

Land Management Report for Preserves  
Prepared for the Conservation Collier Land Acquisition Advisory Committee  
July 21, 2014

### 1. Cocohatchee Creek -AS

**Exotic Removal Status:** The preserve is in a stable state regarding exotics. After October, staff will be doing spot exotic removal as needed.

**Visitation:** A camera positioned in the picnic area for 2 weeks in 2011 registered 41 separate visits. One positioned in June 2014 registered \_\_\_\_ separate visits.

**Management Plan:** A 5-year update to the Land Management Plan was developed and approved by both the CCLAAC in Nov 2013 and Board in May 2014. Changes were not substantial.

**Projects:** A gopher tortoise survey done in 2013 found 15 potentially occupied burrows, but no animals were observed. Only 1 gopher tortoise has actually been observed by staff at any one time at the preserve.

**Major Issues:** No major issues.

### 2. Logan Woods -AS

**Exotic Removal Status:** The preserve is in steady state regarding exotics. After October, staff will be doing spot exotic removal as needed.

**Visitation:** A camera positioned at the picnic for 2 weeks during Feb and March 2013 recorded 1 visitor; however, the trail is being used by one or several bikers, based on tire tracks, and there is routinely trash in the garbage can, though not much.

**Management Plan:** This year a 5-year update to the Land Management Plan was developed and approved by both the CCLAAC in Nov 2013 and Board in May 2014. Changes were not substantial.

**Projects:** In July 2013 a project removed over 1,500 slash pine seedlings. The goal of the project was to maintain the existing habitat. Pine seedlings were growing in significant numbers following exotic removal and it was determined by discussions with Florida Division of Forestry, that to maintain the existing habitat, some could be removed, leaving 15% of the number of the existing pines as replacements. The project used an FGCU volunteer. Over 1,500 seedlings were removed in 6 sections, leaving 1 control section untouched. Additional pine seedlings have sprouted since the removal and this situation is currently being monitored.

**Major Issues:** No major issues

### 3. Otter Mound -AS

**Exotic Removal Status:** The preserve is in a relatively steady state regarding exotics, with coral vine (*Antigonon leptopus*) being the ongoing concern. After October, staff will be doing spot exotic removal as needed.

**Visitation:** No cameras have been placed in this preserve yet. Based on brochure replacement, at least 25 people a week, likely more, are visiting the preserve, with more visitation occurring during the winter than summer.

**Management Plan:** This year a 5-year update to the Land Management Plan was developed and approved by both the CCLAAC in Nov 2013 and Board in May 2014. The substantial change was the addition of a Tree Management Plan. This plan was added after a neighbor requested for 2 years to have 3 non-native trees (royal poincianas) removed along his property on the east side of the preserve. They were healthy, but he had a fear of them falling on his house during a storm. The existing land management plan advised that royal poinciana would be controlled if it showed invasive tendencies. These trees, while beautiful, are non native and according to Univ. of Florida IFAS, have invasive tendencies and should be treated with caution. This species is very invasive in the preserve. The tree management plan identifies a process for removing healthy non-native trees. This plan was distributed to the neighbors and found acceptable. This plan provides a tree survey process and framework for making necessary tree removal decisions instead of responding to neighbors' potentially unfounded fears of falling trees. The plan also provides a process to evaluate the health and safety of specific trees and keeps visitors and neighbors safer.

**Projects:**

- In March 2013, a project to count the gumbo limbos in response to tree health issues was accomplished with FGCU student help.
- On October 8, 2013, the Board signed an extension to the Interlocal Agreement between Collier County and the City of Marco Island. Marco Island will mow the right of way and provide routine police patrols.
- In October 2013, 5 native shrubs were planted behind a home adjoining the preserve to provide a screening buffer. The existing Land Management Plan provided for this.
- In October 2013, 3 royal poinciana trees were removed on the east side of the preserve and chipped onsite.
- In November 2013, the chipped material was used to re-mulch the trail.
- In December 2013 the parking lot and sidewalk were pressure washed
- In March 2014 the rope along the trail fencing was replaced.
- In June 2014, an FGCU student-led volunteer project removed debris throughout the preserve and replaced wood trail borders.

