

Yay! It's the Coccoloba Jam!

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Coccoloba Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society
Next Meeting: Tuesday, August 11th, 6:30 pm social; 7 pm speaker
Page Field Base Operations 5200 Captain Channing Page Dr., Fort Myers, FL 33907.
Visit our Website: <http://www.fnpscoccoloba.org/>
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Chris Schmiede in his office

August Guest Speaker

Chris Schmiede is a Forest Area Supervisor with the Florida Forest Service. Chris is responsible for managing wildland fire and emergency response operations and planning for Lee County. Prior to his current position, Chris was the Forester at

Follow Coccoloba happenings on the web, Facebook, & Twitter! Check out Coccoloba's website for up-to-date information on chapter events (www.fnpscoccoloba.org). Like us on Facebook (type in Coccoloba Chapter, Florida Native Plant Society) and follow us on Twitter (@FNPSoccoloba) to join the conversation!

Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest for over seven years where he was responsible for overseeing all land management planning and operations for the 32,370-acre forest, including timber and non-timber sales, silvicultural activities, non-native invasive species control, forest recreation, prescribed burning, and wildland fire assistance. Chris has a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry from Michigan Technological University and extensive professional education and training in wildland fire science and operations.

Fire is a major component of almost all native ecosystems in Florida. Through the use of prescribed fire, fire-dependent ecosystems can be maintained, preserving native flora and fauna. Additionally, prescribed fire is used as a wildfire hazard reduction tool, reducing fuel levels to protect people, homes, timber, range, and other values at risk. The Florida Forest Service has several programs designed to assist landowners and other public agencies with conducting prescribed burning. Additionally, the Florida Forest Service has an aggressive wildfire mitigation program, performs prescribed burning on State Forests, and oversees one of the most active open burning programs in the country.





Clockwise: Before, during and after!

What We Did This Summer

Last week the Cocoloba Chapter membership came together to build a native plant corridor for the children of Fort Myers Middle Academy. This ambitious planting features numerous species of plants arranged in natural plant communities. The concept is to introduce the children to the plants and the animals they support as they appear in a natural setting. The central path that runs down the middle provides multiple access points to all sides of the plant groups. The principal of the school was thrilled with the outcome and we can't wait for the kids to see their new gift. After months of planning and two weeks of working in the hot sun and drizzling rain, the final result is truly amazing!





Top left: laying down layers of cardboard and covering it with mulch. To eliminate grass regrowth we made sure the cardboard had a six inch overlap and at least three inches of mulch on top. Top right clockwise: Martha Grattan, Mark Miller and Marlene Rodak mudding in the new plants. Second row left: Dick Workman, Rodger Bunnell and Ana Clavero getting ready to put down some cardboard. Second row right: Cheryl Joyce surveys her handy work. Bottom: Ana Clavero and Dick Workman perform an installation.

But that is not all . . .





Top: Martha Grattan and Rodger Bunnell install a clump of Fakahatchee Grass at Three Oakes Elementary. Bottom left: Martha and Rodger talk propagation in the school butterfly garden. Bottom right: A new butterfly identification sign donated by Publix.

We also provided a native plant installation at Three Oaks Elementary!

Early in July, team Coccoloba made a quick stop at Three Oaks Elementary to plant some extra plants on the campus. The plants were left over from the Riverdale High School project. We were happy to welcome Three Oaks Elementary to the Coccoloba family!



FNPS Submits Open Letter To Legislature In Support of Florida Forever Funding

April 27, 2015

FNPS has submitted an open letter to the Florida legislature that disputes their continuing contentions that the state fails to properly manage the conservation land that it already owns and that Florida has already conserved sufficient land. Those false arguments are then used to justify the small amount of funding their budget includes for Florida Forever purchases, and the requirement that those funds can only be used for the purchase of conservation easements or other less-than-fee-title acquisitions. Below is the full text of the letter:

April 27, 2015

SUBJECT: Has Florida Already Conserved Too Much Land?
Do We Properly Manage What We Own?

Dear Senator or Representative:

Much of the debate surrounding the distribution of Amendment 1 funds has revolved largely around whether Florida should conserve additional land through public acquisition. Many legislators have taken the position that Florida is not properly managing the land it already owns – so it would be irresponsible to purchase more. Some legislators go a step further and suggest our inability to properly manage what we already own is a clear sign we have already acquired too much land.

