

CHARLOTTE HARBOR FLATWOODS INITIATIVE Meeting Notes
December 13, 2023 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Teams Meeting

Open Teams Meeting - Kim Fikoski & Laura Layman, SFWMD (contact info on final page)

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

- Kathy Burke, FWC Section Leader Planning and Design: Kathy gave an update on the Bond Farm HEI NRDA grant. She indicated FWC has answered all of EPA's questions and they are waiting to hear back for the final approval – hopefully summer 2024. Additional easements to move water west will be needed to secure additional funding for the SW Discharge Structure design and permitting. For more information please contact Kathy at 850-591-0544 or Katherine.burke@myfwc.com.
- Mindy Brown, FDEP Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserve: Mindy discussed 1) FEMA Hurricane Ian funding that will be discussed at the December 14th Southwest Florida Estuarine Restoration Team (SWERT) meeting. Proposed projects require a 2-page summary and need to improve water delivery and water quality to coastal areas, and/or secure natural shorelines through land acquisition. Kevin Miller is the Department of Interior liaison for FEMA. Please send both Mindy and Kevin Kalasz (USFWS) any potential projects for funding consideration, as they are the co-chairs of SWERT. Kevin is developing a 2-pager for the CHFI. For more information please contact Mindy at Melynda.A.Brown@dep.state.fl.us. Mindy also mentioned 2) the new Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park manager: Nikki Ross. Nikki's contact information is below:
Nicole R. Ross
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Recreation and Parks
Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park
Park Manager II
Nicole.r.ross@FloridaDEP.gov
Office: 941-575-5816
Cell: 941-628-1232
- Mark Walton, SWFWMD, Environmental Scientist SWIM Program : Mark mentioned that seagrass imagery surveys are being conducted January 1 through the end of February 2024. For more information please contact Mark at (813) 985-7481, EXT 2209 or mark.walton@swfwmd.state.fl.us
- Kevin Kalasz, Coastal Program Coordinator, USFWS: Kevin followed up on Mindy's discussion regarding \$4 billion in FEMA recovery dollars, 10% of which is towards resiliency projects. There is no closing window now and the projects proposed should preferably be able to start within the next 2 years. For more information, please contact Kevin at (305)780-7514, Cell (772) 205-7140, or via email at kevin_kalsz@fws.gov.

- Nicole Iadevaia, CHNEP: Nicole gave an update on 1) Yucca Pens Project Funding. CHNEP is waiting on EPA grant, which is expected in Spring 2024, at which time they can send the RFP. Nicole requested that key partners attend a scope of work meeting in early January before Kim Fikoski retires; she will send a doodle poll for the meeting. The intent is to have a robust scope to provide to the selected contractor. Please go to the CHFI Water Atlas webpage (link below) to view Nicole's presentation. 2) Babcock-Webb Yucca Pens Water Quality Monitoring Data on the CHNEP Water Atlas. Nicole also mentioned the upcoming SW FL Climate Summit in 2024. Save the dates (February 28-29, 2024). For more information, Nicole can be reached at 941-833-6582 or niadevaia@chnep.org

For the next quarterly meeting, Nicole suggesting reaching out to USFWS for an update or presentation on the proposed 'Everglades to Gulf Conservation Area' and action plan, which includes the CHFI area.

- Approval of the plan and Conservation Area would enable the Service to protect environmentally sensitive lands by working with willing landowners through strategic acquisition of both fee-title and less-than-fee conservation easements leveraging multiple federal and state funding sources. The plan is currently being finalized and will be submitted to the Director of the Service for approval, afterward the Conservation Area would be established.
- Their primary contact on this effort has been Julie Morris from the Florida Conservation Group (jmorris@floridaconserve.org) who has been working directly with Kathleen Burchett, Refuge Supervisor for Florida and the Caribbean of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Debi Osborne, CFGC Director of Land Protection: Debi noted that the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast successfully bid at auction and purchased the 20-acre inholding within Charlotte Harbor State Park! They hope to sell it the state soon. A map is attached to these meeting notes. Debi will continue to reach out to local governments for tax sale opportunities for land acquisition. For more information, please contact Debi at 941-918-2100 or debi@conservationfoundation.com
- Roger Copp, Senior Water Resource Modeler with WSA: Roger discussed the pilot project for the Babcock-Webb gate installation. His schematic drawing is attached to these meeting notes. This pilot project will test holding more water back via metal risers in 2 locations this upcoming dry season to mitigate the effects of lower dry season water levels and hydroperiods due to climate change. If successful, there are approximately 15-20 additional locations where these structures can be installed to help maintain adequate hydrology within the WMA. For more information, please contact Roger at (813) 896-4502 or roger@wsaconsult.com

Long-term Fisheries Monitoring and Restoration in Charlotte Harbor

- Eric Weather, FWC Research Administrator - PowerPoint from the Fish & Wildlife Research Institute, Fisheries-Independent Monitoring group updating the partners on the long-term Charlotte Harbor Fisheries Monitoring and Restoration activities. Please go to the CHFI Water

Atlas webpage (link below) to view the presentation. For more information please contact Eric at (941) 249-6550 or Eric.Weather@MyFWC.com.

Babcock-Webb WMA Red-cockaded Woodpeckers

- Matt Miller, FWC Wildlife Biologist: PowerPoint on RCWs at Babcock-Webb WMA. Please go to the CHFI Water Atlas webpage (link below) to view the presentation. For more information please contact Matt at (941) 833-2555 or Matthew.Miller@MyFWC.com.

2024 Quarterly meetings

March 13, 2024

June 12, 2024

September 11, 2024

December 11, 2024

All CHFI information is available on the CHNEP Water Atlas CHFI Webpage:

<https://chnep.wateratlas.usf.edu/charlotte-harbor-flatwoods-initiative/>

Laura Layman's contact information:

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