**Major Issues:** During the past 3 years, this preserve has experienced an issue with loss of gumbo limbo trees (6) and overall decline of the health of vegetation in general. At first thought to be a combination of drought, cold, and infestation by insect pests, this problem has not yet been conclusively diagnosed despite involvement of the County Extension office, the State of Florida, University of Florida and several Tree Company and Exotic Contractors. Several samples of tree leaves and bark were sent for microscopic examination at the University of Florida Pathology Dept. The leaves were examined for a phytoplasma, which was found not to be present. No additional gumbos have fallen since Sept 2013. The vegetation looks slightly better, but still shows significant insect presence.

#### 4. Alligator Flag -CS

**Exotic Removal Status:** In maintenance state. One maintenance event done a year as well as landscaping along bike trail

**Visitation:** Wildlife camera set up for 3 weeks until taken down by visitor- recorded one squirrel, 2 raccoons, and 154 visitors (mostly repeat dog walkers and kids from neighboring condos)

**Management Plan:** 5 year Update due this year

**Projects:** none

**Major Issues:** Trash (beer cans and bottles), bike rack stolen, bench vandalized

#### 5. Nancy Payton -CS

**Exotic Removal Status:** In good condition however, still fighting natal grass issues- treating 3 times a year to get it under control, almost gone but still seed source- neighboring properties not treating or managing as well as SFWMD canal edges

**Visitation:** none- not officially open to the public- neighbors walk firebreaks

**Management Plan:** 5 year update done and ready to be brought to the BCC

**Projects:**

Prescribed burns: **was done in 2009-64 acres, 2010-4 acres, 2011- 70 acres.**

Timber harvest was done to reduce basal area and reduce declining trees 2011

Currently monitoring snags getting bid to remove along property edges and trail

Gopher tortoises have been thriving now that habitat has greatly improved in a November 2008 survey- the population was estimated at 18 individuals it has now grown to over 57 individuals

Eagle Scout project done in 2013- Trey Blackmon- built one picnic table, one interpretive sign, 5 benches and trail markers.

**Major Issues:**

- A large amount of pines died in the NE portion of the preserve due to a pine bark beetle infestation that occurred after a prescribed burn/drought. We harvested some of the dying pines out to also reduce the basal area for the RCWs.
- We did some planting 4 years ago in the center and south areas and the pines are doing well and have reached 3 feet tall now.
- We do have ORV riders going through the preserve and along the canal roads. The neighbors call the authorities but no one has been caught yet.
- We have had RLS's in the County Attorney's office for years regarding easement issues for public access. We had a pre-application meeting with Growth Management and they advised that we would have to upgrade and maintain the access road in order to build a larger parking area on the south 1 acre outparcel formerly owned by Mr. Murphy. We do not have the funding for this.

- We did relocate an easement in over the Hideout Golf Club's 2 acres from the south 30 feet to the north 30 feet. This easement will allow us access from Blue Sage Drive across the Murphy property east into the preserve. Upon approval of the 5 year update from the BCC we will clear a narrow trail over the easement to allow access from this southwest corner.

## 6. Panther Walk -CS

**Exotic Removal Status:** In maintenance state-one contracted treatment a year- new parcel will be treated at the same time and might require one additional treatment a year

**Visitation:** none

**Management Plan:**

**Projects:** none

**Major Issues:** In March, during an exotics inspection, we found a tent and evidence of people camping on the property and the neighboring property. We worked with the Sheriff's office and Code Enforcement to get them removed. There was one woman, 3 children and 4 men living there- all had criminal records. Sherriff's office and property owner helped to remove all the debris including a bathtub, dresser etc. We had to get 3 buckets of human excrement removed.

