

Hope on the Horizon for Globally Endangered Lakela's Mint

**Compiled from
USFWS press release & email from
Jody Bonet, Lakela's Mint Chapter**

SEVENTEEN YEARS AFTER BEING FEDERALLY listed as endangered, some of the few remaining Lakela's mint plants (*Dicerandra immaculata* Lakela) may be assured of some protection in St. Lucie County. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced the award of a Recovery Land Acquisition Grant to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) to acquire the first protected site in the historic range of Lakela's mint, found only in a 0.5-mile by 3-mile area in Indian River and St. Lucie Counties, between Vero Beach and Fort Pierce. The grant program is part of the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund for states, authorized under the Endangered Species Act.

The grant funding will be used by FDACS to acquire about 11 acres of scrub along U.S. 1 in St. Lucie County, which took the lead in pursuing this acquisition. The grant application was prepared by Diana Waite, St. Lucie County Community Development, with review and photographs provided by Jody Bonet, St. Lucie County Grant Writer and co-founder of FNPS' new Lakela's Mint Chapter. The Lakela's Mint Chapter committed to assist in developing signage and to host tours at the site, Bok Tower staff and USFWS will help with plant surveys and management, and St. Lucie County will fence the site to prevent off-road vehicle damage.

Lakela's mint is restricted to a small area of coastal sand pine scrub along one of our most travelled highways. Threats to the species include commercial and residential development and sand mining. The plant is also subject to mildew attack, which destroys the viability of the seeds before they are dispersed. Because there are so few plants remaining, the mildew problem has become a serious concern.

Lakela's mint blooms primarily in September-November—perhaps we can look forward to a field trip hosted by our new Lakela's Mint Chapter. 