

Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative (CHFI) Meeting Notes
December 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.

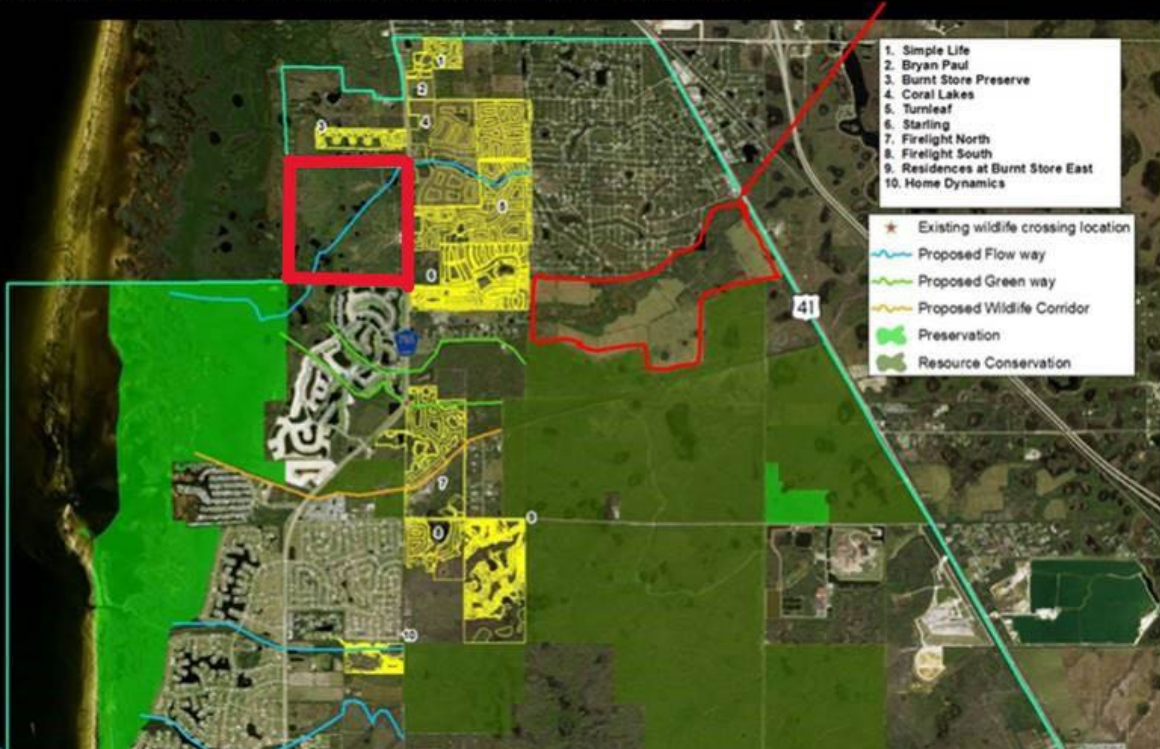
State Partners:

- Laura Layman, SFWMD Lead Project Manager:
Laura summarized that since our last quarterly CHFI meeting, she has facilitated a few meetings with several of the CHFI partners to coordinate on land acquisition strategies for the Charlotte LLC/Ansin family parcels. For reference see the two (2) parcels outlined in RED below (approximately 600-acre western parcel and 888-acre eastern parcel). The western 600-acre Charlotte LLC parcels were discussed in the last CHFI quarterly meeting as being a priority for acquisition, due in part to the natural ponds on the property that provide valuable fish habitat. The western parcel is within the Charlotte Harbor Estuary Florida Forever project boundary. The eastern 888-acre parcel was brought forth in subsequent conversations and would provide valuable hydrologic and habitat connectivity in the area, among other benefits. The eastern parcel is not currently within a Florida Forever project boundary. The Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast (thanks Brooke Langston!) is helping to take the lead on these potential acquisitions.