The Florida Native Plant Society (Society) has a firm position on this issue, and it is a position backed by an abundance of science and observable evidence. We ask that you consider the following facts as you continue your deliberations, now and in future years, about spending on the Florida Forever program.

Do we properly manage what we already own?

Our public lands represent a huge public investment, and a well-managed investment should appreciate in value. It would be foolhardy to keep buying land while failing to safeguard what we already own. The agencies responsible for safeguarding that investment should be held accountable. To that end:

A land management plan must be prepared for every state owned conservation property and meet the minimum requirements established by law (Sections 253.034(5) and 259.032(10), F.S.)

Each property must undergo a land management review every five years. The reviews are performed by teams of experts representing the state agencies and must also include a private landowner and/or a citizen representative from a private conservation organization. The reviews must determine: 1) Is the property being managed for the purpose of its acquisition?; and 2) Is it being managed in accordance with the management plan? Of 462 reviews coordinated by the Division of State Lands, only 7 failed to meet all statutory requirements for a success rate of 98%; 5 of the 7 subsequently passed in a follow-up review.

Two other measures of the quality of land management in Florida:

We have the most active and successful prescribed fire program in the southeast, and are recognized as a model for fire management by other states; and Florida's state park system is the only 3-time Gold Medal winner for having the finest state park system in the nation.

If you can share specific examples of inadequate attention to land management, we would welcome hearing about them, because they should be addressed and the Society will stand with you on that point. Representatives of the Society have served on many of the land management review teams because we recognize the fundamental importance of good land management. To date, all we have heard are broad-brush statements about inadequate management. If your examples are a result of inadequate funding (i.e., staffing, equipment, or other resources), then they underscore the Society's position that Amendment 1 funds should be used to supplement existing sources of funding for our land management programs.

Has Florida already conserved too much land?

One argument against conserving more land contends that Florida doesn't even know what lands have already been protected. While it can be difficult to hit a moving target, we succeed very well at maintaining an up-to-date inventory of public lands (<http://fnai.org/webmaps/ConLandsMap/> and http://fnai.org/PDF/Maacres_201502_FCL_plus_LT_F.pdf). Is that current inventory of lands sufficient to conserve Florida's natural resources in perpetuity?

Will it satisfy the needs and desires for our posterity and allow them to enjoy the same quality of life that we enjoy today as Floridians?

There is much evidence indicating the answer to that question is an emphatic "no," including:

There are 133 animal species and 534 plant species designated as threatened or endangered. A 2010 assessment determined that 80% of our rivers, 90% of our lakes, and 97% of our estuaries are impaired because they cannot meet established water quality standards. Urban sprawl consumed approximately 768,000 acres of habitat and working landscapes (forests and ranches) between 2000 and 2010, or nearly 2% of the entire state.

What do such trends tell us? How do we address the challenges those trends represent if we dismiss land conservation as an important tool to counter them? The Society contends that we

cannot.

We've already acknowledged the tremendous investment our portfolio of conservation land represents. Buying land is expensive, and decisions about which lands to buy should be guided by science, practical considerations, and ensuring the public gets the best bang-for-the-buck with its land acquisition dollars. For decades, Florida's land conservation programs have recognized the need for accountability and have consistently refined the processes necessary to impose and exhibit such accountability. The Florida Forever 5-Year Plan (http://www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/FFAnnual/March_2014FloridaForever.pdf) and the rigorous scientific analyses that underpin the Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment (http://fnai.org/PDF/FFCNA_TechReport_v4_01.pdf) demonstrate such accountability. Both are continually updated and help identify which lands should be conserved, and why. Would the land:

Protect important habitat for imperiled plant and animal species? (see Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas* and Rare Species Habitat Conservation Priorities)

Protect rare or sensitive habitat types that are not already sufficiently conserved? (see Underrepresented Natural Communities)

Protect a connection between nearby lands and help create an ecologically functional network of linked lands? (see Significant Landscapes, Linkages and Conservation Corridors)

Conserve a "working forest" that could remain in private ownership and be effectively protected by a conservation easement? (see Sustainable Forest Management)

Conserve a floodplain area that protects homes and other private property by storing floodwater while also protecting valuable wildlife habitat? (see Natural Floodplain)

Protect water sources important for people and/or nature? (see Surface Water Protection; Functional Wetlands and Aquifer Recharge)

Protect coastal lands important to our tourism industry, coastal wildlife and quality of life? (see Fragile Coastal Resources)

Provide other "people" values, like significant recreational opportunities or protection of cultural and archaeological sites? (see Recreational Trails and Significant Archaeological Sites).

