

# **Authorized Gopher Tortoise Agent Training Program**

## **Course 1**

Syllabus Provided to:

**The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**  
620 S. Meridian Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Syllabus Provided by:

 **Environmental & Permitting  
Services, Inc.**

1174 Camp Avenue Mount Dora, FL 32757

(352) 383-1444 (352) 383-3877 Fax

November 2008  
Revised March 2009

**Course Instructors:**

Instruction conducted by professional staff certified by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) as Authorized Gopher Tortoise Agents.

**Pre-requisite Materials:**

LPG Environmental & Permitting Services, Inc. (LPGEPS) to provide a list of recommended materials to registered course participants. The list includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. (April 2008, Revised April 2009). Gopher Tortoise Permitting Guidelines (*Gopherus polyphemus*). April 2008, Revised April 2009, from <http://myfwc.com/permits/Protected-Wildlife/permits.html#gophertortoise>.
- Cox, James, Douglas Inkley, and Randy Kautz. (December 1987). Ecology and Habitat Protection Needs of Gopher Tortoise Populations Found on Lands Slated for Large-Scale Development in Florida. Nongame Wildlife Program Technical Report No. 4.
- Updated studies and policies as appropriate/applicable.

The following details information to be provided during the Authorized Gopher Tortoise Agent Training Program. Information will be provided via PowerPoint presentations, handouts and field exercises. Hours required for each medium are detailed below.

**COURSE 1\*** – *8.0 hours classroom, 8.0 hours field exercises and 8.0 hours practical exam (classroom & field components), total 24.0 hours - \$750/person (min. 10, max. 20) and 10% discount if advanced registration of 10 or more.*

- **Gopher Tortoise Biology/Ecology/History**
- **Current FWC Guidelines & Permitting**
- **Field Survey Techniques & Protocol**
- **Use of GPS to Document and Map GT Survey Results**

\* **This course will supplement the FWC Authorized Gopher Tortoise Agent experience requirement for Gopher Tortoise Surveys.**

**Course Outline:**

- I. Biology of the Gopher Tortoise (*1.0 hour classroom*)
  - A. Taxonomy
  - B. Anatomy
  - C. Habitat
  - D. Diet
  - E. Breeding/Social Behavior
  - F. Life Expectancy
  - G. Disease
  - H. Ecological Importance of the Gopher Tortoise

- I. Geographic Variation/Genetic Groups
- II. History (*2.0 hours classroom*)
  - A. Range and Population Trends
  - B. FWC Gopher Tortoise Permitting Guidelines (April 2008/April 2009)
    - i. Legal Status & Recent Changes
    - ii. Conservation Goals
    - iii. FWC Policy Addressing Gopher Tortoises
- III. Field Survey Techniques (*3.0 hours classroom with interactive activities, 8.0 hours field exercises*)
  - A. Field Surveys
    - i. Identifying a Gopher Tortoise burrow
    - ii. Classification of Burrow Status
    - iii. Field Survey Protocol
- IV. Permitting for Relocation (*2.0 hours classroom*)
  - A. Activities which do not require a Permit
  - B. FWC Permitting
    - i. Gopher Tortoise Permitting Options/Requirements
      - a) Relocation Permits
      - b) Settlement Permit
      - c) Emergency Take Without Relocation Permit
      - d) Temporary Exclusion Permit for Major Linear Utility Corridors
      - e) Authorized Gopher Tortoise Agent Permit
      - f) Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site Permit (For Long-Term & Short-Term Protected Sites)
      - g) Scientific Collecting/Research/Educational Use Permit
      - h) Avitrol Use Permit
    - ii. Mitigation Contributions
    - iii. Application Submittal Requirements
    - iv. Permit Expiration Dates & Extension Procedures

V. Evaluation of Trainee

- A. Written comprehensive exam to test competency of covered materials. (2.0 hours)
- B. Field exam (6.0 hours)
- C. Successful completion (80% or better competency level) of the above outlined course will result in the issuance of a certificate bearing the LPGEPS Logo and original signature by both trainers.