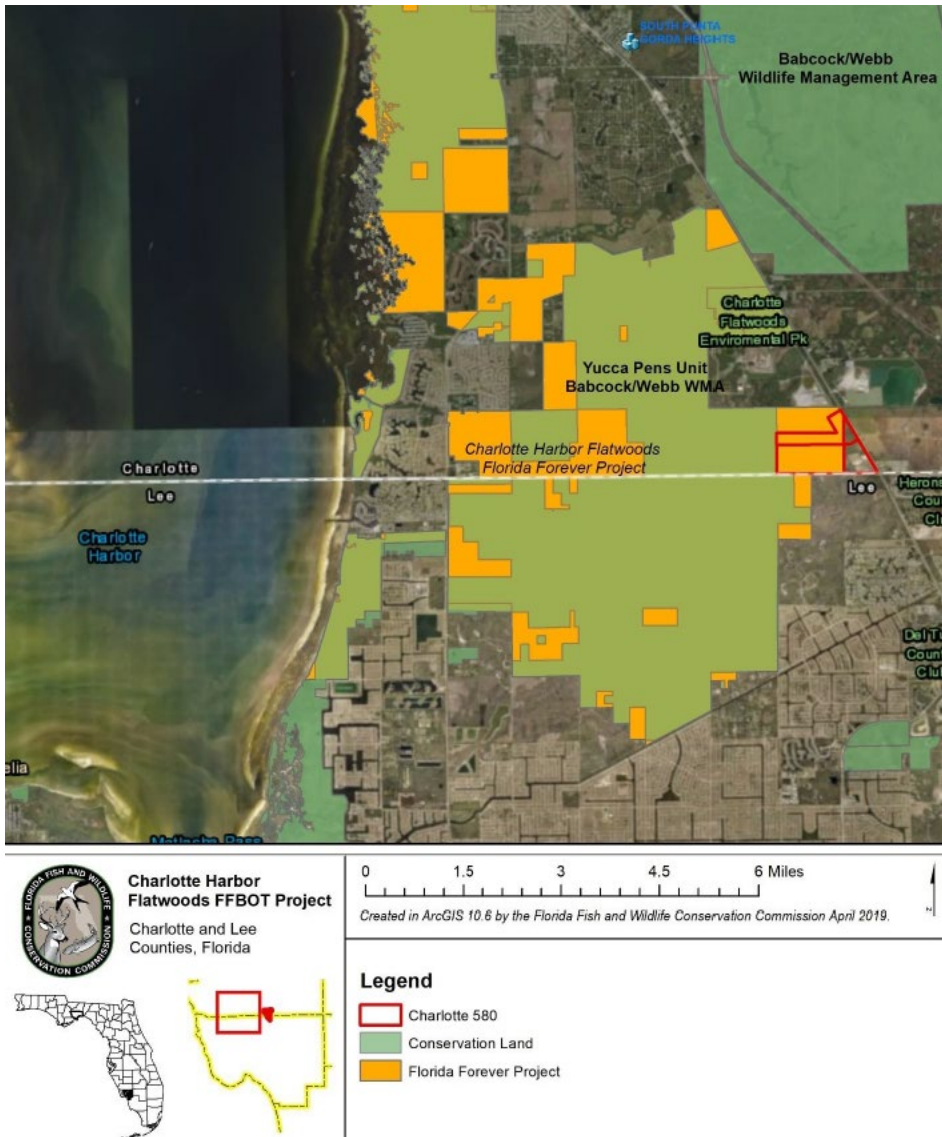
Closer view of flow ways and green ways...

Are there opportunities for stormwater treatment, wildlife passage?

Ansin property



Several of the CHFI partners have also met recently to discuss strategies for acquisition or less-than-fee simple acquisition of a flow-way on the Charlotte 580 parcel. This parcel is part of the CHFI Florida Forever boundary and is currently for sale. This property, shown outlined in RED on the map below, would be instrumental in completing the final part of the desired flow-way between the Bond Farm Hydrologic Enhancement Impoundment (HEI) and the Yucca Pens Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Billy Rollins has been instrumental in coordinating with this landowner. For more information, or if there are other parcels of interest to pursue for acquisition, please contact Laura at (239) 338-2929, ext. 7725 or llyman@sfwmd.gov.