*The underscored items are separate analyses within the Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment.

It would be difficult to find anyone, anywhere, who has done a better than Florida at using the best available science and practical, real-world considerations to help guide its land conservation priorities and ensure accountability to the taxpayers. This should be a source of pride to our legislature!

It's often said we are each entitled to our own opinions, but not to our own facts. The challenge policymakers often face is the need to make decisions with limited factual information to guide them. However, if the legislature is basing its opposition to increased funding for Florida Forever on a contention that we have failed to properly manage the land we already own, or that we have already conserved sufficient lands to meet conservation objectives, then we submit you are

basing your position on your own set of facts – a set of facts that does not comport with reality! The Senate’s polling of Floridians clearly demonstrates that the Society’s position is consistent with the intent of the overwhelming majority of voters who made Amendment 1 law. We hope you are open to considering all the evidence that additional work remains to be done before Florida can claim to have protected a functional network of conservation lands, and that you will recognize the outstanding job public land managers are doing to protect our public lands and make them available for the people to enjoy. It should then be easy to reach a consensus on Amendment 1 spending. Dedicate a majority of the funds to land acquisition and use the remainder to provide supplemental funding for land management and advance other pressing conservation objectives - like accelerating restoration of the Everglades and reversing the degradation of our springs and estuaries. Thank you for considering our concerns. We stand ready to assist you in any way possible. Please do hesitate to contact us if you require additional information or explanation of our position.

Respectfully,

Anne C. Cox,

President Florida Native Plant Society

Community Garden Opportunity

For the month of August, FAMILY GARDENS, a new community garden in South Fort Myers, will be accepting applications for garden bed rental. FAMILY GARDENS beds are approx. 4'x8' with an optional automatic watering capability. Beds are available for a 9-month or 12-month rental. See www.uugardens.org for details and online applications. Membership includes special gardening classes conducted by Master Gardeners every week through the growing season. Ribbon-Cutting for the Gardens is set for September 12th. Bed availability is limited.

Minutes of the General Membership Meeting of the Florida Native Plant Society, Coccoloba Chapter

Tuesday, July 14, 2015, 7:00 pm
By Ben Johnson, Chapter Secretary
Attendance: 36

Martha Grattan called meeting to order.

Marlene Rodak gave the Treasury Report: \$10,130.20 current chapter balance, \$250 grant submitted for meeting space, fiscal year has ended, and Rodger Bunnell has filed the Chapter's taxes.

Marlene then spoke about the Fort Myers Middle Academy project. Mulch was delivered the previous week, and teams will be working during the week to distribute the mulch. Members are needed the following week to install plants. A \$200 donation was requested by Marlene for this project. Ana Clavero made the motion to donate the \$200. Ben Johnson Seconded. Motion passed.

Martha Grattan introduced new members. Welcome Sharron Brust and Robert Tonkin!

Martha then discussed a bylaws change passed at the FNPS State Conference. The President Elect position was added as a 1 year term, the President would then serve a 2 year term, and then become the Past President for a 1 year term. Previously, a President would serve a 2 year term followed by 2 years of Past President. This change will provide a training period, broaden the pool of people qualified for the position, and encourage more people to consider filling the presidency.

Martha then announced an upcoming field trip to Lemon Bay Park hosted by the Mangrove Chapter on August 29th at 9 a.m. in Englewood, FL. More information can be found at <http://mangrove.fnpschapters.org/>.

Ben Johnson motioned to approve minutes. Jim Rodwell seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned.

Plant auction raised \$31.

Martha Grattan introduced guest speaker Dr. Jim Burch. Dr. Burch previously worked for the National Park Service as a Resources Management Supervisor Botanist at Big Cypress National Preserve overseeing the exotic plant management program. Dr. Burch gave a presentation on the Brazilian Pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) tree. His presentation covered the background and characteristics of the Brazillian Pepper, and methods used to control this FLEPPC (Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council) Category 1 pest. He described various methods of pest control applied to the trees in Big Cypress National Preserve.

Informational links:

Brazillian Pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*)

<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/node/405>

Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (FLEPPC)

<http://www.fleppc.org/>

Big Cypress National Preserve

<http://www.nps.gov/bicy/index.htm>

Lemon Bay Park

<https://www.scgov.net/parks/Pages/LemonBay.aspx>

Fort Myers Middle Academy

http://www.leeschools.net/school/school_splash.aspx?ssid=52

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