



## Steering Committee Meetings, June 7-8

Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

*The steering committees and staff of the Peninsular Florida and South Atlantic LCCs held a joint meeting in Ponte Vedra Beach, near St. Augustine, at the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve on June 7. A business meeting for the Peninsular Florida LCC steering committee, staff and interested partners was held at the same location on June 8.*

*Participants: Tim Breault (PFLCC Coordinator); Steve Traxler (PFLCC Science Coordinator /USFWS); Beth Stys (PFLCC Science Coordinator/FWC); Dave Hankla (PFLCC Consultant); Lisa Thompson (PFLCC Communications/FWC); Brian Branciforte (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission); Ernie Cox (Family Lands Remembered/PFLCC Chair); David Chagaris (UF/IFAS Nature Coast Biological Station); Lindsay Cross (Florida Wildlife Corridor); Michelle Everson (USFWS); Laramie Ferry (Florida Forest Service); Rolf Olson (USFWS National Wildlife Refuge System); Jessica Graham (Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership); Caroline Gorga (FWC); Patrick Iler (Family Lands Remembered); Chet McGill (USFWS Bureau of Indian Affairs); Mary Oakley (University of Florida); Jennifer Reed (Florida Forest Service); Scott Sanders (FWC); Kristina Serbesoffking, The Nature Conservancy); Bill Uihlein (USFWS); Tamar Kavaldjian-Liskey (USFWS)*

**Meeting purpose:** Biannual in-person meeting to convene PFLCC steering committee members and interested partners. The joint meeting with the South Atlantic LCC was held because as neighboring LCCs that share geographic overlap, getting the two groups together provided for beneficial information and idea exchange, as well as improved regional coordination moving forward. One of the over-arching goals of in-person meetings, as well as monthly steering committee conference calls, is to ensure that progressive planning and action is being made in support of the Peninsular Florida LCC's mission: *Fostering landscape scale conservation to sustain natural and cultural resources for future generations.*

### **Action items/key decisions:**

- The PFLCC is now engaged with the UF/IFAS project "Effects of Land Use Change on Natural Resources in the Suwannee River Basin.
- Please share Conservation Planning Atlas link with colleagues and ask for input. Send Conservation Planning Atlas feedback to Beth directly ([Beth.Stys@MyFWC.com](mailto:Beth.Stys@MyFWC.com)) or by using the feedback feature on the CPA website. If you have a group that could benefit from a tutorial (webinar) on the CPA, contact Beth.
- If interested in serving as PFLCC Steering Committee Vice-Chair, please let Tim know. Ernie Cox, acting Chair, will be reaching out to the group in the coming weeks.
- Group had consensus on LCC support of preproposal resilient landscapes.

## **June 7 agenda:**

- **Welcome from Dr. Michael Shirley, Director of the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve**
- **Presentation - Florida Strategic Plan for Sustaining Military Readiness through Conservation Partnerships – an Air Force/PFLCC planning effort, Tim Breault (PFLCC)**
- **Presentation – A Scenario-Based Approach for Implementing Climate Change Adaptation on Public Lands, Beth Stys (PFLCC)**
- **Presentation – Wildland Fire, a Resilient Landscape project and NFWF project, Rua Mordecai (SALCC)**
- **Facilitated discussion – building off the morning’s presentations on working within and across LCC boundaries**
- **Presentation – Gulf Coast Bird Monitoring, Randy Wilson (USFWS Division of Migratory Birds)**
- **Presentation – Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS), Cynthia Edwards (SECAS Coordinator)**
- **Presentation - RESTORE-funded Strategic Conservation Assessment of Gulf Coast Landscapes project, Linda Walker (USFWS)**
- **Presentation – Southeast Climate Science Center (SECSC), Jerry McMahon (SECSC)**
- **Presentation – Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP), Jessica Graham (SARP)**
- **Facilitated discussion – identifying the top opportunities and actions that can address individual and collective LCC success**

**June 8 agenda:**

**Presentation – Rural and Family Land Protection Program update, Jennifer Reed (FDACS Florida Forest Service)**



## Rural and Family Land Protection Program (RFLPP)

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
Florida Forest Service

- Florida Agriculture has an annual economic impact estimated at more than \$123 billion
- Florida Agriculture is responsible for 2 million jobs adding \$3 billion to the tax base
- RFLPP acquires perpetual agricultural easements to preserve agricultural use, while preventing fragmentation and protecting natural resources
- RFLPP accomplishes this goal at 50% of the fee acquisition price and keeps the land working and on the tax roll with no land management costs to the State

