

**Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative (CHFI) Meeting Notes**  
**September 11, 2024**

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. - Please bring info to share with the partners**

State Partners:

- Laura Layman, SFWMD Lead Project Manager: SFWMD coordination is ongoing with FWC regarding potential assistance with construction management services for Bond Farm. Laura also mentioned that there may be some upcoming funding for Dispersed Water Management projects in this area. She will know more later this year or early next year and will provide an update at that time. For more information, please contact Laura at (239) 338-2929, ext. 7725 or [llayman@sfwmd.gov](mailto:llayman@sfwmd.gov).
- Kathy Burke, FWC Section Leader, Planning and Design: Bond Farm- Kathy is working with ESA to execute task assignments for the listed species work required by state and federal permits. The assignment includes vegetation, hydrology and species monitoring and should be executed within the next few weeks. There is also a small re-design required for the berm, to go around a 6/10-acre tract that was not successfully acquired. In addition, some of the Bond Farm permits expire next year and need to be extended or renewed. Bond Farm SW Discharge- Consultant acquisition for design of the SW Discharge from Bond Farm is on hold, pending the outcome of the SW Aggregates property negotiations that the City of Cape Coral is working on. Gaming Compact Funds- Kathy mentioned that there is \$8M available per year for hydrologic restoration projects within FWC's WMAs, and that this is the first year this money is available. These funds could be used for construction of the proposed Yucca Pens Hydrologic Restoration. To get Yucca Pens on the list, Kathy needs a realistic timeframe for when the construction funds would be needed. The Gaming Compact funds could potentially be used for design, but the emphasis would be on funding construction. For more information, please contact Kathy at (850) 591-0544 or [Katherine.Burke@MyFWC.com](mailto:Katherine.Burke@MyFWC.com).
- Mark Walton, SWFWMD Environmental Scientist, SWIM Program: Seagrass Mapping- The 2024 draft seagrass maps for Charlotte Harbor will be available in January 2025. Cape Haze Restoration- This restoration project is still in the permitting process. Cooperative Funding Initiative- The deadline to apply for SWFWMD's FY 26 Cooperative Funding Initiative is 5pm on October 4<sup>th</sup>. This program provides matching funds for projects that help create sustainable water resources, enhance conservation efforts, restore natural systems and provide flood protection. Website link: [Cooperative Funding Initiative | WaterMatters.org \(state.fl.us\)](https://www.watermatters.org/state/fl.us). For more information please contact Mark at (813) 985-7481, Ext 2209 or at [Mark.Walton@swfwmd.state.fl.us](mailto:Mark.Walton@swfwmd.state.fl.us).

#### Federal Partners:

- Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP, Director of Research & Restoration: [Yucca Pens Hydrologic Restoration Project](#)- Now that the federal funding has come through, CHNEP plans to move forward with procurement for design and permitting services starting in October. Additional survey work is needed to adequately capture water flows in this area, and additional funds and RFQ are needed for this. CHNEP may request technical assistance from CHFI partners with additional review of the proposed scope of work. [Annual EPA Reporting](#)- Nicole thanked CHFI partners for providing information on dollars spent on related projects in the area, for their federal reporting to Congress and the EPA. This helps to support CHNEP's funding. [2025 Southwest Florida Climate Summit](#)- CHNEP is organizing this event, which will be held on February 19 & 20, 2025. [Modeling Coordination](#)- CHNEP shared the CHFI model with Charlotte County as part of coordination on the Burnt Store Road Area Plan. CHNEP has also been coordinating with the Army Corps of Engineers on modeling associated with coastal storm management, and with the City of Cape Coral on CHFI modeling as it relates to the SW Aggregates property and the design of the NE Reservoir Storage Enhancement project. For more information, contact Nicole at (941) 833-6582 or at [niadevaia@chnep.org](mailto:niadevaia@chnep.org).

#### Local Governmental Partners:

- Rand Edelstein, Utilities Deputy Director, City of Cape Coral: [SW Aggregates update](#)- The City collaborated with CHNEP on the prior CHFI modeling effort, which allowed enhanced modeling and design for the NE Reservoir Storage Enhancement project. The proposed conveyance route plan for this project is close to the point where the City can share it with stakeholders for input; Rand will be reaching out to the team within the next few months on this. The City is actively trying to acquire the SW Aggregates parcel, and negotiations are underway. For more information, please contact Rand at (239) 242-3651 or [redelstein@capecoral.gov](mailto:redelstein@capecoral.gov).
- Anastacia DeFilippo, Environmental Inspections Coordinator, Charlotte County Community Development: Anastacia shared three (3) planned developments that are within the Burnt Store Road area, whose zoning applications will be heard at the upcoming Charlotte County Commission meeting on 9/24. These projects are adjacent to state land and have maintained wildlife corridors, an eagle nest and preserved pine flatwoods habitat. These projects have staff recommendations for approval. More information on these projects can be found at the links below. For more information, please contact Anastacia at (941) 764-4127 or at [Anastacia.DeFilippo@charlottecountyfl.gov](mailto:Anastacia.DeFilippo@charlottecountyfl.gov).
  - <https://www.charlottecountyfl.gov/core/fileparse.php/954/urlt/2024-pd-24-04-sr.pdf>
  - <https://www.charlottecountyfl.gov/core/fileparse.php/954/urlt/2024-pd-24-05-sr.pdf>
  - <https://www.charlottecountyfl.gov/core/fileparse.php/954/urlt/2024-pd-24-07-sr.pdf>

