

The Year of Restoration

by K. Terrance Mock, FNPS President



Photos by Terry Mock

A restoration project: before, and three years later.

As the first real estate developer to be elected president of a Florida state environmental organization, I hope that, in some small way, I represent a new basis for man's evolving relationship with the rest of nature. Ideally this relationship should be ecologically and economically sound over the long run.

I realize that many members would argue that preservation of wilderness, as opposed to utilization of wilderness, should be our Society's guiding principle. This division of opinion has been present within the overall environmental movement since the early part of this century. Polarized debate over this fundamental issue has shaped private and public use of land to the extent that in most cases we have either preserved nature or we have destroyed nature. Rescue or rape. All or none.

But I find this either/or mentality to be too confining. These simplistic answers do not fully address the questions being asked. How do we accommodate the state's population growth? How do we guarantee survival of endangered species? How do we return the Kissimmee River to a natural condition? How do we afford it? How do we manage the Garden, anyway?

I believe that the answers involve

ecological restoration. As a healing technology, restoration offers us the tools to rebuild our native habitats, the life support systems of Florida and the planet. The immediate economic and political advantage of a restoration philosophy is the ability to permit environmentally sensitive projects, when justified, through mitigation. But beyond this emergency effort to save both our endangered species and our economic growth rate, restoration offers us an ideal for a sound long term relationship between human beings and the environment. What we all need to realize is that a subtle, long term shift in consciousness will occur when restoration—an idea based on the imitation of nature—becomes standard practice.

When we begin to use native plant communities as models for urban landscapes, preservation of remaining virgin native habitat will achieve even more importance, and the implications for architecture, agriculture, medicine and all other human endeavors will begin to be seen. Taking responsibility to live in a way that heals and nurtures the earth will result in a philosophy of living according to the principles of nature.

It is for these reasons that I have chosen *restoration* as the theme for

our Society this year. We are not abandoning our other stated goals of preservation and conservation. We are simply going to stress our third official goal, namely *restoration*, for the coming year in order to focus attention on this timely subject and take advantage of the fact that no other environmental organization is taking the lead on this issue.

We now have the technological ability to rebuild natural ecosystems. I want our Society to encourage all those who have experience in the restoration field to share their knowledge with our expanding membership network. If you have a restoration story to tell other members write **The Palmetto** editor. If you would like to get personally involved with restoration in your area then check with your local chapter for projects, or start your own project within your chapter.

As our base of information on restoration expands, we will have need for a new environmental ethic to guide us in choosing from a multitude of personal and business options. Nature is diverse and dynamic, and any attempt to manipulate the natural environment should be done with the utmost respect.