



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta, Georgia 30345

June 27, 2025

Elise Pautler Bennett
Center for Biological Diversity
PO Box 2155
St. Petersburg, FL 33731

Dear Ms. Paulter Bennett,

On behalf of Ecological Services, Southeast Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), I congratulate you and the entire Pine Rockland Conservation Team on your selection as a 2024 Regional Recovery Champion for your efforts in conserving and protecting the globally imperiled pine rockland ecosystem in South Florida, which supports over twenty federally-listed species. You and your organization's tireless efforts to collaboratively work to recover this significantly important ecosystem in a challenging, highly fragmented urban landscape has changed the trajectory of this ecosystem and its rare species.

Over the past decade, the Team has made incredible strides towards species and ecosystem recovery, exemplifying what it takes to recover species and their habitats. Members of the Team have contributed countless hours collecting and submitting data on petitioned and listed species, reviewing recovery documents, organizing and facilitating meetings, and providing other contributions to the conservation of the species and this unique habitat. These efforts have substantially contributed to novel approaches to species recovery by focusing on ecosystem restoration, management, and conservation, which are intended to make species recovery in this ecosystem as efficient, cost effective, and successful as possible.

Furthermore, the Team's role in the implementation of recovery efforts has been vital for the preservation of pine rocklands and more than 20 federally listed species found there. Those efforts have increased visibility and raised awareness of pine rocklands within the local Miami-Dade community as well as among local, state, and federal officials. The work included developing restoration science to effectively manage, restore, and enlarge the pine rockland habitat, conducting prescribed burns in challenging locations, and expanding populations of listed plant species across their ranges. This Team has been instrumental in creating and executing essential recovery actions.

I commend you and the entire Pine Rockland Conservation Team for all that you have accomplished on behalf of pine rocklands. Best wishes for your ongoing success.

Sincerely,

Assistant Regional Director – Ecological Services
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service