

**United States Fish and Wildlife Service
South Florida Ecological Services Field Office**

**TRAPPING PROTOCOL TO DETERMINE PRESENCE OF
THE SILVER RICE RAT (*Oryzomys palustris natator*)
8/5/2005**

This protocol is to be used when trapping to determine presence/absence of the silver rice rat (SRR) in a given area.

1. Individuals conducting the trapping should have previous experience in live-trapping small mammals (or be trained by an experienced person). They must also be able to identify any species that may be captured during the trapping event.
2. Surveys should include all potential SRR habitats within the area and, if landowner permission can be obtained, adjacent lands with potential SRR habitat.
3. Trapping should be conducted over the entire project area using a grid system of Sherman live-traps spaced at 15-20 meter intervals.
4. Traps should be set for four consecutive nights per trapping season or until an individual of each species is caught. Unexpected drops in temperature may cause a disruption in consecutive trapping nights.
5. Trapping will not be conducted when nighttime temperatures are forecast to be <60° F. If temperatures are forecast to be in the mid to low 60's, cotton balls (4-5) will be placed in the trap along with the bait.
6. Trapping will not be conducted when tidal inundations are high, that is during any spring tide (traps on Styrofoam floats may flip). If possible, all trapping should occur during neap tides, those times when tidal fluctuations are the least.
7. Bait should consist of crimped oats and any combination of the following ingredients: peanut butter, grapes, apples and/or sunflower seeds. If raccoons are disturbing traps (determined by missing bait or closed traps), the Service will be contacted and an appropriate method for minimizing trap disturbance will be implemented. If raccoon trapping is deemed necessary, the raccoons will be trapped using appropriately sized traps (e.g. Tomahawk) and any feral cats captured in the traps will be brought to the local animal shelter.
8. In areas where fire ants are present, 10% Carbaryl (Sevin) dust will be placed immediately under the traps so that SRRs will not come in immediate contact with it. Other approved methods will be considered.
9. Traps should be checked and all SRRs released no later than 3 hours after official sunrise.
10. All captured individuals shall be handled for as briefly as possible in a humane manner during the time it takes to tag, examine, identify, and collect necessary biological samples. All SRRs captured in the wild will have distal portions of tails clipped for genetic analysis. Self-

piercing ear tags will be used for individual rice rat identification and such identification will be applied by authorized personnel. All SRRs shall be released at their point of capture.

11. Any black rats (*Rattus rattus*) captured during woodrat trapping will be euthanized humanely.

12. Presence of SRR can be documented in a single trapping period. To determine absence, traps shall be operated seasonally (fall, winter, spring, summer) for at least two years.

13. Site description and trapping data should be recorded. Site description should include GPS location and property Real Estate number, habitat on the project area and adjacent lands, and trapping design relative to habitat distribution. Daily trapping data should include number of SRRs trapped per day, non-target species, and lost or missing traps. Complete and verified data will be delivered via digital and/or electronic file. All digital and hardcopy information that is part of the project must be included in the final report (i.e. GIS data, reports, metadata, photos, and other supporting materials). Sex, age, and reproductive status of any cotton rats will also be reported. All trapping information should be submitted to the following offices:

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