

# CHARLOTTE HARBOR FLATWOODS INITIATIVE (CHFI) Meeting Notes

## December 10, 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, Lead Project Manager, SFWMD:** Laura welcomed the group and new attendees. New attendees included Emily Keenan, Paul Owen and Ryan Shute. Emily is an environmental scientist with Environmental Science Associates (ESA), who is supporting FWC on the Bond Farm project as well as analysis of potential flow-way design west of US-41. Paul Owen (Principal Ecologist with Owen Environmental Consulting, LLC) and Ryan Shute (Professional Engineer with Morris Depew) are working with the potential buyer of the Charlotte 600 parcel (FKA Charlotte 580). Laura also mentioned Mike Kemmerer's recent retirement and congratulated Cason Pope in his new role replacing Mike as the District Biologist for FWC's Southwest Region. Laura indicated at the last CHFI meeting in September that SFWMD will assist FWC by handling the procurement for the Bond Farm construction. An interagency agreement between SFWMD and FWC is currently being drafted, with the procurement for construction occurring next year. Bond Farm is outlined in yellow on the map below. Laura also mentioned the continuing coordination with Billy Rollins (LSI Companies, Inc.) and other CHFI partners on the Charlotte 600 parcel, and the recent coordination with Paul Owen and Ryan Shute. This privately owned property is a key parcel to complete the CHFI flow-way from Babcock Webb WMA to Yucca Pens WMA. Any updates on the ownership of this parcel will be shared with the group as they are obtained.

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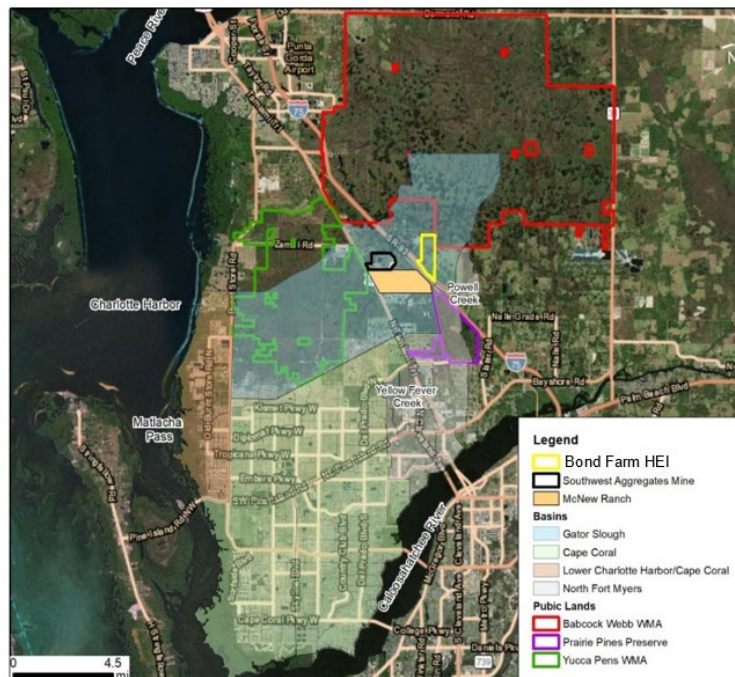


Figure ES-1: Bond Farm Hydrological Enhancement Impoundment (HEI) Project Location

A map of the Charlotte 600 parcel is below.



For more information, please contact Laura at (239) 338-2929, ext. 7725 or [llyman@sfwmd.gov](mailto:llyman@sfwmd.gov).

- **Katherine Burke, FWC Section Leader, Planning and Design:** Kathy mentioned that FWC has issued a series of new contracts with ESA. ESA will be conducting a desktop analysis of the desired flow-way west of US-41 and within the Charlotte 600 property. FWC is using NRDA funds for this effort, and the goal is to generate a high-level general flow path design through this parcel from the regional hydrologic restoration perspective, which can be used in further discussions with CHFI partners and the property owner. Kathy discussed that for Bond Farm, FWC recently provided a template interagency agreement to SFWMD, and that ESA is under contract with FWC to assemble the documents needed for the construction procurement package (final plans, permits and technical specifications, etc.). FWC will provide this information to SFWMD in January, so that SFWMD can begin the procurement process once the interagency agreement is executed. Kathy also mentioned that the recent FDEP permit modification for Bond Farm had an incorrect operations plan, so FWC will work with FDEP to get that corrected. For the SW Discharge project, Kimley Horn will submit 60% design plans to FWC for the pump station by December 31st. Kathy reiterated that an MOU is needed between FWC and the City of Cape Coral to define roles and responsibilities related to the SW Discharge Project and the city's NE Reservoir Storage Enhancements Project, which are key projects to

