



Sabal minor

A bi-monthly newsletter for the members of the Florida Native Plant Society

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2018 | VOLUME 20, NUMBER 6

Message from the President – October 2018 | Susan Carr

Cool weather is finally edging into Florida after a long summer season. Unfortunately, the season also brought Hurricane Michael which devastated parts of the Florida Panhandle. Our hearts go out to our Panhandle members and their families who were affected by the storm. As time passes, we will learn more about the impacts to the native plant habitats of the Eastern Panhandle – an area that harbors incredible biodiversity and many rare and endemic plant species. As champions for native plants, we can assist in the recovery of our natural areas, help the managers of our public lands and advocate for legislation that will protect our environment. The Society has a very important role as Florida faces increasing pressures from changing climate and population growth. As guardians of natural Florida, **we promote the preservation, conservation, and restoration of Florida's native plants and native plant communities.**

I want to introduce the Society's newest Staff member: Valerie Anderson. Val is our Director of Communications and Programming, and she brings a wealth of talent and enthusiasm to the Society. Together, Juliet Rynear (FNPS Executive Director) and Valerie are improving communications within the Society as well as our external messaging as we tell the world about our good works! You may notice more activity on social media and other venues – this is a result of having a great and dedicated staff!



I am pleased to see greater communications and coalitions among Chapters in various regions. The Central Florida Chapters are coalescing around common activities including Native Plant Month. The SE Florida Chapters are very active in their advocacy efforts and are organizing in advance of the upcoming legislative session. These are just a couple examples of how improved communications and cooperation are bolstering our organization and mission.

In addition to our Chapters, our FNPS committees are doing a lot of great work on our mission which we will be highlighting in future communications. The Conservation Committee is moving full steam with various projects focused on protection of imperiled plant species. The Land Management Partners Committee has coordinated member participation in reviews of public lands throughout Florida – we are the **ONLY** nonprofit organization that provides this sort of consistent input that is essential to management of our natural areas. The Policy committee is gearing up for the 2019 legislative session, as we will be representing the interest of native plants and habitats in this critical time. These are only examples of the myriad ways that we do our work... there is not enough space here to list them all!

Our organization foundation is solid. Going into the fourth quarter of 2018 our financial outlook is good and we are on course with our budget and goals. Our membership continues to grow steadily. We are poised to start 2019 with solid financial footing and a fully operating staff – I think next year will be bright for FNPS as we continue to do good work on behalf of our native plant heritage!

Message from the Executive Director | Juliet Rynear

Our hearts and prayers are with our Panhandle friends and family! Thank you to everyone who is lending a hand, raising money, and donating water, food and clothing.

As I'm writing this it is still October and our Native Plant Month events are in full-swing. We have scheduled more than 70 proclamations, field trips, and special events. In addition, we have major projects revving up across the state, including new monitoring programs for rare plants and their habitats, a regional policy initiative, native plant demonstration sites, and an exciting new phase in our Sandhill Land Acquisition Project.

Here are just a few highlights:

- Our amazing member Neta Villalobos-Bell won a \$10,000 award from Cox Conserves Heroes. The award will fund educational programs for her local chapter, the Cuplet Fern Chapter of FNPS. Watch her video here: <https://vimeo.com/291958144>
- Our Native Plant Month Sponsor Florida Power & Light made a \$5,000 donation to help fund the amazing 2-acre Cutting Horse Eco-Center and right across the street they are installing native trees and plants at their substation! Learn more here: <http://www.fnpscocoloba.org/cutting-horse-center.html>
- Our Southeast Chapters are spearheading an ambitious project to promote funding for Florida Forever conservation land acquisition and management. They will connect with elected representatives and introduce them to the important habitats and native plants of Southeast Florida through field trips, information packets, and a travelling native plant art show that will make its way to Tallahassee in time for the legislative session.
- Thanks to your support for our Warea Area Project and our partner Putnam Land Conservancy, 6 parcels have been preserved from development and our goal for the next year is to acquire at least 50 acres through donations and grant funding. The project area is home to the largest population of the critically endangered species Claspig Warea (*Warea amplexifolia*). To donate or learn more visit this [link](#).

