
FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

**Southeastern Florida Chapter
Initiative
For Community and Policy
Advocacy**

MIDTERM REPORT

March 5, 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

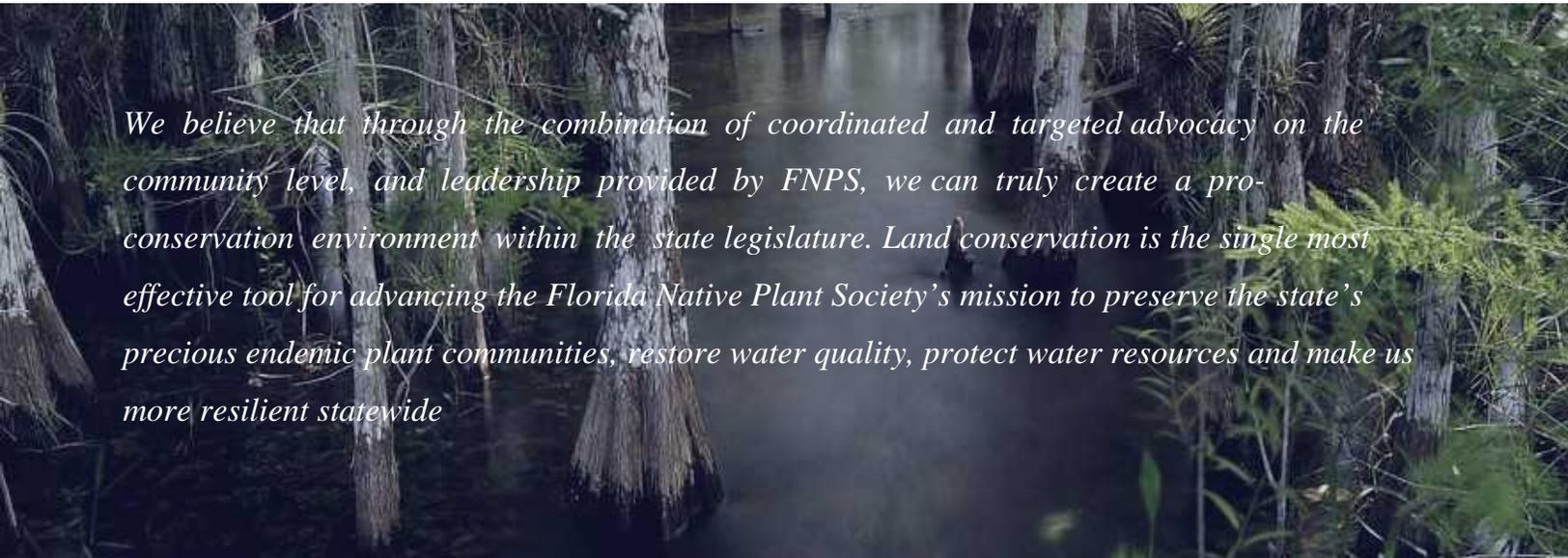
*“Florida Native Plant Society Southeast Florida Chapter Initiative for
Community and Policy Advocacy”*

During Phase 1 and 2 of the Florida Native Plant Society Southeast Florida Chapter Initiative for Community and Policy Advocacy, we were able to facilitate and encourage organized advocacy in almost every chapter. We not only successfully implemented “Take Your legislators to the Field” in Miami-Dade, Monroe, Palm Beach and Martin County, but also worked alongside the state policy committee in order to recruit and train volunteers while providing local chapters with the tools, resources, and trainings they need in order to successfully duplicate these initiatives in the future.

It has been made clear that this effort has been worthwhile by the positive feedback we have received not only from volunteers but from the legislative staff and participants as well.

We have been able to ignite advocacy at the chapter level by taking frustration and turning it into constructive action and by forming partnerships between Sierra Club, Audubon and Native Plant Society advocates to work together on these issues.

Throughout the past few months, FNPS increased its membership, visibility amongst regional environmental leaders, legislators, and the public, and has become a more recognized entity for advocacy and conservation information. FNPS Chapters of SE Florida, its membership and lead volunteers were provided with professional organization, coordination, and education regarding outreach and advocacy particularly with their sizeable delegations through in-person meetings, phone conferences, and field trips.