**Discussion:**

- Tim: this project is underfunded; would like steering committee to understand we have good private landowner involvement – intrinsic underlying value of fish and wildlife and water storage on these working lands
- Jennifer: There is a priority on larger easements – some are 24,000 acre projects; there is one project that is 60 acres; rankings of tiers – connectivity important, viable agriculture important, protection of natural resources important
- Ernie: suggest we focus on this program in future programs, in connection with less than fee programs; legislature likes this program – keeps land on tax rolls,

people working land now continue to work the land, no cost to manage the land; at present this is an opportunistic program – would like us to discuss directed funding of this at future meeting – target funds to specific projects

- Why would a landowner apply to this program vs. Florida Forever? Jennifer: this program is faster, allows multiple agricultural uses
- Jennifer: deed of easements are written for landowner to follow all BMPs
- Ernie: this program says to keep doing what you are doing and we'll help you to landowners taking good care of their properties – appeals to landowners because it doesn't make them change what they are already doing. Asking landowners to partner with the Department of Agriculture makes sense because they have been partnering with them for years.
- Scott: This program is designed to be an agricultural easement, allowing lands to be working lands.
- Kris: TNC is supportive of this program; would be good to continue conservations on how we can continue to improve
- Tim: working lands are better neighbors for conservation lands than developed areas; they have a lot of stewardship for these properties

**Presentation – water farming demonstration project (a type of dispersed water management project), Mary Oakley (UF Center for Landscape Ecology)**

### **Section 319 Grant-Funded Project**

- **WHO:**
- **The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)** is the recipient of the **\$3 million (total) matching grant** from federal Clean Water Act, for nonpoint source pollution, through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (**DEP**).
- Boyd Gunsalus: project manager with SFWMD.
- The **Indian River Citrus League** and the Florida Farm Bureau Federation are project partners.
- Watershed Coordinator role (University of Florida)

## What is Water Farming?

- **Water retention on fallow citrus groves.**
  - Sealed impoundments are filled with inflows, pumped in from regional drainage canals, and rainfall. No wet season releases.
- **A newer type of Dispersed Water Management project that differs from other DWM projects on ranchlands in a few ways:**
  - Water farms provide deeper water storage;
  - No release means higher nutrient reduction efficiency rate (97-100%, for surface water);
  - Water farmers are “all in”: 100% of a grove is committed while the water farm is operative.

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## Dispersed Water Management (DWM)

Definition: Shallow water distributed across parcel landscapes using relatively simple structures



## DWM Program Benefits

- Increased water storage
- Less water sent to Lake Okeechobee and estuaries
- Reduced nutrient loadings
- Increased groundwater recharge
- Improved habitat
- Higher soil moisture in dry season
- **Rapid implementation**



### Goals of the Water Farming Demonstration Project (per SFWMD)

- Reduce volume discharged from direct rainfall;
- Reduce regional canal system water volume discharged to the St. Lucie River and Estuary (SLE);
- Reduce the load of total nitrogen (TN) and total phosphorous (TP) to the SLE;
- **Monitor and document the costs and benefits;** and
- **Make an *informed decision* regarding the future role of water farming.**
- Targets for the 3 pilots in 2 years: 22,000 acre-feet of storage; 55,644 lbs TN; and 13,282 lbs TP reduction.

## Update/Current Events

- **Funding:** 2016 Florida Legislative Appropriation of **\$56.8 million** for the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (includes the SLE Watershed).
- **Specified in the Appropriations Act:** At least **\$47.8 million** (84%) shall be used to fund public-private partnership projects on private agricultural lands— understood to mean Dispersed Water Management projects, including water farms.
- **New water farms are likely to be funded**, including two proposed by current water farmers: Caulkins expansion (to 3,000 acres) and Evans Bluefield Grove (6,602 acres).
- Interim report on the demonstration project is coming out soon.

The full [presentation](http://peninsularfloridalcc.org/page/steering-committee) is available at: <http://peninsularfloridalcc.org/page/steering-committee>.

Discussion:

- Three projects are being demonstrated; all data should be in by July 2017. This is an opportunity to use fallow groves for water storage on the Treasure Coast; water farming allows landowners to hold onto their land with shorter contracts (citrus greening and canker can make the groves fallow – with a 7 year tree growth cycle, this program preserves the property and allows them to replant in citrus later on)
- This report may open eyes – would match up with fee simple and easement lands
- Water farms attract birds, serve as habitat
- There will not be an RFP at the next stage – there is not a floor or ceiling on payments, differs for each property currently

## ***Mission Statement***

The mission of the Nature Coast Biological Station (NCBS) is to enhance the conservation and sustainability of natural resources throughout the Nature Coast through collaborative research, enhanced public engagement, field-based courses, and hands-on training workshops.