restore historical flows and move the excess water from Babcock Webb WMA to the west to US-41. There are multiple agreements and easements that will need to be signed between the two agencies, so the sooner the process is started the better, so that there are no delays to the city's project. Kathy also reiterated that Bond Farm is just a portion of the storage that is needed to fully restore the hydrology of Babcock Webb WMA; the southwest portion of the WMA is experiencing adverse ecological impacts from higher-than-normal wet season stages and hydroperiods due to regional blockages of historical flows. 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:** Mark indicated that the 2026 seagrass mapping cycle for the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) is beginning now in December. For more information, please contact Mark at (813) 985-7481 or [Mark.Walton@swfwmd.state.fl.us](mailto:Mark.Walton@swfwmd.state.fl.us).

#### Federal Partners:

- **Jennifer Hecker, Executive Director and Nicole Iadevaia, Director of Research & Restoration, CHNEP:** For the [Yucca Pens Hydrologic Restoration Project](#) that CHNEP will be managing, Nicole indicated that a few of the CHFI partners met in November to touch base again on the proposed scope of work. CHNEP has a draft final scope and will be sending it out for final feedback from CHFI partners before proceeding with procurement in late December. This project stems from the recommendations in the Lower Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Strategic Hydrological Restoration Plan and aims to restore hydrology within Yucca Pens WMA via the construction of ATV ditch blocks, weirs and low water fords. It also includes a potential groundwater seepage barrier at the southern end of Yucca Pens WMA adjacent to the Gator Slough Canal. The potential flows from the Bond Farm SW Discharge project will be incorporated into the model to see if these collective improvements meet the ecosystem restoration needs of the WMA. The modeling effort associated with this project will also look at the potential effects the restoration activities will have on the downstream tidal creeks. The project will deliver a shovel-ready construction design with the associated local, state and federal permits, plans, cost-estimates, etc. The project received EPA grant funds, but funding is still needed for construction. Nicole also mentioned two [upcoming CHNEP conferences in 2026](#), the Triennial Watershed Summit in June, and the Southwest Florida Resiliency Summit in September. For more information on these conferences, please visit: <https://www.chnep.org/summits-workshops>. Nicole also discussed the various data resources that are available on the CHNEP Water Atlas website, including updated water quality fact sheets by basin, updated seagrass maps by basin, updated funding fact sheet, and tools that can be used for analyzing water quality trends and monitoring water flows and levels for streams and rivers. Nicole mentioned that CHNEP can write letters of support and/or acknowledgement as needed to help obtain project funding. Links to the various tools and information were provided by CHNEP in the Microsoft Teams chat, and are also provided below:
  - **Lower Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Strategic Hydrologic Restoration Plan:** [Lower Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Strategic Hydrologic Restoration Plan](#)
  - **Water Quality Fact Sheets by Basin:** <https://www.chnep.org/water->

- [quality-fact-sheets](#)
- **Seagrass Maps/Fact Sheets by Basin:** <https://chnep.wateratlas.usf.edu/seagrass/#seagrass-home>
- **Updated Funding Fact Sheet:** <https://www.chnep.org/federal-funding>
- **Water Atlas New Tools:** Download data by waterbody tool & graphing feature added to Levels and Flows on Stream/River Pages updated with most recent CHFI stations in Yucca Pens. Ex: <https://chnep.wateratlas.usf.edu/waterbodies/rivers/9000405/>
- **2025 Water Quality Trend Analysis completed for 17 water quality parameters:** <http://www.chnep.wateratlas.usf.edu/water-quality-trends/>
- **Tutorial Videos:** how to navigate the new and improved site; can be accessed on the CHNEP YouTube channel under the CHNEP Water Atlas Tutorials Playlist: <https://youtu.be/wMUjWtraHKE?si=MDrOZmO08TcnFAe2>

For more information, please contact Nicole at (941) 833-6582 or [niadevaia@chnep.org](mailto:niadevaia@chnep.org).