We believe that through the combination of coordinated and targeted advocacy on the community level, and leadership provided by FNPS, we can truly create a pro-conservation environment within the state legislature. Land conservation is the single most effective tool for advancing the Florida Native Plant Society’s mission to preserve the state’s precious endemic plant communities, restore water quality, protect water resources and make us more resilient statewide

Overall the outreach and education work in South Florida was extremely successful. Because of the great work of local volunteers, and the tools and resources provided by Conservation Concepts throughout the southeast region (Miami Dade, Monroe, Palm Beach and Martin Counties), delegates and representatives are truly more educated on how to make the environment a priority in 2019 as the Governor has indicated.

We have learned however that, for best results, the field trips need to be offered 2 months prior to committee week and must be advertised by the Executive director of the delegation 3 weeks before the trip starts. We have had a total number of over 36 volunteers across the region put in over 900 hours of their time and energy. We have taken out 20 legislators and staff into lands purchased with FF funds. Finally, we have had requests for another trip in Palm Beach and Dade County to accommodate those who missed the first field trip.

Overall, we have exceeded our expectations in terms of volunteer participation and we think the volunteers we have brought together will continue on with an advocacy/policy committee.

It is the professional opinion of Conservation Concepts, that FNPS chapters in Dade, Palm Beach and Martin counties now have the ability to keep this initiative going with minimal help from the policy committee or the state. The handbook and materials we provide will help them keep this going into the future. We think a follow up presentation at each chapter would be ideal to help recruit, train and manage volunteers and participants for a conservation committee or advocacy/policy committee.

The results of our surveys will help us understand how many volunteers were active in the outreach process. For now, this information is still unclear. We do however, hope to leave a lasting impression that advocacy is an important part of our success as the native plant society and strive for active committees to be formed that remain active after this effort is complete. These committees will hopefully stay in touch with the policy committee and remain active in years to come. We are also hopeful that this can spur efforts in other regions across the state and potentially attract grant funds so we can replicate this in every region.

Throughout Southeast Florida, we were able to develop relationships with legislators, educate new legislators and build on solid science-driven conservation information and we hope this will lead to legislators and staff knowing who to contact and trust for information and guidance when making difficult decisions on conservation issues in the future.

These relationships were built through the development and engagement of over 36 volunteers, meetings with over 36 delegation offices in and out of district representing counties from Monroe to Martin.

We are excited to begin the final phase of this work and tap on the relationships we have built as the session progresses to ensure they make the right decisions on all of our policy priorities for the Native Plant Society. We also look forward to creating a handbook and doing more outreach on the results of this effort over the summer. We suggest a follow presentation in every chapter to drive home next steps and prepare for next year.

MIAMI & MONROE BY THE NUMBERS

Senator Oscar Branon

- Field Trip: ATTENDEES
 - Senator Braynon
 - Oneca Lowery – Chief of Staff

Senator Manny Diaz

- Field Trip: LA ATTENDED
 - David Martin – Legislative Aid

Senator Jose Javier Rodriguez

- Field Trip: DS ATTENDED
 - Melissa Lopez – District Secretary

Senator Jason Pizzo

- Tallahassee Meeting on Jan 22
 - Communication with Teri Cariota

Senator Anitere Flores

- Field Trip: AL ATTENDED
 - Demi Busatta – Legislative Assistant
- Tallahassee Meeting on Feb 18
 - Communication with Nicholas Alvarez

Senator Annette Taddeo

- Field Trip: LA ATTENDED
 - Venusmia Lovely – Legislative Aide
 - Kalell Lovely (15)
 - Angelina Scott (18)
 - Michael Scott – Legislative Aide

Representative Dotie Joseph

- Field Trip: LA ATTENDED
 - Yetcel – Legislative Aide

SUMMARY

In Miami Dade County, delegates joined FNPS Volunteers on a field trip that started with a presentation and then a hike into natural areas followed by a kayak trip to highlight water quality. The 17 office delegates and 8 volunteer participants visited the Deering Estate which has several Florida Forever Parcels (additions to the main property as well as some slated for acquisition). In Addition, we highlighted Biscayne bay coastal wetlands parcels nearby, purchased with environmentally endangered lands (EEL) funds, which are funded by The Florida Forever Program. We were able to meet with every one of the 24 delegate offices, attended and spoke at 2 delegation meetings, attended special events where legislators were present, and attended several chapter meetings to encourage participation

Laura Reynolds also spoke on behalf of the Native Plant Society in front of the Dade County Delegation. Her presentation actively engaged delegates and encouraged them to ask questions related to the field trip, the goals of FNPS, and the Florida Forever Program.

