

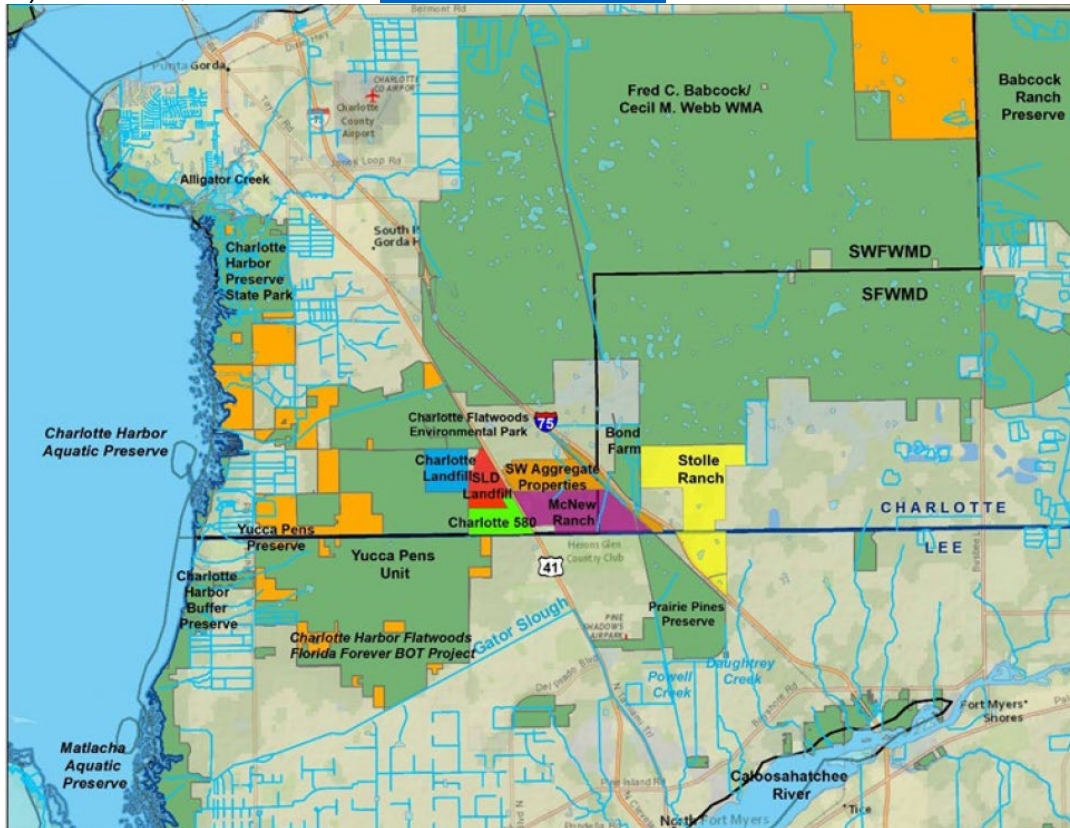
Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative (CHFI) Meeting Notes March 12, 2025

Teams Meeting facilitated by Laura Layman, SFWMD

Roundtable for any Updates on Issues, Research, Projects, Acquisitions, Upcoming Workshops/Training/Associated Meetings, Future Agenda Items, etc.

State Partners:

- Laura Layman, SFWMD Lead Project Manager:
Laura summarized that since our last quarterly CHFI meeting in December, there has been ongoing coordination with several of the CHFI partners regarding land acquisition strategies for some key parcels in the area. This includes the Charlotte LLC/Ansin family parcels as well as the Charlotte 600 property (formerly known as Charlotte 580). Please see the December 2024 meeting notes for more details on these properties and their locations [121124 CHFI Meeting Notes.pdf](#). These parcels provide valuable fish and wildlife habitat and would enhance hydrologic connectivity in the region. Land acquisition is still needed to complete the final part of the desired flow-way connecting the Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and the Bond Farm Hydrologic Enhancement Impoundment (HEI) to the Yucca Pens WMA. For more information, or if there are other parcels that have been acquired or are of interest to pursue for acquisition, please contact Laura at (239) 338-2929, ext. 7725 or llayman@sfwmd.gov.