## 7. Pepper Ranch -CS

**Exotic Removal Status:** Treatment on 722 acres of SSA has been done 2 times a year for the last 4 years. The next treatment will occur in August and we received a \$46,000 grant from the FFWCC to do an additional treatment next Spring. Then we can move to one time a year in that area.

**Phase 2 treatment** was started in December 2013 over 500 acres in the south central area of the ranch and down by the visitor's center and lake. Areas near the pasture were mechanically removed the rest killed in place an regrowth treated.

**Phase 3 treatment-** 30 acres mechanical removal of pepper north of the main road was done. Next fiscal year we will do maintenance treatments on Phase 2 and areas in Phase 3 that were just done and will hopefully finish initial treatment on the entire preserve if funds will allow.

**Visitation:** 2011/12 season: 141, 2012/13 season:204, 2013/14 season: 579 (this is not including youth or public hunts)

**Management Plan:** Current

**Projects:**

- The bathroom facility was completed last summer.
- Finally obtained well clearance after major after the fact permit issues- water needs to be tested on a regular basis and well maintained
- Campground was completed and opened as well- many scout groups utilizing

- We replaced the stove in the visitor's center.
- New security cameras and DVR installed
- New electronic gates were added
- New entrance sign and bear proof dumpster
- Parks mow pasture and campground area
- Trails are being maintained
- Screened in enclosure is being added to rear area of new bathroom facility. It will enclose the wash sink and a new ice machine is being added.
- Eagle Scout Projects: One large group firepit and benches added near visitor center, a total of 15 picnic tables were built, campground fire pits, lantern hooks and markers, 3 hitching posts and 5 benches along the trails and one kiosk near the mountain bike trails. One scout plans to create a group campsite area in the north part of the preserve.
- Mountain Bike volunteers built 5 miles of trails including bridges over ditches and a boardwalk
- Public and Youth hunts ongoing
- Cattle lease has been renewed
- Monitoring oil operation
- Hiking and horseback trails are being maintained 2x per year
- Geocaching active
- Two bald eagles fledged from the nest this year as well as multiple fawns, and sandhill cranes
- Gained a couple volunteers to give guided hikes in the Fall

**Major Issues:** Gates breaking down constantly, lightning has struck and destroyed DVR twice in lodge. Found that all outlets in visitor center were not grounded and electrical outlets now need to be upgraded for safety.

## 8. Red Maple Swamp -CS

**Exotic Removal Status:** Treating 50 acres once per year

**Visitation:** not open

**Management Plan:** current

**Projects:** Ongoing exotic removal

**Major Issues:** none

## 9. Redroot- CS

**Exotic Removal Status:** In maintenance state- treat one time per year

**Visitation:** little to none

**Management Plan:** Due for 5 year update this year

**Projects:** preparing to do a prescribed burn, Eagle Scout to build benches

**Major Issues:**

- dumping on Limpkin Road-Code Enforcement involved
- Neighbors not maintaining exotics.
- Bench stolen

### 10. Rivers Road -CS

**Exotic Removal Status:** Started initial exotics treatment. Almost complete. Air potato beetles were not successful over winter, received \$15,000 for follow-up treatment by USFWS, and \$15,000 from FWC for an additional follow-up treatment in the spring

**Visitation:** not open yet

**Management Plan:** approved by BCC this year

**Projects:** Eagle Scout to build benches

**Major Issues:** minor trespassing issues- neighbor addresses and looks over preserve on our behalf.

### 11. Winchester Head -CS

**Exotic Removal Status:** Treated a 5-acre parcel with significant lygodium and Brazilian pepper infestation on 37<sup>th</sup> avenue

**Visitation:** none-not open

**Management Plan:** current- received extension on IMP

**Projects:** none other than exotic txt.

**Major Issues:** none

### 12. Camp Keais Strand Properties

**Exotic Removal Status:** N/A

**Visitation:** N/A

**Management Plan:** IMP approved by Board on 5/27/14

**Projects:** N/A

**Major Issues:** N/A

### 13. Caracara Prairie -MH

**Exotic Removal Status:** 2 volunteers working 2 days a week in gopher tortoise recipient site area and sweep of entire property 1 time a year. 2 volunteers also lead FGCU service learning groups to pull exotics. Looks good. Timing of Nutrush treatment is important.

