

CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR THE PUERTO RICAN BOA - USFWS

General Information:

The Endangered Puerto Rican boa (*Epicrates inornatus*) is an endemic species and it is the largest snake that inhabits the Puerto Rico Island Shelf. The color and pattern of the Puerto Rican boa is highly variable. The species color can range from tan to dark brown with irregular diffuse marking on the dorsum but some individuals lack marking and are uniformly dark. Juveniles have reddish brown ground color with numerous pronounced markings. The Puerto Rican boa can be found in the habitat range from the sea level to about 400 m of elevation. The boa tolerates a wide variety of habitat types ranging from wet montane to subtropical dry forest and can be found from virgin forest to areas that exhibit various degrees of human disturbance like roadside or out buildings. Boas are more active at night, remaining less active concealed or basking in the sun during the day. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Federal Register October 13, 1970) listed the Puerto Rican boa (*Epicrates inornatus*) as endangered in 1970 and it is protected by the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. Any person that injures, captures, or kills a Puerto Rican boa is subject to penalties under federal law of up to \$100,000, one year in prison or a combination of both.

Recommendations:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (hereafter the Service) has developed recommendations to avoid or minimize impacts on the boa during a project development in an area where the boa may occur. The recommendations are the following:

- A. Prior to any earth movements or vegetation clearing, the boundaries of the project area, the buffer areas and areas to be protected should be clearly marked in the project plan and in the field.
- B. A pre-construction meeting should be conducted to inform supervisors and employees about the conservation of protected species, as well as penalties for harassing or harming such species.
- C. Prior to any use of machinery on areas where the boa may occur, the vegetation should be cleared by hand to provide time to the boa, if present, to be detected or move away from the area. All personnel involved in site clearing must be informed of the potential presence of the snake, and the importance of protecting the snakes.
- D. Before activities commence each workday during the vegetation clearing phase, the experienced personal in identifying and searching for boas should survey the areas to be cleared that day, to ensure that no boas are present or affected within the work area. If boas are found within the working area, activities should stop at the area where the boas are found until the boas move out of the area on their own. Activities at other work

sites, where no boas have been found after surveying the area, may continue. If relocation of the species is necessary, any relocated boas should be transferred by authorized personnel of the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) to appropriate habitat close to the project site. Any findings should be reported to the Service and to the DNER Ranger office so they can further assist you in developing sound conservation measures and specific recommendations to avoid, minimize and/or compensate for any impacts to this species.

- E. Strict measures should be established to minimize boa casualties by motor vehicles or other equipment. Before operating or moving equipment and vehicles in staging areas near potential boa habitats (within 25 meters of potential boa habitat), these should be thoroughly inspected to ensure that no boas are lodged in the standing equipment or vehicles. If boas are found within vehicles or equipment, authorized personnel of DNER must be notified immediately for proper handling and relocation. Any relocated boas should be transferred to appropriate habitat close to the project site.

For more information:

**US Fish and Wildlife Service
Caribbean Ecological Services Field Office
Road 301, Km. 5.1 / Bo. Corozo
Boquerón, PR 00622**

Telephone: (787) 851-7297

Fax: (787) 851-7440

Email: caribbean_es@fws.gov