

Proposal submitted to Board of Directors on 11/7/2015 for the creation of a Habitat Restoration Program. Submitted by Juliet Rynear, Conservation Committee Chair.



Habitat Restoration Program Proposal

This proposal is based on recommendations that were outlined in the report from the Bristol Strategy Group and presented to FNPS members and the Board of Directors at the Board/Planning Retreat in February 2014. At that time, FNPS had identified three Aspirational Goals:

- Support Land Management Review and Land-Use Planning
- Education Programs
- Habitat Restoration

From these basic goals and the work that we did at the Planning Retreat we identified 3 programs for the Council of Chapters to spearhead:

1. Promoting landscaping with native plants,
2. Enhancing educational field trips,
3. Developing strategies & advocacy for land use planning to address habitat loss

Since the Land Use Planning Initiative has run into some roadblocks, I think it would be a good idea to review the idea of creating a program that we can use to raise funds for FNPS while promoting community involvement and education. Habitat restoration is an example of something that some Chapters are already doing. In many cases activities include educational programs. I believe that we could raise funds to support these activities through both grants and corporate donations. Here are just a few examples of work that is being or has been performed by FNPS Chapters that could fall under a fundable Habitat Restoration Program:

- Assistance with habitat restoration and management at city, county and state parks, natural areas, and restoration sites
- Native plant rescue from sites endangered by imminent development
- Reintroduction of rescued native plants at protected sites and/or restoration areas
- Introduction of locally propagated native plants at restoration sites
- Partnerships with local members of the Florida Association of Native Nurseries
- Involving community volunteers in activities: Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, Brownies, high school and college students, Master Naturalist students and training programs

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- FNPS volunteers are providing 100's if not 1,000's of hours of labor on many projects throughout the state. Why not put our volunteers to work in support of FNPS directly?

We need to document members hours spent on these projects because we can use those hours as "matching funds" for the purpose of applying for grants and to attract corporate sponsors and donations by showing our level of community involvement and community service hours. With enough funds raised, we could potentially fund project leaders/consultants to organize and lead projects, hire local community educators, give FNPS "SWAG" and educational literature to volunteers to help get the word out about FNPS.

A great day to host major community restoration projects is National Public Lands Day in September. It's also a great day to get families involved (the Scouts are especially active on this day). A statewide FNPS Habitat Restoration program such as this may be a good warmup for Native Plant Month. It could increase our presence in the media and help educate our elected representatives as to the importance of conservation and restoration, provide photo-ops, and as FNPS continues to grow, we can show that we are also creating jobs and opportunities for small businesses and many Floridians.