



**Florida Native Plant Society  
Executive Committee  
Meeting Notes**

Go-to-Meeting, 7:00pm, 25 September 2018

**Members attending:**

Catherine Bowman, Susan Carr, Gail Parsons, Jackie Rolly, Juliet Rynear, Bonnie Basham, Don Spence

**1. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Florida Rare Plant Conservation Endowment (FRPCE)**

a. The FRPCE was a project that grew out of discussions between our previous FNPS Executive Director Kellie Westervelt and USFWS Florida State Supervisor Larry Williams. The discussions focused on how FNPS and USFWS could collaborate to promote plant conservation in Florida. The purpose of the FRPCE was to eventually provide a permanent funding source for the conservation of Florida's rare plants and habitats. Numerous partner organizations joined in the endeavor and representatives from each organization began serving on a "temporary board" for the purpose of drafting a statement of need, choosing a name for the endowment, drafting a mission statement, and locating a fiscal sponsor for the endowment. The plan was to install a permanent board of directors to manage the FRPCE once a fiscal sponsor had been contracted. In September 2017, the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida was contracted to be the fiscal sponsor.

Recently, the USFWS recommended that the "temporary board" become the permanent Board. A draft MOU was sent to each of the organizations/agencies represented on the "temporary board" and the organizations were asked to sign the agreement. These organizations/agencies are: Archbold Biological Station, Bok Tower Gardens, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (Florida Forest Service), Florida International University, Florida Native Plant Society, Institute for Regional Conservation, University of Florida, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661), the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742 f(a)(4)), the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-57) and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) (ESA).

b. A draft copy of the MOU was provided to the Executive Committee for discussion on 25 September 2018. Per discussion, there were some concerns over some of the basic MOU language. Additionally, Juliet Rynear had just been informed by Leigh Brooks (FNPS representative on the FRPCE Temporary Board) that the other organizations/agencies could not agree to fundraise for the endowment due to inherent conflicts. Thus the MOU is now stalled/tabled. Leigh asked if FNPS and others could serve in an advisory capacity if they were unable to serve on the permanent board and the answer was "yes". Until the fund raising issue is resolved, this MOU cannot move forward. As a result this item will be removed from the Board agenda for 27 September.

## **2. Florida Native Plant Society Southeast Florida Regional Initiative for Community and Policy Advocacy**

a. One of the foremost objectives the FNPS policy and legislative committee is promoting statewide land acquisition and conservation efforts. The Florida Forever land conservation program was the envy of other states, with an annual budget of \$300 million. Unfortunately, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, the Florida Forever program was sidelined and left to languish by the state legislature. Inspired by FNPS initiatives encouraging chapter members to “take legislators to the field”, the Palm Beach and Miami Dade County chapters of the FNPS in coordination with the firm Conservation Concepts LLC have developed a comprehensive program designed to reach out to local decision-makers and members of their legislative delegations, provide thorough education on the importance of conservation lands to their communities, provide personalized educational tours of conservation lands in their districts and follow up with targeted lobbying efforts aimed towards supporting pro-conservation legislation. Currently five chapters, Martin County, Palm Beach County, Broward County, Miami-Dade County and Monroe County have or will commit funds to this project and are requesting that FNPS state contribute a portion.

b. After some discussion, it was decided that we need to see more detail on the expenses and work on making this a stronger proposal. For example, it is probable that as a charitable organization we cannot be providing funds for food to elected officials, and it appears that only water based tours are on the agenda. We would also like to see more information on land-based tours and the locations and types of tours that will be offered to demonstrate the importance of preserving the last remaining properties within the Florida Forever project areas within southeast Florida. Also recommended was to produce a “How To” manual for other regions. There is time to work on this given the November elections. The Executive Committee would like to meet with the regional chapters involved in this proposal and work to make this a stronger proposal. Recommend taking this item off the BOD agenda for 27 September, but leave the document on the forum and indicate no action required at this time.

## **3. Torreyea Keepers Project**

a. This is a request for funding from Leigh Brooks for the TorreyeaKeepers project. This project is intended to last for two years, possibly longer depending on outstanding needs. Leigh provided the proposed budget for the 2 years. Funding will cover capital expenditures, salaries, workshops, materials, etc. The Executive Director has had numerous conversations with Leigh as well as Magnolia Chapter members who are participating in the project and Magnolia Chapter board members who voted to approve funds for the project as a “kick start” and to help defray costs that Leigh has been covering herself.

**b. The most important discussion topics were:** 1) FNPS cannot fund the proposal as written because we do not have the funds (130K) nor can we support new Staff positions, vehicles and equipment. 2) We seek clarification of what actually is being asked of FNPS – i.e. to fund the budget as proposed? To serve as the nonprofit home for future fund raising from other sources?

After discussion it was decided that FNPS should request that the project remain within FNPS and not have the project to go somewhere else or into a new nonprofit organization. However, how to stay involved without being able to fund becomes the issue. Some things to consider are:

i. Keeping and funding TorreyeaKeepers as an FNPS project - FNPS would help raise funds and promote it as one of our conservation projects.

ii. FNPS (via Leigh and other volunteers) would seek grants or contracts to support this work. An obvious source is the USFWS (as this is a Federally Endangered species). If funds are secured, the project would be a FNPS program, run as any other FNPS program, subject to overhead and support expenses.

More discussion with Leigh and Magnolia Chapter is required and recommended. This item will remain on the FNPS BOD agenda and the Executive Committee is recommending that we meet with Leigh Brooks and the Magnolia Chapter before asking the Board of Directors to vote yes or no.