- Kathy Burke, FWC Section Leader, Planning and Design: Kathy mentioned that she recently hired a new engineer, Beckie Reide, and that Beckie will attend the May 20th CHNEP meeting (discussed under the CHNEP update). Welcome Beckie! Beckie can be contacted at (352) 663-2632 or Beckie.Reide@MyFWC.com. For the Bond Farm HEI construction, Kathy is coordinating permit extensions/modifications with FDEP and USACE for the ERP permit and 404 permit, respectively. The existing state ERP permit expires in June and a modification of the project berm around the Zemel tract needs to be incorporated into both permits. ESA is contracted with FWC to obtain these permit modifications. FWC staff will be meeting with SFWMD staff this afternoon regarding any assistance that SFWMD can provide with construction of the project. Construction is anticipated to commence in 2026. A meeting between Laura Layman, Kathy Burke, Rand Edelstein and the respective consultant teams for the City's Northeast (NE) Reservoir project (SW Aggregates) and FWC's SW Discharge project (second phase of Bond Farm) was held on February 4th. This was a very productive and helpful coordination meeting to share information and collaborate on these adjacent projects. Laura, Kathy and Rand will also be meeting with FDOT on March 27th to coordinate on the NE Reservoir and SW Discharge projects. For more information, please contact Kathy at (850) 591-0544 or Katherine.Burke@MyFWC.com.
- Mark Walton, SWFWMD Environmental Scientist, SWIM Program: Mark indicated that the 2024 seagrass maps are complete. There has been a limited release of the maps to select partners for review and verification. The final Charlotte Harbor seagrass maps are expected to be released in late March or April. The Cape Haze hydrologic restoration project is currently undergoing federal permitting with the USACE. For more information, please contact Mark at (813) 985-7481, Ext 2209 or at Mark.Walton@swfwmd.state.fl.us.
- Eric Weather, FWC Research Administrator, FWRI: Eric reiterated the importance of conserving coastal ponds, which provide critical habitat for snook and tarpon. There is ongoing research on these coastal ponds in the Charlotte Harbor area, as part of a NOAA RESTORE project. More information can be found here: [Recreational Fishery Habitat Conservation - NOAA RESTORE Science Program](#). For more information, please contact Eric at (941) 249-6550 or Eric.Weather@MyFWC.com.
- Philip Stevens, FWC Research Scientist in Fish Biology, FWRI: Philip let the group know that FWC will be presenting at a workshop at the upcoming Wildlife Corridor Summit in June in Orlando. Philip will be discussing FWC's Landscape Conservation Strategic Initiative and how it fits into the larger picture of conservation activities in Florida. The CHFI is a focus area for this initiative, dubbed C3 Southwest. There was some great discussion on this topic and Philip requested for the group to send him any relevant information that will be useful for his presentation. Please contact Philip at (727) 896-8626 or Philip.Stevens@MyFWC.com.

Federal Partners:

- Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP, Director of Research & Restoration: Nicole wanted to notify the group of a new publication for which CHNEP was a co-author. This study looked at water quality data for the Greater Charlotte Harbor estuary and analyzed over 20 years' worth of monitoring data to provide water quality and eutrophication trends. [Water Quality Trends and Eutrophication Indicators in a Large Subtropical Estuary: A Case Study of the Greater Charlotte Harbor System in Southwest Florida](#). Nicole also mentioned the new CHNEP event response landing page for Hurricanes Helene and Milton, which contains aggregated data from these storms and incorporates feedback from the CHNEP TAC meeting and the Federal Agency Recovery Coordination Listening Session. [Hurricanes Milton & Helene | CHNEP Website](#). The Water Atlas 2.0 is live, and CHNEP is continually making improvements and updates to this platform. Currently CHNEP is working on trying to automate the collection of rainfall data from counties. [Welcome - CHNEP.WaterAtlas.org](#). Nicole also discussed CHNEP fact sheet updates related to funding, water quality and seagrasses. [State & Federal Funding | CHNEP Website](#), [CHNEP Water Quality Status Fact Sheets](#), [Seagrass Fact Sheets | CHNEP Website](#). For more information, contact Nicole at (941) 833-6582 or at niadevaia@chnep.org.
- Jennifer Hecker, CHNEP, Executive Director: Jennifer mentioned that on May 20th US EPA staff from headquarters and Region 4 will be conducting a site visit as part of the National Estuary Program evaluation process, and CHFI is the focus of this meeting. Staff from CHNEP, FWC and SFWMD will attend, and the meeting will include a site visit to Babcock/Webb WMA. The site visit will highlight our collaboration on the LCHF project and how federal funding has furthered this initiative. For more information, contact Jennifer at (941) 833-6583 or at jhecker@chnep.org.