#### Local Government Partners:

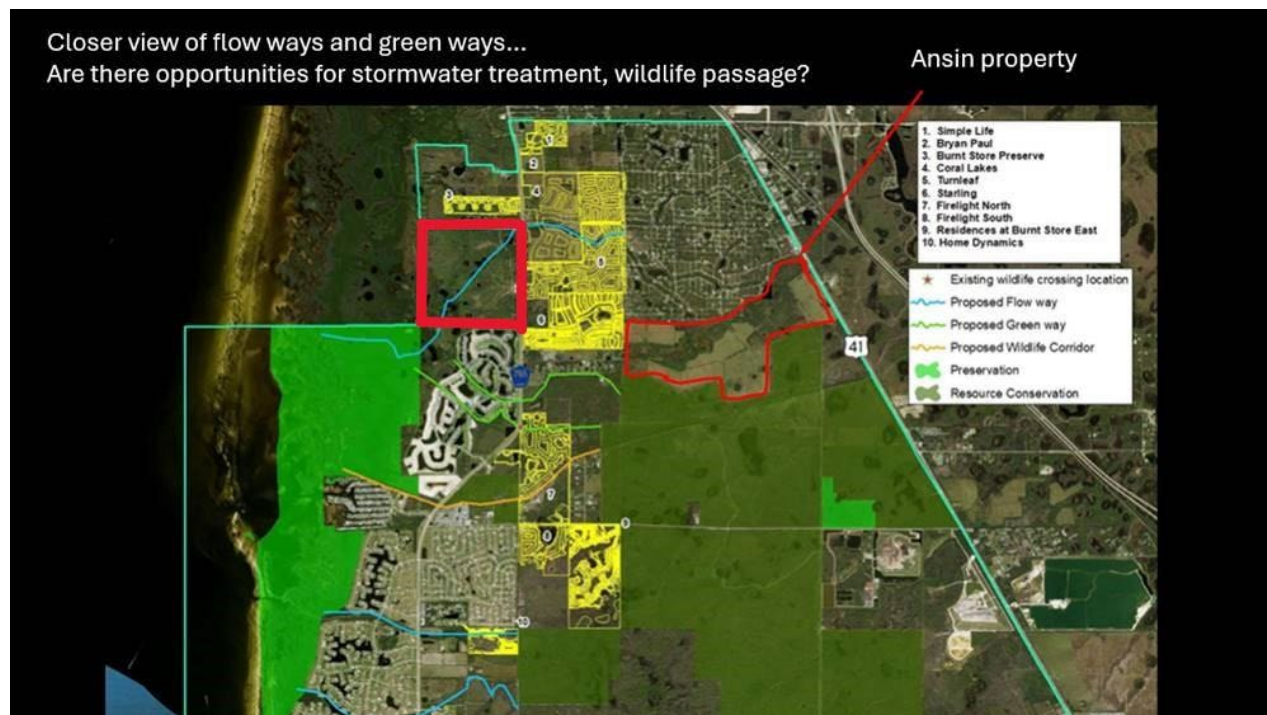
- **Rand Edelstein, Utilities Deputy Director, City of Cape Coral:** Rand discussed that the construction contract for the NE Reservoir pump station and pipeline was awarded in November by the Cape Coral City Council. Construction is anticipated to start in January 2026, and to be completed by the summer of 2027. For the NE Reservoir Storage Enhancements Project, Rand indicated that the Basis of Design (BOD) Report is being developed and that a draft is not available yet for review. KCA is working to complete the modeling associated with this project, which is undergoing full calibration, and modeling inconsistencies with the Lower Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Strategic Hydrologic Restoration Plan are being resolved in coordination with FWC and WSA. For more information on the NE Reservoir projects, please contact Rand at (239) 242-3651 or [redelstein@capecoral.gov](mailto:redelstein@capecoral.gov).
- **Brandon Moody, Water Quality and Resiliency Manager, Charlotte County:** Brandon mentioned that for the One Charlotte, One Water Plan, the 30-day public comment period has ended and that the draft report is available online. The plan will be going before the county commissioners soon for final approval. The draft plan can be found at the following website: [One Charlotte, One Water | Charlotte County, FL](#). Brandon also mentioned that the Conservation Charlotte program is up for renewal soon. It will be a ballot initiative for voters to approve. The renewal will include new acquisition criteria including resiliency, flood control, and expanded wildlife and environmental criteria. The ballot initiative will be introduced in either 2026 or 2027. If anyone would like to coordinate on the new acquisition criteria, please reach out to Brandon. He can be reached at [Brandon.Moody@charlottecountyfl.gov](mailto:Brandon.Moody@charlottecountyfl.gov) or (941) 743-1290. The link to the Conservation Charlotte website is here: <https://www.charlottecountyfl.gov/departments/community-services/natural-resources/conservation-charlotte/>

#### Other Stakeholders and NGOs:

- **Brooke Langston, Director of Land Protection, Big Waters Land Trust (BWLTT):** Brooke provided several updates for the group. First, she indicated that she and Billy Rollins met with a Charlotte County commissioner to discuss the possibility of fundraising for a Charlotte County Park within the Charlotte 600 site.