**NATURE COAST**  
BIOLOGICAL STATION

## **Goals**

- Increase collaboration among UF/IFAS, partner agencies, and NGO's in the region
- Develop research programs that address key uncertainties in natural resource management of freshwater, estuarine, and coastal terrestrial systems
- Improve the visibility of IFAS's natural resource programs via public outreach and social media



**NATURE COAST**  
BIOLOGICAL STATION



## Approach

- Conduct focused and collaborative research on topics that address natural resource issues of regional and national prominence
- Provide opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students through internships and assistantships
- Communicate research through outreach workshops, social media, IFAS Extension, and Florida Sea Grant



## Effects of Land-use Change on Natural Resources in Suwannee River basin

- Understand how management of upland habitat influences terrestrial, freshwater, and estuarine natural resources, coastal marshes, oysters, fish and wildlife
- Large scale, long term, multi-disciplinary research project
- Data synthesis, fieldwork, and modeling
- Workshop in CK this July – 16 faculty from 5 IFAS units to layout plan and draft proposal




The full [presentation](http://peninsularfloridalcc.org/page/steering-committee) is available at: <http://peninsularfloridalcc.org/page/steering-committee>.

Discussion:

- Collaborations with partner agencies, NGOs key; Cedar Key is a good spot for serving agencies and researchers. Research a priority. Ernie: would be good to have LCC representatives at the workshop in July – Beth and Steve will be attending.

- Steve: As the PFLCC develops conservation targets, would be interested in talking with this group as marine aspect has not been one of our strongest links. Dave: there will be a proposal to build on ecosystem modeling out of UF for the NOAA RFP for the RESTORE Act.
- Tim: Mike Allen is now on our steering committee – we are getting more diversified and making connections.

### **Presentation – PFLCC Conservation Planning Atlas, Beth Stys (PFLCC)**



#### The Atlas

- Data discovery, visualization, and analytical platform
- Runs through [DataBasin](#) platform
- Designed by: [Conservation Biology Institute](#)
- Designed for showcasing spatial datasets, projects, and efforts
- Will be the home for PFLCC Conservation Design and other deliverables
- Live and operational at: [pflcc.databasin.org](https://pflcc.databasin.org)

The full [presentation](#) is available at: <http://peninsularfloridalcc.org/page/steering-committee>. More information on the CPA can be found at: <http://peninsularfloridalcc.org/page/cpa>. The direct link to the CPA is: <https://pflcc.databasin.org/>.

#### Discussion:

- Beth: future work on CPA tools – a conservation action tracker and climate action toolbox; the steering committee has said we want to know who is doing what, where and when – we are creating something that will address this, similar to a google map, so that we can track these projects. There will be a lot of search features but we still need your input – it will only be as good as the input from everyone to add these projects.

- Please send feedback to Beth directly ([Beth.Stys@MyFWC.com](mailto:Beth.Stys@MyFWC.com)) or by using the feedback feature on the CPA website. Please share with colleagues and ask for input.
- Ernie: Do we have ability to track people using the CPA? Can we get metrics as reports once a month, with how many people are using the tool. Tim: That same question being posed to all LCCs – is there a way for all LCCs to capture data on using it and why.
- Beth: can come to NWR staff for hands-on presentation or a webinar; the more people we can get using this, the better we can make it. Tim: if you can convene groups of colleagues, that is helpful; webinars are also effective and an efficient use of time.

### **Staff reports/wrap up and adjourn**

- Tim: will need LCC support of preproposal resilient landscapes; group consensus for support of this.
- We are in the selection process for filling Tim's position (Tim is retiring in July). Ernie: hoping within 30 days to make a recommendation, then takes some time from that for the hiring process through USFWS to be completed.
- Tim: sent out a request for nomination of Vice-Chair; this two-year term does not automatically go to Chair position; requesting the group to consider and let him know. Ernie will be reaching out to the group regarding this in the next couple of weeks.
- Review of joint potential news release requested by SALCC steering committee member; the final is on both the [PFLCC](#) and [SALCC](#) websites.
- Tim: thanks everyone for their work and input into the LCC over the years.