

by Mike Minge, FNPS Executive Director

In the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, dozens of FNPS member plant nurseries are severely damaged and hundreds of our south Florida members are affected. The greatest damage occurred in the Homestead, Goulds, Florida City, and Cutler Ridge areas. Peripheral areas around Miami and the Everglades suffered also. The good news is that no FNPS members are known to have died, but many are still in shock and the morale is very low.

Upon learning of the severity of the situation, some FNPS leaders and members got together to take help to some of the south Florida members. The first group went out on Saturday, August 29, with generators, tools, nursery hardware, food, and water, with Steve Riefler and Bill and Nancy Bissett (The Natives) blazing the trail. The second group took truck-loads of food, more water, more nursery equipment, and high spirits. Brightman Logan (Central Florida Native Flora) and his employees and I traveled south to distribute items and console members.

We were stopped on the way into the damaged zone by armed 82nd Airborne troopers. When questioned if we had weapons, we replied, "Yes," and were shocked to hear the guards say, "Good, you may need them."

As we proceeded farther into the area, the line where storm damage began was quite obvious, evidenced by the lack of foliage and the amount of debris strewn everywhere. Buildings were collapsed, some with even steel I-beams twisted, but standing. Chainlink fences were blown nearly flat to the ground, and telephone poles were snapped off and hanging in mid-air. Needless to say, the power lines were lying in the road and all power



FNPS Executive Director Mike Minge photographed torn roofs, downed trees and power lines, and flattened fences on his trip to Miami to help FNPS members.

was cut off.

The biggest disappointment was that the melaleuca trees were mostly still standing, though the Australian pines took some great falls. Many native pine trees, some as big around as your waist, were snapped like match sticks, but the low-growing vegetation seemed to be surviving. Lime trees were completely uprooted and looked like tumbleweeds. Say goodbye to real keylime pie for awhile.

Helicopters buzzed through the air and were joined by transport planes. The Army had huge tanker trucks with potable water and lots of Desert Storm-type jeeps roaming the streets. Power company trucks from many places such as Alabama and South Carolina lined the roads, and Tampa sent in a rescue helicopter. We saw firemen from Winter Park, and police from Ft. Pierce and Washinton, D.C. Needless to say, there were no traffic lights, and traffic jams were bad on the main avenues.

I had watched the TV coverage of the approaching hurricane and followed

the news in its aftermath, and thought I would be prepared for what I was to see, but nothing can compare with the real thing. It is almost indescribable, and certainly the images will be lifelong.

As we approached the nursery of the Ganns, it looked like a bomb had hit it. The office had lost part of its roof, and rain had damaged the library and files. The fence was on the ground, and most of the risers and sprinkler heads had bent over. The plants were blown everywhere, and many are simply gone. Semi-trailers and the delivery van had blown over on their sides. The former storage sheds are now just five concrete pads. What used to be a dense hammock of gumbo limbo trees is now stripped to the bare trunks.

After dropping off supplies, generator, and a work crew to help clean up and secure the area, we went on to visit others in similar situations. The roadsides were piled high with dead trees and limbs where debris had been pushed to clear a path. Also piled

Report

about 15 feet high was a huge wad of clothes left out in a parking lot near a food tent area. People picked through them to find a wet but suitable item to wear. The Army seemed to have food ready to serve and supplies to distribute, and helped in keeping traffic moving along.

While visiting FNPS nurseries, we heard first-hand accounts of what it was like during the storm. Some had huge piles of rubble and trees against their houses blocking the doorways. Pieces of roof tiles were like missiles with some going through concrete block walls! I heard of an avocado doing the same! Large boards broke through windows and doors, and roofs just peeled off. In one area by a newly plowed field full of rocky soil, the wind hurled the rocks through the window covers and even through a mattress that was placed over the opening. The best protection on windows seemed to be the Rolladen covers, which deflected the debris.

One FNPS member had her back yard native plantings wiped out by a neighbor's royal palm tree, which was uprooted completely and blown through her yard. Railroad crossing flashing light frames were twisted like pretzels. We saw papaya trees with just stems remaining, but the avocado trees that had just been pruned made it through.

It will be interesting to see the revegetation of the area — what natives will come back, and what exotics will invade. We are trying now — FNPS, in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy — to put together a plan for a long-term plant survey.

Also we are concerned about immediate help to the victims that are our members. We hope that over the next several months that local chapters can put together some volunteer efforts to come south and assist the people and help the nurseries to get back into operation.

I have notified many of you of the immediate problems, and will be back in touch as future efforts continue to help with the reestablishment of the area. Those who are unable to travel physically to the location can contact the state FNPS about what items will be needed as time goes along, and as we become more aware of the needs.



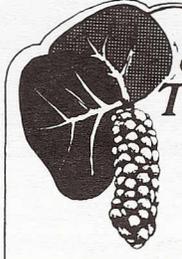
Mike Mingea

Don Gann and Brightman Logan discuss the hurricane damage to Gann's nursery in Goulds.

by Patty Phares,
Dade Chapter President

I'd like to let our FNPS friends know that, as far as I know, Dade Chapter members are safe. We are grateful for all the concern and support from everyone after the destruction by Hurricane Andrew a few weeks ago. Based on our demographics, my guess is that about three-quarters of Dade Chapter's membership suffered major damage to trees and major or minor damage to home or business, but so far, I know of none who lost all. We're "hanging in there", thanks to the encouragement and help of neighbors, family, friends, and employers.

