

Southeast Florida Scrub Working Group Meeting 3/13/2023

Field Trip:

- Discussed mechanical treatment of Cabbage palms, particularly near paved roads
- Spotted a few Scrub-jays

Presentations:

Greg Braun- Sustainable Ecosystems International – President Martin County Chapter FNPS

Preserving T & E Species during re-introduction of Fire at the Arbors

1. The Arbors
 - a. Residential subdivision
 - b. Appx. 185 acres
 - c. Appx. 190 homes
 - d. Wetland and upland preserves
2. Upland Preserves
 - a. About 60 acres
 - b. Managed per Preserve Area Management Plans (PAMP)
 - c. Endangered and Threatened Species
 - i. Florida scrub-jay
 - ii. Gopher Tortoise
 - iii. Preforate lichen
 - iv. Tillandsia Air Plants
 - v. Scrub pinweed, Pine pinweed
 - vi. Large flowered falserosemary
 - d. PAMP prohibited anything other than invasive plant removal until 2014
 - i. 2014 changes: Revisions to county regulation
 - ii. Firewise program
3. Firewise- Management burns, less expensive than mechanical
 - a. Issues and challenges
 - i. Preserve easement: 25'
 - ii. Approval from property owners
4. Scrub Preserve Management
 - a. Engage HOA BOD
 - b. Amend PAMP
 - c. Survey for gopher tortoises
 - d. Create firebreaks
 - e. Coordination
 - f. Prep first block
5. Relocation
 - a. Establish *Cladonia perforata* blocks to be returned after burns
6. Acknowledgements and Contacts

- a. Florida Forest Service: Marty Harn and staff
- b. Arbors BOD, Gwynn George, Rick DeLuga
 - i. Resident volunteers: Pam Hopkins, Valerie Clark
- c. Martin County Growth Management Division
- d. Ann Debolt, Roger Rosentreter, FNAI- Brenda Herring
- e. Scrub Ecosystem Working Group Member
 - i. FL Park Service- Dick Roberts, SCA, Anne Cox
 - ii. Dr. Jon Moore- Florida Atlantic University
 - iii. PBC ERM: Melissa Tolbert, David Witmer

Cladonia perforata- Ann Debolt- Botanist

1. *Cladonia perforata*
 - a. Federally listed as endangered
2. 30 planted areas in 2009- Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area
 - a. Continues to persist in 2023
 - b. Site and habitat has declined since 2021
3. 180 individual *C. perforata thalli* were gathered from The Arbors and relocated to private 65 acre nature preserve near Stuart.
4. Acknowledgements
 - a. Greg Braun- Sustainable Ecosystems International
 - i. President- Martin County Chapter FNPS
 - b. Pam Hopkins- Vice President Martin County FNPS
 - c. Rick DeLuga- Former Board Member, Arbors Village Association

Harper Carroll- Mechanical Vegetation Reduction as an Urban Management Tool

1. Pros for Mechanical Management
 - a. Wildfire hazard mitigation
 - b. Allows for safer intro of prescribed fire
 - c. Achieves desired vegetative structure and composition
 - d. Encourages ground cover productivity
 - e. Promotes viability of rare plants and animals
2. Difficulties in Burning Urban
 - a. Accumulated fuel loads
 - b. Smoke management
 - c. Weather parameters
 - d. Politics/public perception
 - e. Meeting objectives
 - f. Risk over reward
3. Mechanical fuel reduction
 - a. Mechanical vegetation reduction (MVR)

Break for Questions

For Harper:

Q: In areas where you have done root raking, do exotic grasses come in?

A: A little, but managed by consistent management

Q: Did you burn anything during your experiment for growth timing?

A: No. Grow season then chop or grow season then chop and herbicide.

Q: Do you rake out area after chip (mechanical)?

A: No. Chip has less biomass and quicker breakdown. May depend on site.

For Greg:

Q: Can you use initial Gopher tortoise surveys for future surveys? Has management improved habitat?

A: No long-term monitoring as it is privately owned land. Avoided burrows when placing fire lines. Appears tortoises have moved from edges of scrub towards inner parts that were burned.

Q: What kind of dispersion were you burning at?

A: N or S wind to avoid Hwy 1. Took 2.5 years to get everything set and correct conditions. First burn was for 20 acres, but only burned 2.

Ricardo Zambrano- Scrub lizard updates

1. Background
 - a. Endemic species
 - b. Mostly on ground, no climbers
 - c. Like particularly sandy areas of scrub
 - d. Breed March-July
 - e. Diet- insects, smaller lizards
 - f. Predators- Scrub-jays, snakes, Curly-tailed lizards
 - g. Historically occurred as far south as Miami-Dade
 - h. Surveys conducted by Kevin Enge
 - i. Habitat loss and fragmentation, lack of fire
2. Project Objective

- a. Reintroduce to historic site in Palm Beach County
 - b. Specimens taken from Jonathan Dickinson and Seabranck Preserve
 - c. Collections Feb 25- March 1 2019
 - i. Right before breeding season
 - ii. 25 males and 25 females from each collection site: 100 total
 - iii. Released in pairs
 - iv. Clipped smallest toe on either right or left foot based on collection site
 - d. Released to Hypoluxo Scrub Natural Area
 - i. 97 acres of scrub and scrub flatwood
 - ii. Released in Northern sector
 - iii. GPS marked waypoints
3. Surveys
- a. Surveyed North and Mid sectors
 - b. June 2019 hatchlings observed
 - c. September- 54 lizards recorded
 - i. Range extending slightly south
 - d. May 2022- only 2 lizards observed
 - e. September 2022- 6 lizards
 - i. Moved more south to less likely habitat. Unknown why
 - ii. Potential predators curly-tailed lizards
 - f. Continue quarterly surveys
 - i. Predation management?
 - ii. Reintroduce?

Break for Questions

For Ricardo:

Q: Were health assessments made on the lizards during surveys?

A: No

Q: Have there been hatchlings spotted since 2019?

A: Yes, still reproducing.

Q: Can you trap curly-tailed lizards without bycatch

A: Unknown.

Overall Questions/ Comments

-Are artificial openings helping Scrub-jays? Which works better; fire lanes or circles?

-Scrub plants list document for Martin County draft passed around- Anne Cox

-Translocation Successes

-Karl Miller

-Seminole State Forest, Rock Spring Run, Jonathan Dickinson

-Still experimental, no formal program yet

-Meeting for Land Management?

-Helps with cooperative organization

-New manager in Indian River County

-Example of 4 county cooperation: look into how they started

-Request to map small scrub sections/acquisitions

-Meeting Structure

-Fall and Spring? One or both in-person?

-Strong response for in-person meetings, both fall and spring

-Rotate parks/habitats for meeting host

-Statewide Meeting?

-average response for Yes