Representative James Bush

- Tallahassee Meeting on Jan 22
 - Communication with Rep Bush

Representative Jose Oliva

- Tallahassee Meeting on Jan
 - Communication with Cory Dowd

Representative Bryan Avila

- Tallahassee Meeting on Jan 21
 - Communication with Silvia Castellanos

Representative Nicholas Duran

- In-District Meeting on Feb 28
 - Communication with Yolanda

Representative Joseph Geller

- Tallahassee Meeting on Jan 19
 - Communication with Cody Rogers

Representative Sharon Pritchett

- Tallahassee Meeting on Jan 21
 - Communication with Jedidah Cook

Representative Cindy Polo

- Field Trip: LA ATTENDED
 - Daphnee Arana - Legislative Aide

Representative Ana Maria Rodriguez

- Tallahassee Meeting on Jan 21
 - Communication with Ryan Quintero



The Miami Dade field trip was very successful. FNPS Miami Dade Chapter Volunteers not only had the opportunity to go on a beautiful field trip, visit Florida forever parcels, and enjoy a kayaking trip, but also had the chance to speak face to face with their representatives and members of their staff.

Volunteers were able to advocate for expanding the scale of conservation land throughout the state and how this is also a highly strategy for promoting aquifer recharge, flood attenuation and nutrient filtration.

Representative Barbara Watson

- Tallahassee Meeting on Jan 21
 - Communication with Rep Watson

Representative Michael Grieco

- Field Trip: ATTENDED
 - Kavanjote Birdi – District Secretary
 - Gianfranco Puppio – Legislative Assistant



Representative Javier Fernandez

- Field Trip: LA ATTENDED
 - Peter Campbell – Legislative Aise
 - Tallahassee Meeting on Feb 20

Representative Vance Aloupis

- Tallahassee Drop-By on Jan 21

Representative Daniel Perez

- Tallahassee Meeting on Jan 19
 - Communication with Daniel Leon

Representative Kionne McGhee

- Field Trip: LA ATTENDED
 - Mikhail Scott
 - Tallahassee Meeting Feb 19

Representative Anthony Rodriguez

- Tallahassee Meeting on Jan

Representative Juan Fernandez-Barquin

- Tallahassee Meeting on Feb 20
 - Communication with Rep Fernandez-Barquin

Representative Holly Raschein

- Field Trip: LA ATTENDED
 - Julio Rodriguez – Legislative Aide
- Tallahassee Meeting Feb 21
 - Communication with Julio Rodriguez





- Suzanne Koptur – 5 Hours
- Carl Barta – 5 Hours
- Arlene Ferris – 40 Hours
- Ayla Shove – 5 Hours
- Gwen Burzycki – 5 Hours
- Donna Hnaley – 5 Hours
- Cesar Becerra – 5 Hours
- Darlene A. Humes – 5 Hours
- Patty Phares – 40 hours
- Jeanne Rothchild – 40 Hours
- Violeta De La Guardia – 5 Hours
- Steve and Maria Szydlo – 5 Hours
- Glenn Gardner – 5 Hours
- Rene Wendein – 5 Hours
- Alexis Espinosa – 5 Hours
- Eduardo Verona – 40 hours
- Ian wogan – 20 Hours
- Virginia Ansaldi – 20 Hours

Miami-Dade Volunteer Summary

Total Volunteers: 19

Total Hours: 260



PALM BEACH & MARTIN COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS

Representative Emely Solsberg

- Field Trip: ATTENDED
 - Two Staffers
- Tallahassee Meeting Feb 19

Representative Overdorf

- Field Trip: LA ATTENDED

Representative Matt Willhite

- Tallahassee Meeting Feb 20

Rep David Silvers

- Tallahassee Meeting Feb 20

Rep Marylynn Magar

- Tallahassee Meeting Feb 20

Rep Rick Roth

- Tallahassee Meeting Feb 21

Rep Al Jacquet

- Tallahassee Pass-By Feb 21

Rep Joe Casello

- Tallahassee Pass-By Feb 21

Senator Gayle Harrell

- Tallahassee Meeting Feb 19

Senator Kevin Rader

- Tallahassee Meeting Jan 22

Senator Bobby Powell

- Tallahassee Meeting Feb 19

Senator Lori Berman

- Tallahassee Meeting Feb 19

SUMMARY

The Palm Beach & Martin County outreach included 2 joint-field trips, 3 delegation meetings, outreach to all offices and several speaking engagements at chapter meetings to encourage participation. This led to a total of 5 legislative staff participants on field trips. Unfortunately, we did not raise enough funds in Broward County. However, we did attend a delegation meeting, and spoke at a chapter meeting to give an overview while providing a training to encourage participation. Lastly, we also encourage volunteers to contact legislators on their own and provided those FNPS members that signed up with more information.