However, even those who live in the relatively unaffected areas are finding it hard to do the minimum for their families and jobs, as services and com-



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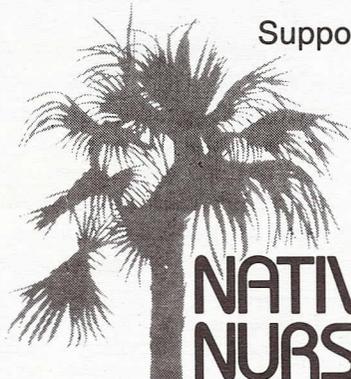
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munication are disrupted and people are reassigned to emergency duties at work, such as directing traffic instead of studying wetlands. I got FNPS mail after someone finally waited in line at the Coast Guard station/burn site/mail distribution site for the first time in two weeks. Everything takes so much time and driving is really dangerous. My phone at home is not working yet, but the office phone is fine.

I lost all my trees, but many shrubs are okay, though bent or partially uprooted. Three shrubs on the east side, though, were wiped off the face of the earth with no trace – no stump, no roots, just smooth ground. The windows in my east bedrooms are gone, and the roof lost some tar and gravel, so I had significant water damage. I am sort of "dried in" with tarps, but they will not hold too long. I live next to a sewer lift with a pump that has to run, so I got power a few days ago (all new poles and lines), whereas most of the area will wait a few more weeks. My area had water service after only the first couple of days. Crews from work came right away and brought supplies, did temporary repairs, and gave me a generator and lots of moral support. The floors are dry and I am no longer sleeping on the recliner with two cats. So, in spite of all, I have to say that the only terrible part was the fright during the storm – truly terrifying for me.

The assistance of friends outside of Dade County has been (and will continue to be) essential and greatly appreciated. I suspect that a few members need help in clearing their yards. Chipping up branches is a huge need. Anyone who wants to come down with a big chipper could get a lot of business from our folks (even several months from now probably).

We really need to focus on nurseries first, though. The nurseries and the knowledge of people such as Joyce and Don Gann are major assets, not only to our chapter but to many of our area's environmental efforts. Getting all the nurseries back on their feet should be one of our top priorities.

Mike Mingea has been involved in efforts to stop further destruction of pinelands and hammocks that have been razed in the relief and cleanup efforts. The pollution and damage caused by the cleanup are at least as staggering as the destruction of the storm. Imagine every tree, roof, and mattress in your own neighborhood being piled up and burned – then, multiply by a few thousand! It is ironic that natural areas, landfill reduction,

and pollution control will suffer in inverse proportion to the amount of relief and insurance money it takes to make our homes comfortable again.

How did native plants fare? Did they survive better than non-natives? At this point, I can only observe that in my area, *all* trees (larger than shrubs) in home landscapes were lost, but the pinelands made out well. They are cleaned and thriving, with maybe every third large pine standing and the understory virtually untouched. In many urban areas where people had planted exotics and hardwoods around their homes in former pinelands, the remaining pine trees are frequently the only trees standing. The old exotic ficus trees of our 1960s housing developments are now house-sized tangles with vertical "saucers" of roots and soil.

Cabbage palms and shorter palms are straight and green. Many hammocks have large trees standing with main limbs but no leaves – they will recover, but maybe we will search a long time for the epiphytes that used to cover their branches.

Along with many other people, I was terrified during the storm, and heart-sick afterwards to see the damage, especially to Fairchild Tropical Garden, to the Deering Estate, and to natural areas. But I remind myself that the natural areas we knew and loved before the storm were affected by natural forces and hurricanes before this one, and now Mother Nature has rearranged things once more. Come join us on our field trips when we start up again, and help us find where she has put everything!

Dade County Natural Areas Recovery Effort

Hurricane Andrew has devastated many of Dade County's natural areas. A complete assessment of the damage will be conducted before any natural area recovery plans are implemented. As part of this process, The Nature Conservancy is compiling a data base of volunteers who may be able to assist with a Dade County Natural Areas Recovery Effort. If you will help, please complete this form and return to: Linda Finch, The Nature Conservancy, P.O. Box 3795, Tequesta, FL 33469, or FAX to 407/575-1132. Thank you!

Name _____
 Phone (day) _____ (eve) _____
 Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 County (Fla. residents only) _____

1. I am available during these months (please circle):
 J F M A M J J A S N D
2. I am available (please check)
 weekdays
 weekends
 on call
 hours/week
3. I have the following skills (check all that apply):
 botanist or plant ID
 exotic plant ID and control
 restoration experience
 herbicide use
 tree pruning or removal
 heavy equipment operator
 chain saw use
 volunteer coordinator
 special events coordinator
 food preparation, serving
 first aid (specify) _____
 audio/visual, photography
 research
 fire training

Comments: _____

4. I can bring the following equipment (check all that apply):
 generator
 chain saw
 chipper
 bow saws, pruners
 front end loader
 trailer (for equipment)
 tent, camping equipment
 hand tools (specify) _____
 tree crane
 bucket truck
 survey equipment
 safety equipment
 video equipment
 other (specify) _____

Comments: _____

5. I can bring the following vehicles (specify type, size):
 truck
 RV or camper
 all-terrain vehicle
 van
 bus
 other

Comments: _____

6. (Dade County residents only)
 I can provide housing for _____ people.