- Kathy Burke, FWC Section Leader, Planning and Design: For the Bond Farm HEI construction, ESA is currently contracted to conduct the threatened and endangered species surveys required prior to construction. The surveys were delayed due to Hurricane Milton. The firm has submitted their proposed methodology to the USFWS for approval and is waiting to hear back. Crested caracara surveys will commence in January. Kathy plans to go out to bid in Winter 2025 for CEI and EOR services; services will include helping to develop the bids for construction. For the SW Discharge project, FWC is currently negotiating with Kimley-Horn for the pump station design, under a continuing services contract. The state legislature increased the dollar amount allowed for continuing services contracts, from \$4M to \$7M. The SW Discharge project is within these limits to extend existing service contracts, which will help avoid a lengthy RFSOQ process for the pump station design. Kathy expressed the need to coordinate efforts

between the FWC design team for the SW Discharge project and the City of Cape Coral and their design team for the SW Aggregates property, to ensure the scopes are in alignment. Kathy also mentioned FWC's continued water level monitoring for the Yucca Pens WMA and Bond Farm, and that that effort will continue for the foreseeable future to help inform restoration efforts. This data can be found on the CHNEP website. For more information, please contact Kathy at (850) 591-0544 or Katherine.Burke@MyFWC.com.

- Florida Forever Update: The Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) has a meeting Thursday and Friday this week to review new Florida Forever projects, project amendments and complete their annual project priority rankings. The information in the CHFI meeting agenda had the incorrect meeting dates; Laura sent an email after the meeting with the corrected FDEP meeting information, agenda and meeting times. Thanks to Laramie Ferry with FWC for sending this information to us! While the agenda did not include any CHFI projects specifically, it may be an opportunity for public testimony on our local Florida Forever projects.
- Mark Walton, SWFWMD Environmental Scientist, SWIM Program: Mark was involved in the Charlotte 580 parcel land acquisition discussion, and indicated he is on standby to assist with facilitating a regulatory meeting on this parcel with the SWFWMD regulatory team, etc. The final Charlotte Harbor seagrass maps will be available in the first quarter of 2025. The Cape Haze hydrologic restoration project is moving to 100% design, and the hope is that the project will move forward to construction within the next 12 months. For more information, please contact Mark at (813) 985-7481, Ext 2209 or at Mark.Walton@swfwmd.state.fl.us.

Federal Partners:

- Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP, Director of Research & Restoration: Nicole wanted to notify the group of some upcoming meetings and conferences. The Southwest Florida Climate Summit will be held from September 16-17, 2025, in Port Charlotte. It will coincide with the Florida Resiliency Conference, to be held from September 17-19, 2025, at the Sunseeker Resort in Punta Gorda. More information about the conference can be found here: <https://www.chnep.org/climate-summit>. The SWERT group is holding an oyster working group meeting on December 19th (virtual) to discuss a regional permitting plan for oyster restoration in Charlotte Harbor. NOAA is also planning a Red Tide Symposium on April 21-23, 2025, in Sarasota. Please let Nicole know if you are interested in participating. The CHNEP nature calendars are now available! You can stop by the CHNEP office to get one, and Nicole also shared a link to a list of local libraries where you can find them (<https://www.chnep.org/annual-nature-calendar>). Nicole indicated that the Water Atlas 2.0, a revamp of the current Water Atlas, is now live at the following link: <https://chnep.wateratlas.usf.edu/>. A primer video is available that shows how to navigate the atlas and some of the tools available on the site. The video was presented at the CHNEP Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) last week and can

be found at the following link: <https://www.chnep.org/technical-advisory-committee>. Nicole also wanted to thank everyone who contributed to the CHNEP annual congressional report. The report was approved by EPA to be included in the congressional report. There were over a hundred habitat entries for our region, including land acquisitions, land management and restoration activities, covering over 66,000 acres in our region. CHNEP appreciates everyone submitting these entries, as they help the organization to continue to receive federal funding! For the Yucca Pens Hydrologic Restoration project, CHNEP has obtained funding for design and permitting and will be starting procurement in early 2025 to coincide with some additional survey work. Nicole also indicated that CHNEP has developed a post storm-event resource page, following Hurricane Ian, that also discusses the 2024 storms (Helene and Milton). The site contains lessons learned, gathered from the collective brain trust in this region, as well as some tools and resources that may be useful for everyone during natural disasters. Please see the following link: <https://www.chnep.org/what-we-do/event-response>. There was also a brief discussion about high water line surveys after major storms, and whether that may be incorporated into the site in the future. Local and state agencies are already collecting this data for their jurisdictions. For more information, contact Nicole at (941) 833-6582 or at niadevaia@chnep.org.