Local Governmental Partners:

- Rand Edelstein, Utilities Deputy Director, City of Cape Coral: Rand discussed the upcoming meeting with FDOT on March 27th to discuss the NE Reservoir Project. Permits will be required from FDOT to convey water across the I-75 right-of-way from Babcock/Webb WMA and Bond Farm. KCA is the consultant team for the city on this project. The exact date of the closing for the SW Aggregates property has not been determined yet; it depends on the results of the due diligence findings. The city will be bidding for construction of the reservoir pump station and pipeline separately. For more information, please contact Rand at (239) 242-3651 or redelstein@capecoral.gov.
- Brandon Moody, Water Quality and Resiliency Manager for Charlotte County: Brandon mentioned that there are upcoming public meetings for the One Charlotte, One Water Plan. He can share the meeting information with anyone who is

interested in attending. This plan is anticipated to be approved by the Charlotte County commissioners later this spring. The county has also submitted grant requests for additional USGS water level gauges in Charlotte Harbor and Lemon Bay, to help fill in data gaps. For more information, please contact Brandon at (941) 743-1290 or Brandon.Moody@charlottecountyfl.gov.

Other Stakeholders and NGO's:

- Brooke Langston, Big Waters Land Trust (FKA CFGC), Director of Land Protection: Regarding the Charlotte LLC parcels mentioned above, Brooke has been coordinating with the Ansin family regarding their future plans for these parcels and whether they are willing to sell the properties for conservation purposes or consider less than fee simple acquisition. The family has not made any specific decisions about moving forward at this time. For more information, please contact Brooke at (941) 918-2100 or b.langston@bwlt.org.
- JoEllen Wilson, Bonefish & Tarpon Trust (BTT) Juvenile Tarpon Habitat Program Manager: JoEllen mentioned BTT's contract with Damon Moore with Oyster River Ecology to explore six potential sport fish nursery habitat restoration sites in the Cape Haze Peninsula. These projects are undergoing design and permitting. She expects lessons learned from the Coral Creek Restoration Project can be translated to these projects. For more information, please contact JoEllen at (786) 618-9479 or jwilson@bonefishtarpontrust.org.

Presentation: Florida Environmental Resource Permitting (ERP) Stormwater Rule Updates

- Gabrielle Vignet-Williams, Engineering Specialist, Stormwater and Solid Waste Facilities, FDEP South District Office: Gabrielle gave an excellent presentation and overview of the changes to the state's ERP stormwater rules adopted in 2024. These changes stemmed from Senate bill (SB) 712, also known as Florida's Clean Waterways Act, and were ratified on June 28, 2024. The information related to the rule changes along with the referenced forms can be found at FDEP's ERP Stormwater Resource Center here: <https://floridadep.gov/water/engineering-hydrology-geology/content/erp-stormwater-resource-center>. For more information regarding these rule changes, please contact Gabrielle at (239) 344-5671 or Gabrielle.VignetWilliams@FloridaDEP.gov.

Remaining 2025 CHFI Quarterly Meeting Dates

- June 11, 2025
- September 10, 2025
- December 10, 2025

If you have any edits or comments that were not captured in these meeting notes, or if you have any agenda items for future meetings, please send them to Laura Layman at llayman@sfwmd.gov.

The presentations and meeting notes will be posted on the CHFI Water Atlas webpage at the link below.

All CHFI information is available on the CHNEP Water Atlas Webpage:
<https://chnep.wateratlas.usf.edu/charlotte-harbor-flatwoods-initiative/>