

Lee County Shorebird Partnership Meeting – Spring 2017

February 22, 2017 at Fort Myers Regional Library

In attendance were: Charlie Ewell, the Lee County Partnership Coordinator, Joel Caouette with The City of Sanibel Natural Resources Department, Audrey Albrecht with Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, Amy Clifton with FWC, Kathryn Harris with FWC, Dan Van Norman with FWC, Meg Rousher with FWC, Steve Boutelle with Lee County Natural Resources, Robert Hughes with Florida Park Service, Karen Rogers with the Florida Park Service, Officer D. Barrett with FWC, Adam DiNuovo with Audubon Florida, Melinda Averhart with Audubon of Southwest Florida, Stephanie Erickson with Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve.

I. Lovers Key State Park

- Robert Hughes was introduced as Catherine Moses's replacement.
- Karen Rogers indicated the social attraction project at Lovers Key is a joint project between FWC and Lovers Key State Park, initiated during the dredging project of 2014. Karen stated they would be willing to discontinue the project with the approval of FWC. Amy Clifton stated it would be beneficial to continue the project.
- Additional support was offered from FWC for added predator control and possibly night cameras.
- Karen clarified that they have active year-round predator control.
- Reported causes for nest failures were multifactorial in origin, including unknown predators and overwash from TS Colin.
- Robert Hughes reported continued issues with boaters bringing dogs onto the North end of the island.
- Lovers Key is being considered as a back-up repository site for the dredged material from New Pass, if an agreement is not worked out with Big Hickory/Pelican Landing.

II. Little Estero Island/Big Hickory Island

A. Dredging of Big Carlos Pass and New Pass; Steve Boutelle

- Big Carlos project to begin in 45 days and will take 30 days to complete.
- Dredged material from Big Carlos Pass will be deposited in the Critical Wildlife Area of Little Estero Island.
- New Pass project will start immediately following the completion of Big Carlos and take 30 days to complete.
- It is undetermined where the dredged material from New Pass will be deposited at this time. The proposed site is Big Hickory Island/Pelican Landing, although no agreement has been reached.
- Lovers Key State Park is planned as a backup site. Additional permitting would be required for this location.

B. Little Estero Island Updates

- Melinda Averhart is stepping down as Lee Stewardship Coordinator beginning April 1st.
- Dan VanNorman and Meg Rousher will return this season as FWC's Critical Wildlife technicians.

- Predator control was discussed in relation to two Laughing Gulls that heavily depredated the LEI least tern and black skimmer nesting colony during the summer of 2016.
- Carlos Pointe Condominiums are requesting a detailed management plan to combat vegetation, during and after breeding season from Amy Clifton.
- Incidental take permit issued to rake at Carlos Pointe Condos.
- All snowy plover nests outside of the posted colony will be individually posted with a 15 foot radius.
- Penny Jarrett with the Town of Ft. Myers Beach has submitted a request to the town and the Public Works department to discourage the riding of motorized vehicles for trash collection through the wrack line.
- Officer Barrett reported “barge parties” will be occurring near the nesting area on Big Hickory over the summer. Adam DiNuovo offered additional stewarding coverage to the area during these times.
- Brief discussion regarding service dogs on the beach and instruction on the proper terminology to use from Officer Barrett to help distinguish service from non-service dogs.

III. Sanibel; Audrey Albrecht of SCCF

- Completed full survey of Sanibel on foot for winter shorebird survey.
- 200 to 300 fish crows perching locally.
- Various types of predator control were discussed for use on Sanibel including: emetic eggs, electric eggs, and lethal control.
- Joel noted no discharge of firearms is allowed on Sanibel Island.

IV. Critical Wildlife Area Updates; Amy Clifton

- Some of the 16 CWAs are being debated. The timeline for posting signs and buoys is unknown.
- Lee County’s budget was just approved to purchase signs and hire technicians.
- Only buoys will be used for posting the six islands in Lee County.
- “Boating and waterways” determined the amount of signs used for posting. Less to be used than initially requested.
- Officer Barrett stated to let FDLE know if more signs are needed.
- Monthly data collection will occur to determine if goals are being met.
- New CWA Coordinator in the state, Michelle VanDeventer.

V. Audubon Florida; Adam DiNuovo speaking on behalf of Brad Cornell in his absence

- Brad is encouraging a statewide public service announcement campaign and expansion of our message past the beaches.
- Kat Harris recommended connecting Brad with Shea Armstrong and Julie Wraithmell.
- Charlie Ewell has a connection to film PSAs at Cypress Lake High School and he will extend the connection to Brad.
- Suggestion of connecting with WGPU for media coverage.
- Officer Barrett expressed interest in a workshop with Audubon Florida for officer education. He suggested this could possibly take place at the Lee County marine task force meeting which occurs on the first Wednesday of every month.

VI. Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve; Stephanie Erickson

- Stephanie has replaced Cheryl Clark as the Aquatic Preserve Manager
- Kelsey Lang is heading up the wading and diving bird nest monitoring in Estero Bay.

VII. Winter shorebird survey results; Charlie Ewell

- Survey of Bunche Beach resulted in large numbers of birds on the East and West ends, including 10 - 15 piping plovers, 20-30 marbled godwits, and notably less black skimmer usage this winter.
- Species richness and abundance seem to be comparable to years prior.

VIII. Updates to the Florida Shorebird Database; Kat Harris

- The database will open in March.
- The pre-nesting category has been omitted.
- Primary goal is to increase solitary site monitoring.
- Better data is needed to meet NFWF goals.

IX. Updates to the new Imperiled Species Management Plan; Amy Clifton and Kat Harris

- 15 species are no longer listed.
- 23 newly-listed threatened species.
- 14 species keep the same listing.
- 5 remain Species of Special Concern.