FNPS weighs in on updated management plan for the Crystal River Preserve State Park | Gene Kelly

The Florida Native Plant Society reviewed a proposed update of the *Crystal River Preserve State Park Unit Management Plan* and submitted comments for consideration by the Acquisition and Restoration Council during their October meeting in Tallahassee. While the update acknowledged sea level rise as a factor in the long-term conservation of the Preserve, FNPS' comments emphasized that this is such a critical threat to the Preserve's resources that it must be afforded a more proactive focus in the management approach outlined by the Plan. The salt marshes and hydric hammocks of Waccasassa Bay, located just north of Crystal River, have been the subject of research on sea level rise impacts for many years, and that history of research along a similar stretch of Big Bend, marsh-dominated coastline has documented the demise of numerous stands of coastal hydric hammock scattered within the salt marsh. Using Google Earth aerial imagery, we documented the presence of similar "ghost forests" in the Preserve (see figures below). We suggested that these forests must be accurately mapped, and monitored into the future, to properly measure both the existing and impending impacts of sea level rise.

Salt marsh and hydric hammock account for about 75 percent of the 27,500-acre Preserve, and they are the natural communities most vulnerable to large-scale change and loss in response to rising seas. The vulnerability of these communities is exacerbated by declines in freshwater flows from the Homosassa River, Crystal River, and other inland sources of fresh water discharge that maintain estuarine conditions over much of the Preserve. Continued declines in freshwater flows will accelerate sea level rise-induced salt water intrusion.

Any future losses of salt marsh in the Preserve will also reduce habitat available for many resident wildlife species, included such imperiled species as the Florida manatee, Marian's marsh wren, Scott's seaside sparrow, Gulf salt marsh snake and Gulf salt marsh mink. Some modeling studies conducted along the Big Bend have predicted a possible increase in the total area of salt marsh if rates of accretion exceed rates of erosion as the sea rises; however, such an outcome is unlikely given the rate of rise that is predicted. FNPS has recommended that Surface Elevation Tables (SET), or other instruments capable of accurately measuring erosion and accretion rates, be installed at various locations in the Preserve to improve the accuracy of future modeling.

Our recommendations centered primarily on the need to implement a comprehensive monitoring regime to enhance our understanding of the changes that are taking place in coastal ecosystems. For example, are the “ghost forests” being transformed into new salt marsh? Do vegetative changes in other stands of hydric hammock portend a progressive transformation into the “ghost forests” of the future? Is the coverage of mangroves in the salt marsh expanding, perhaps in response to a lower frequency of killing winter freeze, and will an expansion in mangrove coverage degrade habitat suitability for the Scott’s seaside sparrow and marsh wren, which appear dependent on open expanses of black needlerush marsh? Only through diligent monitoring can the form and pace of the upcoming changes be understood, and informed management decisions be formulated.

FNPS believes the updating of management plans for public conservation lands along the coast provides a timely opportunity for moving ahead on the issue of sea level rise, and that our estuaries and coastal wetlands are too valuable a resource to delay measures aimed at enhancing the resilience of our natural coastlines.

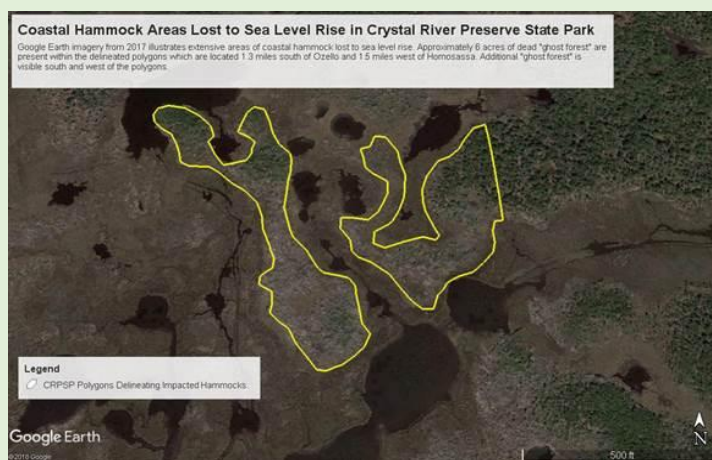


Figure 1. The area depicted in this imagery illustrates impacts resulting from ongoing sea level rise at a site in the Crystal River Preserve State Park. Approximately 6 acres of coastal hammock within the delineated polygons has been lost to sea level rise, and additional areas of affected hammock are visible to the south and west of the polygons. Location centered approximately at 28°48'16.8"North and 82°40'9.6"West.



