

CHARLOTTE HARBOR FLATWOODS INITIATIVE (CHFI) Meeting Notes

September 09, 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 welcomed the group and since there were a few new attendees gave a brief overview of the purpose and history of the CHFI. New attendees included Catalina Weaver with FWC, Mike Taylor with the Fort Myers Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) regulatory office, Elizabeth Eastes with Charlotte County's Marine Section, Russell Ringland with Future Forestry Corporation and Thomas (TJ) LaRoue with RES (Resource Environmental Solutions, Inc.).

Laura's main update for the group is that SFWMD will assist FWC by handling the procurement for the Bond Farm construction. Both agencies' executive teams coordinated and agreed on this and will be developing an interagency agreement, with the procurement for construction anticipated next year. Bond Farm is outlined in yellow on the map below. Laura also thanked CHFI partners (Billy Rollins, RES, FWC, City of Cape Coral, CHNEP and Charlotte County, etc.) for the coordination on the Charlotte 600 parcel, which is still on the market and is a key parcel to complete the CHFI flow way from Babcock Webb WMA to Yucca Pens WMA.

HR

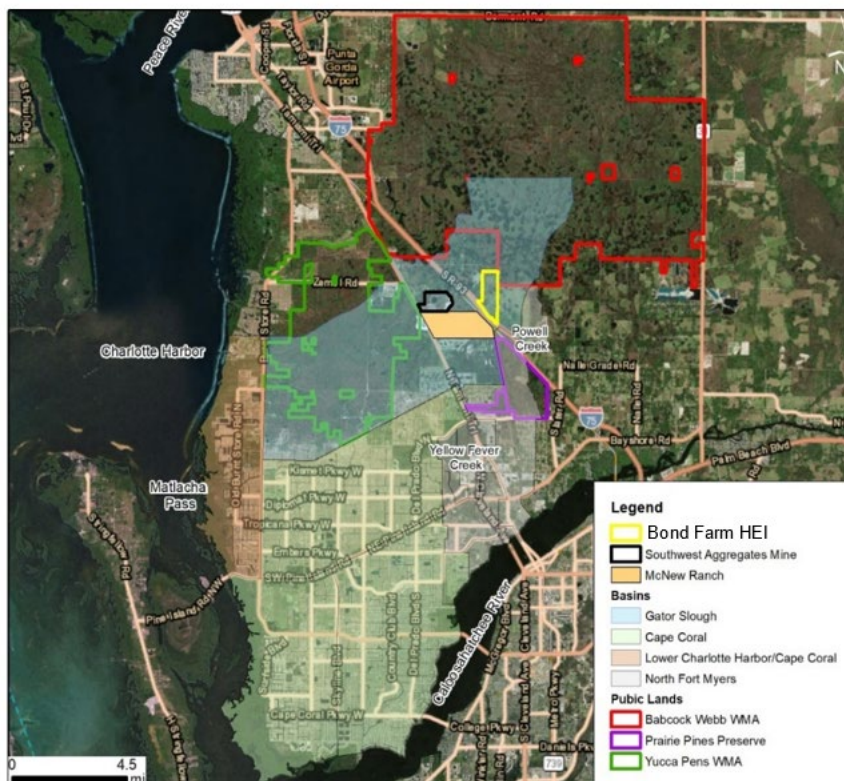


Figure ES-1: Bond Farm Hydrological Enhancement Impoundment (HEI) Project Location

A map of the Charlotte 600 parcel is below.



For more information, please contact Laura at (239) 338-2929, ext. 7725 or llayman@sfwmd.gov.

- **Katherine Burke, FWC Section Leader, Planning and Design:** Kathy discussed that for Bond Farm, FWC is currently working on drafting the interagency agreement with SFWMD. The goal is to start procurement in early 2026; construction needs to commence by the end of 2026 before the FDEP State 404 permit expires. FWC submitted a nationwide permit to ACOE in July for the 6/10-acre Zemel Tract, which the state could not gain ownership of and had to pull out of the project design. Kathy is waiting for RAI comments from ACOE. Monitoring for T&E species within Bond Farm has concluded and little activity was observed. The required shorebird surveys will be postponed until next spring, so that the surveys will be aligned with the start of construction and won't have to be done twice. Immediate pre-construction wildlife surveys required by the permits will have to be done 30-60 days prior to starting earthwork. The quarterly hydrologic monitoring within Babcock Webb (to demonstrate baseline conditions for the permits) is ongoing. FWC is also continuing to contract out for regional water level monitoring in the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods area. For the SW Discharge project, Kathy has been meeting with the City of Cape Coral to coordinate on the interface between this project and the City's Northeast Reservoir project. The 30% design plans for the SW Discharge project have

been submitted to FWC by Kimley Horn, and Kimley Horn is moving toward 60% design plans. Currently there are no funds available for the construction of this project. Kathy is working with Rand Edelstein and the City of Cape Coral on defining roles and responsibilities for these two projects in terms of infrastructure, timing and quantity of flows from Bond Farm and Babcock Webb WMA to the west to the Northeast Reservoir project and to US 41. Due to the different ownership of Bond Farm and Babcock Webb WMA, separate agreements may be needed for each area with the City of Cape Coral. 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 seagrass monitoring effort for 2026 for the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) begins in December. In addition, the deadline for cooperative funding agreement proposals for FY 27 is October 3rd at 5pm. For more information, please contact Mark at (813) 985-7481 or Mark.Walton@swfwmd.state.fl.us.