#### Other Stakeholders and NGO's:

- Debi Osborne, CFGC Director of Land Protection: Debi mentioned that she is retiring at the end of September. Congratulations Debi! The group welcomes Brooke Langston, who is the new Director of Land Protection for CFGC. Debi reiterated that CFGC can assist the group with land acquisition. Debi will share with Laura the previously generated map and list of key parcels targeted for acquisition as part of CHFI, which includes the estuary protection area. There are some key parcels that would be good to acquire and there is limited time to make offers, with the development pressure in the area. For more information, please contact Debi at 941-918-2100 or [debi@conservationfoundation.com](mailto:debi@conservationfoundation.com) or Brooke at [Brooke@conservationfoundation.com](mailto:Brooke@conservationfoundation.com).
- JoEllen Wilson, Bonefish & Tarpon Trust (BTT) Juvenile Tarpon Habitat Program Manager: BTT has been working under a NOAA Actionable Science (RESTORE) Grant to produce a sportfish vulnerability index in collaboration with Charlotte County. BTT is also working on a Conservation Opportunities Index (habitat level) and an eventual comprehensive map of these areas. For more information, please contact JoEllen at (786) 618-9479 or [jlwilson@bonefishtarpontrust.org](mailto:jlwilson@bonefishtarpontrust.org).

#### **Presentation: C3 Southwest (Connect, Collaborate, Conserve)**

- Jamie Wolanin, Southwest Regional Biologist for FWC's Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Restoration Section and Victoria Oliu, Southwest Regional Wildlife and Landscape Biologist with FWC's Wildlife and Diversity Conservation Section: Jamie and Victoria gave an introduction and summary of the FWC Landscape Conservation Strategic Initiative, of which C3 is a part of. C3 Southwest was the first regional team to be created and it was established in January 2022. Its focal area overlaps with the CHFI, and the goal is to facilitate a proactive approach to conservation. There are future collaboration opportunities between these two efforts, and if anyone is interested in participating, please contact Jamie or Victoria at [Jamie.wolanin@myfwc.com](mailto:Jamie.wolanin@myfwc.com) or [Victoria.oliu@myfwc.com](mailto:Victoria.oliu@myfwc.com).

#### **Presentation: NOAA Restore Grant- Fish Research to Inform Habitat Conservation & Restoration**

- Philip Stevens, PhD, Research Scientist in Fish Biology with FWC's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute: This research is an example of FWC's efforts to focus work on the C3 Southwest area. Philip gave an overview of recent research conducted in coastal ponds between the developing Burnt Store Road corridor and the Charlotte Harbor estuary. These coastal ponds are important nurseries for snook and tarpon. The research was co-produced by multiple partners, funded by a NOAA Restore Grant, and will help guide county planners and state government

in prioritizing areas for restoration and conservation. For more information, please contact Philip at (727) 896-8626 or [Philip.stevens@myfwc.com](mailto:Philip.stevens@myfwc.com).

- **Regulatory Discussion:** Philip's presentation sparked a good discussion about the need for coordination with regulatory agencies and the need for additional land acquisition to protect coastal habitat, including coastal ponds. With the data that FWC has collected through this fish research, they can start to characterize and describe what is needed for project design to the engineering community (two sample restoration projects are Robinson Preserve and Lemon Creek). Their research can also help inform the Charlotte County 2028 Comp Plan. Philip discussed the desire to coordinate with the permitting agencies during pre-application meetings, etc. Laura and Phil Flood recommended meeting with regulatory supervisory staff at the state agencies (SFWMD, FDEP and SWFWMD), to share this research and ways to better preserve coastal habitat as part of the ERP permitting process. Mark Walton offered to facilitate meetings with SWFWMD regulatory staff, and Laura offered the same for SFWMD staff.
- **Land Acquisition Discussion:** Some parcels adjacent to the coast and west of Burnt Store Road (owned by Charlotte LLC) were brought up as key parcels we should target for acquisition. Phil Flood asked if these parcels were within the CHFI Florida Forever Boundary and Debi responded that they were. A separate meeting will be scheduled to coordinate who can pay for an appraisal and make an offer to the property owner (CFGC, Charlotte County, CHNEP, SFWMD, SWFWMD, others?). William Rollins mentioned that often a key obstacle is that the state agencies cannot offer more than the appraised value and can't meet the owner's expected price. Non-profit groups have more flexibility and can assist, but they have limitations on what they can offer as well. Nicole mentioned the possibility of using resiliency funding for land acquisition, as these parcels may be part of resiliency floodplain & vulnerability assessments. Debi also mentioned that there are alternatives to acquisition, such as conservation easements, etc. that may achieve multiple goals including helping the landowner to be able to afford to keep the land and not sell to developers. In addition to agencies and non-profit groups, Mr. Rollins mentioned engaging the assistance of land brokers in the area to reach out to these landowners, where the highest and best use of their property is preservation.

### **Remaining 2024 Quarterly Meetings**

- December 11, 2024

**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](mailto: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/>