Local Governmental Partners:

- Rand Edelstein, Utilities Deputy Director, City of Cape Coral: On October 16th the City of Cape Coral approved the Southwest Aggregates mine property purchase by Resolution 344-24. And on October 18th, two days later, the property purchase contract was executed. The City is currently in the due diligence period and is working on all the required items as part of that process. Rand anticipates a closing sometime in April. The resolution can be found on the City's Public Document Search website at the following link: [PublicAccess - CustomQuery Template](#). For more information, please contact Rand at (239) 242-3651 or redelstein@capecoral.gov.
- Jenni Franano, Environmental Inspections Specialist, Charlotte County Community Development: Jenni introduced herself to the group and Laura welcomed her to the team. Jenni is taking over for Anastacia DeFilippo, as Anastacia no longer works for Charlotte County. For more information, please contact Jenni at (941) 743-1290 or at jenni.franano@charlottecountyfl.gov.

Other Stakeholders and NGO's:

- Brooke Langston, Big Waters Land Trust (FKA CFGC), Director of Land Protection: The Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast (CFGC) just completed a year-long strategic planning and branding process, and now the organization is called the Big Waters Land Trust. Brooke indicated that the mission, staff and phone

numbers are the same, and that the website and emails will forward automatically. The organization has revised its service area to include less coastal counties and expand into inland communities, to reduce confusion and overlap with other non-profits in the area. Brooke is excited for these changes and the community they serve has been very supportive. For more information visit: [Big Waters Land Trust](#). With regard to the Charlotte LLC parcels mentioned above, Brooke has reached out to the Ansin family regarding their willingness to sell the property for conservation purposes and is waiting to hear back. The family had a meeting yesterday or today, and she will reach back out to Scott Hodges (grandson of the Ansin's) next week to find out the results of their discussion. Hopefully the family will be interested in a potential purchase by the state. For more information, please contact Brooke at (941) 918-2100 or b.langston@bwlt.org.

- Erica Hernandez, Florida Project Manager, Trust for Public Land (TPL): Erica didn't have any specific updates with regard to land acquisition at this time, but mentioned the upcoming Greenways and Trails Summit. It will take place on February 5th and 6th in Venice Beach, and registration should be open now. More information can be found at: <https://www.fgtf.org/news/fgtf-2025-summit>. Erica can be reached at (850) 222-7911 or Erica.Hernandez@tpl.org.
- JoEllen Wilson, Bonefish & Tarpon Trust (BTT) Juvenile Tarpon Habitat Program Manager: JoEllen indicated that BTT signed a contract with Oyster River Ecology to explore six potential sport fish nursery habitat restoration sites in the Cape Haze Peninsula. She anticipates a January 1st start date and then hopefully to be complete with design and permitting of four of the projects by the end of next year. As these projects move through the pipeline, the goal is to expand into other regions within the county. She does have some potential sites identified within the CHFI footprint. BTT is also working with a NOAA actionable science project team to look at sport fish nursery habitats, and that work could potentially expand into this region as well. For more information, please contact JoEllen at (786) 618-9479 or jlwilson@bonefishtarpontrust.org.

Presentation: One Charlotte, One Water

- Brandon Moody, Water Quality and Resiliency Manager for Charlotte County: Brandon gave an excellent presentation and overview of the One Charlotte, One Water Initiative. This is a planning structure to systematically and holistically address water quality issues within the county. The plan is in draft form right now, with opportunities for stakeholder and public input coming soon this next year. Laura offered to help pass along information about upcoming One Charlotte, One Water Initiative meetings to the CHFI network. For more information, please see the program website at the following link: [One Charlotte, One Water | Charlotte County, FL](#). Brandon's job duties now include resiliency in addition to water quality, so he is also now coordinating the county's vulnerability and surge and flood risk assessment efforts. He indicated that a new outreach person will be starting at the

county for water resources management related issues as well. For more information, please contact Brandon at (941) 743-1354 or Brandon.Moody@charlottecountyfl.gov. Roger Copp with WSA indicated that he would coordinate with Brandon on the FWC water level monitoring being conducted at Babcock Webb and Yucca Pens WMAs, to assist with this county planning effort; the monitoring information is also available on the CHNEP website.

2025 CHFI Quarterly Meeting Dates

- March 12, 2025
- 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/>