Federal Partners:

- **Jennifer Hecker, Executive Director and Nicole Iadevaia, Director of Research & Restoration, CHNEP:** Jennifer reminded the group about the upcoming Southwest Florida Resiliency Summit next week and provided a link in the meeting chat for more information and for this last opportunity to register. This conference will be followed by the statewide resiliency conference. Nicole indicated that this fall CHNEP plans to move forward with procurement for the Yucca Pens Hydrologic Restoration modeling and design project. Nicole emailed a doodle poll to set up a meeting for technical assistance with scope development. CHNEP has received the federal funding for this project (for design and permitting). Nicole also provided an update on useful resources for the CHFI group. CHNEP has made several Water Atlas updates, including on the Waterbody and Basin pages. This includes a download-data-by-waterbody tool, and a new graphing feature added to the levels and flows on the stream/river pages. Updates will be uploaded soon on the Basin pages (data aggregated by basin). There is also an updated map for the CHNEP habitat restoration needs plan; this map was used by BWLT in their strategic plan update. Tutorial videos for the Water Atlas are available on the CHNEP YouTube page. There are also updated water quality and seagrass fact sheets by basin, as well as updated state and federal funding fact sheets. New EPA Region 4 funding is coming out soon, focused along the Caloosahatchee River. CHNEP also recently worked with SFWMD on developing a high-water mark flood observation survey, which is now live. This is hosted in partnership with SFWMD and will be wrapped into District flood models and tools. Nicole encouraged everyone to use this new tool, and that it is also meant for general public use for major rain events or storm events. The data will go directly into SFWMD's flood database. Jennifer and Nicole provided the following links in the Teams meeting chat:
 - **SWFL Resiliency Summit:** <https://www.chnep.org/swfl-resiliency-summit>
 - **Water Atlas Tutorial Videos:** for how to navigate the new and improved site can now be accessed on the CHNEP YouTube channel under the CHNEP Water Atlas Tutorials
Playlist: <https://youtu.be/wMUjWtraHKE?si=MDrOZmO08TcnFAe2>
 - **Water Atlas New Tools:** Download data by waterbody tool & graphing feature added to Levels and Flows on Stream/River Pages (updating

with most recent CHFI stations now, available on these pages soon)
<https://chnep.wateratlas.usf.edu/waterbodies/rivers/9000405/>

- New Basin pages live with associated Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL), Habitat Restoration Needs maps, annual rainfall totals, land/use land cover maps, economic valuation reports, and relevant project information. <https://chnep.wateratlas.usf.edu/waterbodies/basins/2/>
- **Updated Water Quality and Seagrass Fact Sheets by Basin:** <https://www.chnep.org/seagrass-fact-sheets>
- **Updated State & Federal Funding Fact Sheet:** <https://www.chnep.org/federal-funding>
- **High Water Mark/Flood Observations Survey** now live (hosted in partnership with SFWMD) to update District flood models and tools: [2025 Flooding Observations and High-Water Mark Survey](#)

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

Local Government Partners:

- **Jamie Scudera, Projects Manager, Charlotte County Community Services:** Jamie discussed the Conservation Charlotte program, which was adopted by the county in 2006. There are some excess funds in the program. This means that the county may potentially accept new nominations starting at the end of September, which is a great opportunity for additional land acquisition. Any changes to the program will be announced on the website. The goal is to renew the program on next year's ballot, and it will be a "bigger picture" Conservation Charlotte, looking at a macro scale, with potential for parcels that need restoration, etc. Please contact Jamie at Jamie.Scudera@charlottecountyfl.gov or (941) 613-3226 for any updates or nominations. The link to the Conservation Charlotte website is here: <https://www.charlottecountyfl.gov/departments/community-services/natural-resources/conservation-charlotte/>
- **City of Cape Coral:** Although Rand Edelstein was not able to attend today's meeting, Laura mentioned that the city closed on the SW aggregates property back in May. The design team (KCA) is working on the Basis of Design (BOD) report for the NE Reservoir project, to convert the mine to a public water supply facility. The BOD report is anticipated to be available later this year, and the city plans to hold permitting pre-apps with the various regulatory agencies later this year. Kathy and FWC are looking to develop an MOU with the City regarding how flows are getting from Babcock Webb WMA/Bond Farm to Yucca Pens, the amounts of flow, etc. These conversations are starting, but an MOU is needed. The two design teams have been coordinating, as there are many logistics to be coordinated between the Bond Farm/SW Discharge project and the NE Reservoir project. Laura will also follow up with the city on the procurement status of the planned extra survey work at Yucca Pens WMA, that the city had some resiliency funding for. For more information on the NE Reservoir project, please contact Rand at (239) 242-3651 or redelstein@capecoral.gov.