**Visitation:** 50 people from 2/14/14 – 3/9/14

**Management Plan:** Up for Board approval with PHU documents on Sept. 9, 2014.

**Projects:** Burn Prep: Cut down hundreds of cabbage palms in SW corner that were under drip line of pine trees. Installed fireline around SW corner. Eagle Scout: Delivering 5 benches and a picnic table for the trail on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ditch Blocks: Judge Starnes will install 2 ditch blocks in SW and SE corners of preserve through a USDA NRCS cost share program to improve hydroperiod of preserve. FWC biologist may use the nesting pair of caracaras at the preserve in her research next year. Conservation Collier has taken over from Johnson Engineering the annual vegetation and wildlife monitoring requirement for PHUs

**Major Issues:** No Major Issues

#### 14. Freedom Park -MH

**Exotic Removal Status:** Looking good. Lygodium, climbing cassia, ardisia will be ongoing issue because of neighbors. Transportation just got SFWMD sign-off on our portion because it's met all the mitigation requirements.

**Visitation:** No hard numbers, but it's used a lot. Lots of visitors early in the morning and later in the evening. Lots of birders in late March watching painted and indigo buntings, Baltimore oriole, and baby barred owl with its parents.

**Management Plan:** Because of an FCT grant, Freedom Park, the Greenway Park, and the Greenway Preserve are all under the same FCT approved management plan. An amendment to the management plan was approved by the Board on 11/12/13.

**Projects:** No projects at this time

**Major Issues:** No major issues

#### 15. Gordon River Greenway Park -MH

**Exotic Removal Status:** Initial treatment complete in entire park. Sub-contractor is starting 2<sup>nd</sup> maintenance sweep. Is under contract for 2 more maintenance sweep

**Visitation:** Grand opening October 9<sup>th</sup>!

**Management Plan:** Because of an FCT grant, Freedom Park, the Greenway Park, and the Greenway Preserve are all under the same FCT approved management plan. An amendment to the management plan was approved by the Board on 11/12/13.

**Projects:** Eagle Scout would like to do a planting in our section of the Greenway adjacent to the airport. A lot of exotics were removed in this area. His project will probably occur next June.

**Major Issues:** No major issues

#### 16. McIlvane Marsh -MH

**Exotic Removal Status:** N/A

**Visitation:** N/A

**Management Plan:** Board approved 2-year IMP extension on 9/24/13

**Projects:** N/A

**Major Issues:** No major issues

#### 17. Railhead Scrub -MH

**Exotic Removal Status:** Just had a sweep done last month. Looking good. Getting quarterly treatments on FPL easement. Everything else is annual.

**Visitation:** Met with a group of Master Naturalist students in April. Preserve open for groups with advance planning depending on staff availability.

**Management Plan:** Final Management Plan is due for a 5 year review in June 2015.

**Projects:** Received \$15,000 from FWC to mow firebreaks and treat exotics for gopher tortoise habitat. Installed fence to north boundary in SE parcel. Wasn't fenced originally so as not to cut off trespasser access to lake adjacent to Railhead. Sheriff's Office requested that we fence the property line to help curb trespass.

**Major Issues:** Trespass, but coordinating with Sheriff's Office.

### **18.Shell Island -MH**

**Exotic Removal Status:** In very good condition. Staff is treating occasional re-growth.

**Visitation:** N/A

**Management Plan:** Final Management Plan is due for a 5 year review in June 2016.

**Projects:** None

**Major Issues:** None

### **19.Wet Woods -MH**

**Exotic Removal Status:** Just had an annual sweep completed mid-June. Will have another just prior to eagle nesting season

**Visitation:** N/A

**Management Plan:** Will have 5 year update for next CCLAAC meeting

**Projects:** None

**Major Issues:** 1 eaglet fledged from the nest this season