



Statement from Archbold Biological Station regarding Florida golden aster delisting

March 7, 2024

Archbold Biological Station is a non-profit research institution in Venus, FL since 1941, and our mission is to build and share the scientific knowledge needed to protect the life, lands and waters of Florida and beyond. Our work focuses on four major areas – (1) saving the rarest of the rare, (2) sustaining grasslands, (3) connecting large landscape and wildlife corridors, and (4) addressing climate change.

Dr. Aaron David has served as Archbold's Program Director of Plant Ecology since 2021. Since the 1980s, Archbold's Plant Ecology Program has researched the ecology of dozens of rare plant species, and our science has provided the foundation for conservation plans, management, and recovery of these species.

US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has provided grants to support the recovery of Florida golden aster, and these efforts have resulted in eight introduced populations, as well as the discovery of several wild populations unknown at the time the species was federally listed as endangered. From 2017-2022, the Archbold Plant Ecology Program was a subrecipient of USFWS funding to conduct demographic monitoring of the Florida golden aster (*Chrysopsis floridana*) as part of the species recovery effort. Our scientific research leads us to the following in regards to the 2024 delisting of the species:

- **Many populations of the Florida golden aster are either declining or their status is unknown.**
 - There are a total of 30 known populations, including wild populations where the species naturally occurs and introduced populations which were established as part of the recovery effort.
 - Monitoring conducted between 2017-2019 of 18 of these populations indicates that only 6-10 populations are viable.
 - The statuses of the 12 unmonitored populations are unknown.
- **Florida golden aster depends on frequent fire management, and prescribed fire has become increasingly difficult to conduct due to development and urbanization.**
 - Several populations occur in densely populated areas, including within the city of St. Petersburg.
- **We are concerned that the recovery criteria have not yet been met.**
 - The criteria state that 10 viable populations are required for downlisting to 'threatened', and 20 are needed for delisting.
 - At most, 10 populations could be confirmed to be viable at this time.

We are grateful to USFWS for funding science and conservation of this species, which has improved our understanding of Florida golden aster populations. It has been rewarding for our staff to see recovery underway, and the progress that has been made with the species so far.