

*WHAT ARE THE STANDARD
PROTECTION MEASURES THAT ARE
REQUIRED?*

The Seminole Tribe of Florida is required by the Federal Endangered Species Act to abide by standard measures adopted to protect this threatened tortoise:

1. A gopher tortoise protection/education plan has been developed which requires training for all construction crews.
2. A qualified observer/biologist will be on-site for notification by construction personnel if a potential gopher tortoise is sighted.
3. If a gopher tortoise is found on the construction site, all activity must cease immediately, the qualified observer must be notified, and the tortoise allowed to move away from any dangerous area on its own.



WHO DO YOU CONTACT IF YOU
SEE A GOPHER TORTOISE ON
THE RESERVATION?

CONTACT YOUR DIRECT
SUPERVISOR

You may also contact::

Seminole Tribe of Florida's
Wildlife Biologist
Phone: 863-902-3249 x13411
Cell: 954-410-7073



*Seminole Tribe of Florida
Environmental Resource
Management Department*

Gopher Tortoise *Gopherus polyphemus*



Protecting Tribal Resources

WHAT IS A GOPHER TORTOISE?



- Land turtle
- Herbivore; eats only vegetation
- Averages 9-11 inches in length
- Characteristic stumpy, elephant-like hind feet and flattened, shovel-like forelimbs adapted for digging
- Oblong shell; generally a tan, brown, or gray color
- Live in sandy dry upland areas
- Dig burrows up to 15 feet long which are also used by other species

Gopher tortoises are listed as a threatened species by the State of Florida due to the rapid decline in numbers resulting from development and loss of habitat.

WHAT DO THEIR BURROWS LOOK LIKE?



Frequently the tortoise itself will not be seen, however, you may tell if a gopher tortoise lives in the area by identifying their burrows.

- Mound of lighter colored sand at the entrance created when the tortoise excavates its burrow
- The top of the burrow will have a half moon appearance and the bottom may be flat which is also the shape of the tortoise
- Debris can often cover the entrance to an active burrow
- Burrows can be well hidden: under roots of vegetation and among vines



WHY ARE GOPHER TORTOISES IMPORTANT?

Gopher tortoise burrows provide homes for over 360 various species, including the Federally threatened Eastern indigo snake. Additionally the gopher tortoise is a culturally important species to the Seminole Tribe of Florida and is therefore identified as a species that is to be conserved under their wildlife management plan.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SEE A GOPHER TORTOISE OR AN INDIGO SNAKE?



If you encounter a tortoise, burrow, or indigo snake, avoid all contact. If you are driving a vehicle or heavy equipment, stop, cease operation and allow the snake and/or tortoise to move out of the area. Do not harass the snake or tortoise in any way. If you encounter an indigo snake, gopher tortoise or burrow please contact your supervisor or the number at the back of this pamphlet and report the location and circumstances.