Other Stakeholders and NGOs:

- **Brooke Langston, Director of Land Protection, Big Waters Land Trust (BWLTT):** Brooke provided three general updates for the group. First, the City of Cape Coral, FWC and BWLTT closed on two more parcels to preserve burrowing owl and gopher tortoise habitat. They plan to close on two more parcels later in

September, which brings the total up to nine quarter-acre lots acquired in Cape Coral for the year using FWC funds designated for the purchase and restoration of burrowing owl habitat. Two volunteer groups in Cape Coral have been monitoring the preserved parcels. Brooke wants to find and preserve habitat that already has burrowing owls on it. Please let her know if anyone has information on land that has owls on it and/or has healthy habitat that would support the owls, even if outside of Cape Coral. She has an intern that is compiling information on these areas. Second, the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and BWLT are working with Sarasota and Manatee counties for their bond referendums on the 2026 ballot, to continue funding their environmentally sensitive lands purchase programs. If anyone has any time or resources to contribute to this effort, please let Brooke know! Third, we discussed the need for a central repository to hold the list of priority parcels for land acquisition for CHFI. Debi Osborne originally kept the list. Brooke is willing to keep/manage the list moving forward. Brooke will email the maps to the CHFI partner list and wants to coordinate on parcels other people are working on; so that she doesn't duplicate efforts or step on toes. Brooke has a list of landowners that she's compiled as well and offered to combine efforts if desired. Laura and Brooke discussed that a good topic for the December CHFI quarterly meeting is to revisit our group's priority parcels for land acquisition and to create an updated map. If anyone has suggestions or information that would be helpful to Brooke, please let her know. She can be reached at (941) 918-2100 or b.langston@bwlt.org.

- **Billy Rollins, Senior Broker, LSI Companies, Inc.:** Billy provided an update on the potential acquisition of the Charlotte 600 parcel. The sales contract is currently under review by the potential buyer, and the contract terms are being negotiated between the buyer and seller within the next couple of weeks. Billy will reach out for a face-to-face meeting with the parties and CHFI partners when appropriate. Billy emphasized that whoever buys the property will have to partner with all the agencies in the region and the CHFI effort. The potential buyer wants to develop the site for residential use, but a good portion of the property will need to be preserved to meet regulatory requirements. The preservation area could potentially include the CHFI flow way. Billy has been involved with this piece for a long time and will reach out soon to facilitate conversations that help us to reach common restoration goals! For more information, Billy can be reached at (239) 489-4066 or wrollins@lsicompanies.com.
- **Roger Copp, Senior Water Resource Modeler, Apex Companies, LLC:** Roger commended FWC for the continued collection of surface water and groundwater monitoring data at stations throughout Babcock Webb WMA and Yucca Pens WMA. Some stations were installed in 2011, and some in 2020. These stations provide highly valuable continuous monitoring data that is useful for current and future restoration planning efforts in the area. Roger also highlighted one station in Yucca Pens Creek that is a tidal monitoring station that measures both velocity and water level and captures tidal fluctuations to the west and freshwater inputs to the east. CHNEP echoed gratitude to FWC for continuing this monitoring effort; the data is sent to the CHNEP Water Atlas for public use. Nicole is in the process of uploading the most recent monitoring well data. This monitoring program was expanded greatly in 2020 through funds provided by CHNEP. For more information, please contact Roger at (813) 896-4502 or roger.copp@apexcos.com.

- **Russell Ringland, Executive Director, Future Forestry Corporation:** Russell is new to the CHFI group and discussed that Future Forestry Corporation is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization that has surpassed 20,000 trees planted, mostly in Cape Coral. He is looking for more opportunities to plant trees and to do some water quality projects as well. Russell's organization is helping to create more shade in Cape Coral. His company website is [Home - Future Forestry](#) and for more information please contact Russell at (239) 980-7711 or russ@russringland.com.

Presentations:

Habitat Restoration in Charlotte County

- JoEllen Wilson, Juvenile Tarpon Habitat Program Manager, Bonefish & Tarpon Trust (BTT): JoEllen gave an overview of some of the restoration that BTT has been involved with in the Charlotte County area. This research is pertinent and could be expanded to the CHFI flatwoods region.

Allowing Data to Drive the Conservation Planning Process

- Brooke Langston, Director of Land Protection, Big Waters Land Trust: Brooke gave an overview of the Big Waters Land Trust Conservation Plan and the use of data in the conservation planning process. Brooke also mentioned that BWLT has an open land steward position that they are looking to fill and she will pass along the job posting.

Remaining 2025 Quarterly meetings

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 llyman@sfwmd.gov.

The presentation 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/>