Figure 2. The matchstick texture of the area depicted is the result of dead trees, predominantly cabbage palms, that have succumbed to sea level rise. This area of “ghost forest” is a subset of the location depicted in Figure 1.

Committee Reports

Membership Report | Anne Cox

Our membership numbers are growing! We’ve gotten 63 new members in October so far; great job Chapters!

Chapter leaders, please check your inventory of the current Membership Brochure and estimate how many you will need between the November 10, Board and Council meeting and the Retreat on February 15-16, 2018.

We want to see you at our in-person meetings, so **please come** to the next meeting in Kissimmee. If you can't make this one, keep up with the FNPS Calendar for dates and locations. <https://fnps.org/society/calendar>

Conservation Committee Report | Todd Angel

FNPS has petitioned the Endangered Plant Advisory Council (EPAC) to list 2 species of milkweed as either threatened or endangered at the state level. This petition is based on extensive surveys by FNPS members from across the state. The two species petitioned for listing are *Asclepias incarnata*, which has been recommended for listing at the Threatened level, and *Asclepias feayi* which has been recommended to be listed at the Endangered level of protection.

In addition, we have petitioned EPAC to elevate the narrow range endemic mint *Dicerandra modesta* to full species level on the state list in preparation and simultaneously with a request to have *D. modesta* recognized at the species rank under federal level endangered species protection by the USFWS. Currently *D. modesta* is listed as a variety under *D. frutescens* even though recent genetic work shows that the two species are not as closely related as once thought. *D. modesta* is possibly the most endangered *Dicerandra* species in the State having been extirpated from most of its historical range in eastern Polk County.

In support of these efforts members received demographic monitoring training from Archbold Biological Station's Plant Ecology lab during their annual scientific monitoring of *Dicerandra christmanii* in south eastern Highlands County on the [Lake Wales Ridge National Wildlife Refuge](#). We will implement these protocols at two sites for two different species of mint including *D. modesta*. The second site will be in Marion County where the Marion Big Scrub Chapter will be assisting Florida DEP with monitoring *Dicerandra cornutissium* along the Marjorie Carr Greenway which is a stronghold for this species. Photos from the monitoring can be viewed [here](#).

Members of the Conservation Committee, the Executive Committee, and numerous chapters have continued to participate in plant rescues in the Clermont area from one of the last sites of native habitat left in that region. The rescued plants will be placed in several conservation areas as part of ongoing restoration efforts at these sites.

This is a brief overview of projects with much more to come.

Chapter News, Events, and Programs

[Pawpaw Chapter](#) (Volusia) toured residential landscapes with the [Conradina Chapter](#) (South Brevard) on Conradina's Landscape Tour where they saw a hummingbird in Carl Winebager's yard. Pawpaw Chapter was very aggressive in its outreach this month – they represented at multiple events each weekend including National Trails Day and still had 40 people turn out for their chapter meeting headlined by [Lake Beautyberry Chapter](#)'s Wendy Poag and Pat Burgos.

Central Florida Chapters came together for [Tarflower](#)'s heavily attended Florida Native Plant Month Regional Meeting at Leu Gardens (Orange). This is leading to some field trip collaboration between [Cuplet Fern](#) (Seminole), [Ixia](#) (Jacksonville), [Tarflower](#), [Citrus](#), and Pine Lily (Osceola) for a [field trip](#) to the [Lubee Bat Conservancy](#) up in [Paynes Prairie](#)'s territory (Alachua). **Check out the Flickr [album](#) to see how awesome it was.**

[Nature Coast Chapter](#) (Pasco) donated a kiosk full of native plant information to Werner Boyce Salt Springs State Park. Check out [our page](#) on the park for photos and more information.

[Sumter Chapter](#) celebrated [National Public Lands Day](#) by adding native plants to [Dade Battlefield Historic State Park](#)'s landscaping. They also installed a native pollinator garden on the main street of the City of Webster.

[Pine Lily Chapter](#) attained full coverage of proclamations: the two cities within Osceola County and Osceola County all proclaimed October as [Florida Native Plant Month](#).

The full Native Plant Month photo [album](#) is up on Flickr!