LESSONS LEARNED

While the Miami Dade County trip was better attended, we learned that in order to maximize attendance, field trips need to be made weeks ahead of committee week and advertised by the ED of the delegation. Unfortunately, the first trips had to be canceled. There is a lot of interest from delegates and staff in participating in one after session and it is the formal recommendation of Conservation Concepts to host one in late May or early June for this region.



Palm Beach & Martin County Volunteer Summary

MARTIN COUNTY CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS

- Joan Bausch – 100 Hours
- Linda Eastman – 20 Hours
- Peter Grannis – 5 Hours

PALM BEACH COUNTY VOLUNTEERS

- Michael Kohner – 5 hours
- Ginny Powell – 5 Hours
- Elayna Toby Singer – 5 Hours
- Sophia Fonseca – 40 Hours
- Scott Zucker – 40 Hours
- Mary Young – 40 Hours

PALM BEACH COUNTY VOLUNTEERS

- Tracy Stuba – 5 Hours
- Eddy Erhardt – 5 Hours
- Ryan Leavengood
- Anthony Schreiber
- Christopher W. McVoy – 50 Hours
- Kay Gates – 40 Hours
- Winnie Said – 100 Hours
- Lucy Keshavarz – 50 Hours
- Fatima NeJame – 50 Hours

**Total Volunteers:
16**

Total Hours: 520



The field trip to Pine Glades took place on a cool, crisp and beautiful morning in January. In contrast, the local weather for three days prior to the trip was extreme in terms of cold temperatures and deluging rains, prompting many of the participants to cancel prematurely. This was unfortunate because the staffers and volunteers that attended were gifted a superb field experience.

The program began with a presentation that provided a comprehensive overview of the importance of conservation land acquisition and a history of the Florida Forever program with an emphasis on how valuable it is to SE Florida. This was followed by an extremely productive question and answer session that was specific to current bills up for discussion this legislative session.

We then enjoyed a short walk into the marsh via the boardwalk followed by a kayak tour deeper into the marsh. Another walk into an upland section of the natural area was conducted halfway through the kayak tour. There was a considerable amount of expertise within our volunteer crew resulting in continuous discussions and observations about the natural system including its diverse flora and fauna. All participants felt very fortunate to have encountered so many different bird species including a bald eagle that circled us at the end of the trip as if to say goodbye and thanks for coming.



NEXT STEPS

We are currently preparing a survey for all the participants of the Program. This survey will go out to them by March 20th, the feedback will be used in our handbook and provided in our presentation to chapters in May. We are also trying to collect the final fundraising pledges that we have from organizations and individuals to complete our work for this phase. In the meantime, we were able to find a donor to add a mat and frame 40 of the 120 conservation images and we will be displaying these at the capitol as part of Reclaiming Florida's Future event March 12-13th along with a display table to recruit members and volunteers and to highlight FNPS with legislators.

We are also working on having the images displayed at Everglades Action Day on April 8-9. We are hopeful that we can raise additional funds to mat all of the images but if we cannot we will do some targeted fundraisers to complete that so these images can travel around the state highlighting conservation lands in other regions.

If we are able to raise all of the funds, we may have our own earth day celebration where all photos are displayed in the rotunda and outreach done to all of the legislators on what the photographs are for and why conservation lands and Florida Forever are important. We are still short of our goal, but will know in 2 weeks if we will be able to compete a stand-alone event or not. We will have to supply final fundraising numbers by the end of March separately. One additional recommendation is to mobilize the Magnolia Chapter of FNPS by providing members with all materials, tools and resources created by Conservation concepts. This is to empower Magnolia chapter participation in this movement-building initiative going forward, as the chapters proximity to the capitol action makes it a potentially powerful and key "player" in this state-wide project.