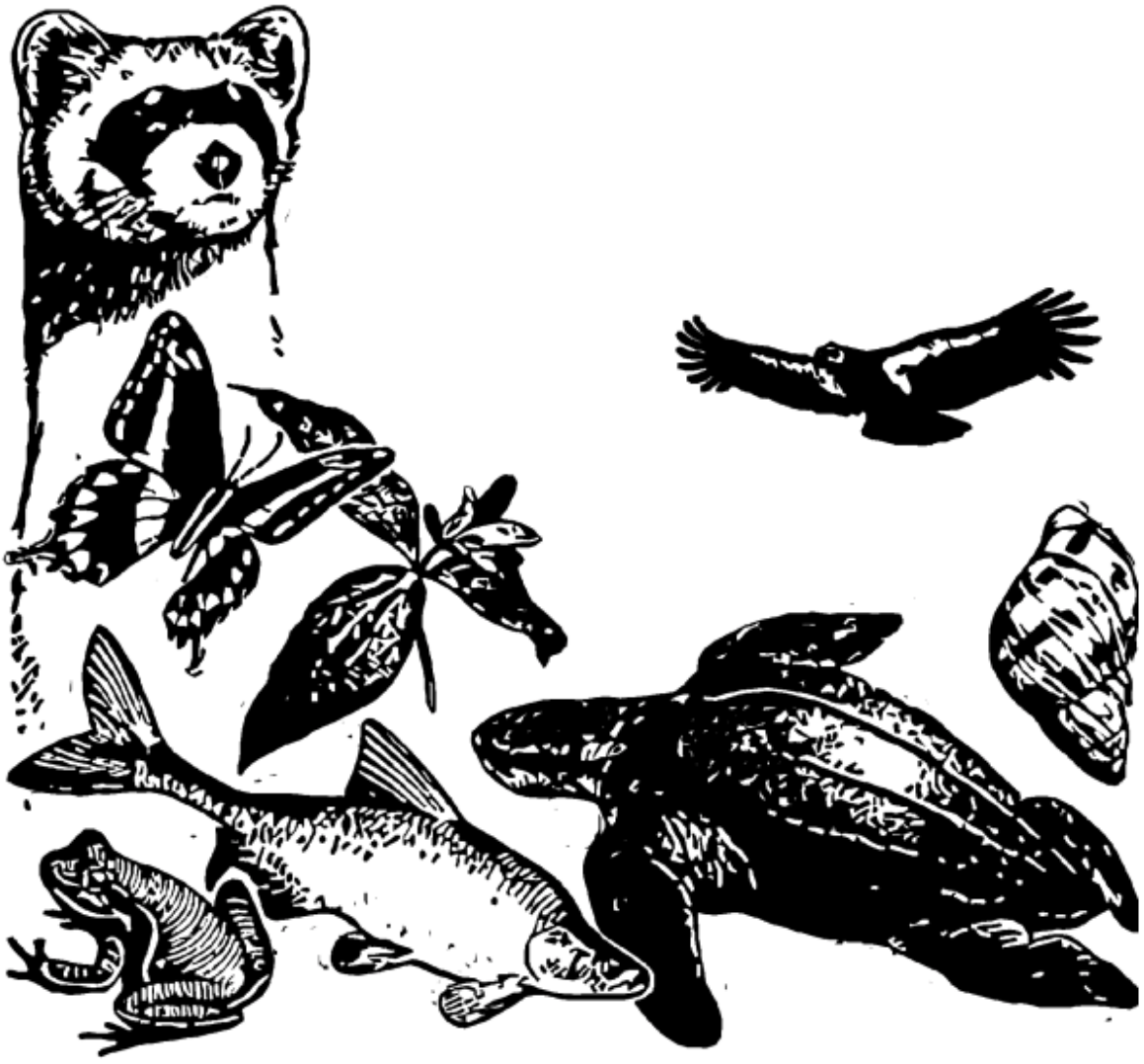
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Recommended Conservation Measures for Southern Hognose Snake

Southern Hognose Snake

Generated March 07, 2026 06:48 AM UTC, IPaC v6.128.23-rc1



IPaC - Information for Planning and Consultation (https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/): A project planning tool to help streamline the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service environmental review process.

RECOMMENDED CONSERVATION MEASURES

SOUTHERN HOGNOSE SNAKE

Pre-Project Planning

- Review State Natural Heritage data for historical and recent records. Lack of records in State Natural Heritage databases does not confirm absence. Assume potential presence in suitable habitat unless surveys confirm otherwise.
- Conduct species surveys before ground disturbance.
    - For surveys a minimum of 3 surveys should be conducted during peak activity periods (late September–October and mid-May–June) using road cruising or drift fence camera arrays. Surveys should occur over two consecutive years where feasible.
- Incorporate avoidance zones for high-quality habitat and known occurrences into site plans. High-quality habitat includes xeric sandhills, longleaf pine–wiregrass communities, and well-drained sandy soils with sparse midstory vegetation.

Minimize Habitat Loss and Fragmentation

- Avoid clearing large, contiguous tracts of sandhill or longleaf pine habitat.
- Design projects to maintain habitat connectivity (e.g., wildlife corridors, buffer zones).
- Limit new road construction through suitable habitat; use existing roads where possible.

Protect Sandy Soils and Groundcover

- Restrict heavy equipment use to dry conditions and use low-pressure tires to reduce soil compaction. To the extent possible avoid use of heavy equipment during the active season (March – November).
- Avoid intensive site preparation (e.g., bedding, root raking) that destroys burrows and alters soil structure.
- Retain native herbaceous vegetation (e.g. wiregrass) that supports prey species.

Manage Underground Refugia

- Do not remove stumps, excavate burrows, or conduct subsurface root raking in suitable habitat.
- If excavation is unavoidable, implement pre-construction surveys and daily monitoring during ground disturbance, with a qualified biologist on-site to relocate snakes if encountered.

Fire and Vegetation Management

- Where feasible, integrate prescribed fire into long-term site management to maintain open-canopy conditions.
- If fire is impractical, use mechanical thinning or selective herbicide to reduce midstory vegetation without harming native groundcover. Mechanical thinning should be done during dormant season.
- To protect essential prey for southern hognose, avoid herbicide application in temporary wetlands that serve as toad breeding sites.

Control Invasive Species

- Ensure all equipment is cleaned of soil, seeds, and plant debris before entering new sites to prevent invasive species spread.
- Implement early detection and rapid response for cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*) to prevent habitat degradation and altered fire regimes.

- Reduce red imported fire ants through approved pest management strategies; minimize soil disturbance to prevent colonization.
- Manage feral hogs and free-ranging cats in coordination with wildlife agencies.

Construction Best Practices

- Use existing natural breaks (roads, trails, wetlands) for fire lines or project boundaries instead of creating new ones.
- Minimize creation of berms or fire lanes with heavy equipment to protect soil stability and burrow systems.

Education and Compliance

- Train contractors and personnel on species identification and BMPs.
- Post signage in sensitive areas to prevent unauthorized activities.
- Enforce prohibitions on killing or collecting snakes.