She and/or Billy will provide future updates on this. Second, regarding the Charlotte LLC/Ansin Family parcels that have been previously discussed by the group (see screen shot below), Brooke has heard back from the family, and they are willing to consider selling the property for preservation, but an offer needs to be made. BWLT is considering ordering an appraisal of the properties. Philip Stevens with FWC stressed the importance of preserving these parcels to protect adjacent state lands and fish habitat. Third, Brooke also discussed that she has a conservation buyer looking for a 200-acre parcel in Charlotte County that can be made into a park/preserve and that has both uplands and water access. This potential buyer will pay fair market value. If anyone has any suggestions, please let Brooke know. She can be reached at (941) 918-2100 or [b.langston@bwlt.org](mailto:b.langston@bwlt.org).

The Charlotte LLC/Ansin family parcels are outlined in red on the graphic below. The western 600 acres in bold red outline are within the Charlotte Harbor Estuary Florida Forever project boundary and the eastern 888 acres in red outline are not within a Florida Forever project boundary.



### Presentation/Mapping Exercise:

#### Key Remaining Parcels for Acquisition for the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative (CHFI)

- **Brooke Langston, Director of Land Protection, Big Waters Land Trust:** Brooke led the group in a mapping exercise and property discussion focusing on what key parcels remain to be acquired to help the CHFI reach its goals. Brooke took input from CHFI partners prior to the meeting and also worked from the previous priority parcel list from a few years ago, which had green parcels as Priority 1, yellow as Priority 2 and red as Priority 3. Brooke presented a draft map during the meeting and indicated that she also has a companion spreadsheet that she can share with the group. Key discussion points included the following:
  - Brandon Moody with Charlotte County mentioned two key parcels in the

Punta Gorda/Port Charlotte area. One is an old derelict golf course along Conway Boulevard in a heavily developed area. The site does have some arsenic present in the soil, and it would provide a great opportunity for remediation and restoration. There is also a former mining site north of Eleanor Avenue that would provide opportunities for restoration. Philip Stevens with FWC noted that relict golf courses provide a great opportunity for restoration, including restoring valuable fish habitat. He provided the Lemon Creek project as one example.

<https://lemonbayconservancy.org/fwc-tarpon-report/>

- David Blewett with FWC mentioned three key parcels on the east side of Burnt Store Road that are adjacent to the Yucca Pens WMA, one of which contains a portion of Yucca Pens Creek. While all three parcels are included within CHNEP's Habitat Restoration Needs Map and are important to protect native habitat and tidal creeks, the parcel that contains Yucca Pens Creek would be the highest priority for acquisition. Roger Copp with WSA noted that the ATV trails in this area are causing ecological damage. Due to these trails, water from Durden Creek gets re-routed to the north and drains to Yucca Pens Creek during the wet season. Protection of these properties could help address these issues. Cathy Olson with Pennoni mentioned that she's seen survey crews recently on these parcels. Sarina Barnard with CHNEP provided a link to both the CHNEP Habitat Restoration Needs Map [Habitat Restoration Needs Map 2](#) and plan [Habitation Restoration Needs \(HRN\) Plan - CHNEP.WaterAtlas.org](#). Sarina also indicated that the site with Yucca Pens Creek on it is a withdrawn Lee County Conservation 20/20 nomination (Site #87), and provided a link to the Conservation 20/20 Status Map [Conservation 2020 Status Map](#).
- Mindy Brown with FDEP mentioned a parcel for sale (listed on Zillow) east of Burnt Store Road and north of Gator Slough Canal that would also provide restoration opportunities. The site has a large rectangular borrow pit on it.
- Laura mentioned that there is overlap between the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative Florida Forever project boundary, the CHNEP Habitat Restoration Needs Map, FWC's land acquisition priorities identified in the management plan for Babcock Webb WMA, amongst other data sets. This overlap along with our current and planned restoration projects and the local knowledge of our partners can help inform and guide what the CHFI priorities for land acquisition are.
- **Group Task:** If you haven't already, please send Brook the Parcel ID#s and/or shapefiles of your priority parcels for acquisition. Brooke will then send out an updated draft CHFI priority acquisition map for review after the holidays.

## CHFI 2026 Quarterly meetings

March 11

June 10

September 9

December 9

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 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/>