



Florida Native Plant Society

Council of Chapters Meeting Minutes 11/24/24 - Revised

Online Zoom Meeting
taken by Melanie Simon – Chair

Melanie Simon called the meeting to order at 06:33 PM

In attendance (25) – 23 of 31 Chapters

*** indicates proxy or guest**

Citrus – Marci Clutter
Coccoloba/Naples – Ben Johnson
Cuplet Fern – Al Squires
Eugenia – David Martin
Heartland – Greg Thomas
Hernando - Janet Grabowski
Ixia – Cate Hurlbut
Longleaf Pine – Kimberly Bremner
Mangrove – Laura Soule
Mangrove - Gail Brynildsen*
Marion Big Scrub – Deborah Curry
Nature Coast – Diane Caruso
Palm Beach County – Rebekah Kaufman

Palm Beach County – Ethan Aparicio
Passionflower – Melanie Simon – **Chair**
Pawpaw – Karen Walter
Pine Lily – Dana Sussmann
Pinellas – Darla Ostenson*
Sarracenia – Lynn Artz
Sea Rocket – Elizabeth Bishop
Serenoa – Trent Berry*
Suncoast – Merrilee Walbrunn*
Sweetbay - Jody Wood Putnam
The Villages – Bob Keyes
FNPS Operations Manager – Cherice Smithers*

Regular Agenda Items

- **Minutes from 9/22/24 and 10/27/24 meetings**
 - *Rebekah K. motioned to approve the September and October meeting minutes. Karen W. seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.*
- **Next Meeting January 26, 2025 at 6:30pm.**

News/Announcements/Reminders

- **FNPS Annual Appeal**
 - Melanie reported that the FNPS Annual Fund Appeal letters and emails will go out shortly. This is a major source of revenue for FNPS (15% of unrestricted revenue), so it is very important that the fund drive is successful this year. Please ask your members to watch for the appeal and give as generously as they can. Unfortunately, there is no verbiage or graphics to share that can be easily inserted in Chapter newsletters.

- **Volunteer Hours Reporting**
 - Cherice is now handling the volunteer hours. The deadline for reporting 2024 hours will be in January, and Cherice will advise of the exact date and any changes.
- **Brochure Printing**
 - Cherice is now handling the brochure printing. Order forms will go out in January, so now is the time to inventory your brochure stock and plan your requirements for 2025 events.
- **Meeting Reminders**
 - Meeting reminder email seems to have helped – good turnout and comments in chat. We're still looking into text reminders.
- **Tree Grants**
 - Trent B. advised that Serenoa is considering giving tree grants to individuals to replace (with natives) trees downed in hurricanes. Not decided yet, but positive response to the idea in chat.
 - Dana S. suggested (in chat) getting with the local municipality to see if they've done a tree inventory on residential streets with info on species diversity and available planning spaces.
- **Chapter Leadership Meetings**
 - Melissa and Gene should be scheduling the regional calls soon. Cherice will follow up.
- **Chapter Member Changes**
 - Laura asked who notify of chapter member changes (change of address or email).
 - Cherice asked that these changes, plus Chapter officer changes, be emailed to her at info@fnps.org. In the future there will be a membership portal so members can do updates themselves.

Initiatives/Updates

- **Insurance**
 - Cherice (updated the Council on insurance guidance. The plan is to finalize materials and new forms for use starting in 2025. They will be in a folder accessed through the membership database portal – Reports tab - where the link for volunteer hours reporting is.
 - Cherice went through the new materials she has put together after researching what the FNPS policy covers and what Chapters need for different activities.
 - Insurance Coverage Guide - Single sheet reference for Chapters to use to determine what insurance coverage they need and whether they need signed waivers, proof of insurance, additional insured coverage, etc. for different types of activities. Included is guidance for water activities (covered with specific limitations) and minors.
 - Insurance FAQs – elaborates on some of the specific activity coverage.
 - Waiver Instructions and new Form – Protection for accidents. Waiver form has been updated (including a photography release) and options added to submit the waiver as a Google form. Waivers need to be photographed or scanned and uploaded (regional folders are set up and file naming guidance) is or mailed to FNPS.
 - Additional Resources – Application for Certificate of Insurance, Policy Summary, Additional Insured Request Letter
 - Greg asked if insurance covers everyone participating in activities. Cherice said it covers both members and guests.
 - Director and Officer Insurance – Still being researched.
 - D&O – covers State officers and Cherice is finding out if Chapters under GEL may have coverage

- Cherice has gotten an application for Chapters who are not under GEL – she will get a quote for D&O to see if it is cheaper through the FNPS provider than individual policies.
- Karen W. asked why Chapter leaders would need D&O insurance. Protects leaders from lawsuits, primarily so their personal assets can't be included in a suit, and pays legal fees. Personal decision about whether the Chapter leaders want to take the risk.
- Email Cherice (csmithers@fnps.org) with any questions.
- **Council Guidance (FNPS Handbook)**
 - Melanie reviewed the change discussed at the last meeting to change the voting method for Council elections from the form to Google forms or another online survey tool. This was agreed to at the October meeting, but a formal vote was not taken.
 - Melanie suggested revising Chapter Representative meeting attendance expectations. The Handbook sets the expectation at a minimum of 4 meetings per year (pre-2020 goal when meetings were in-person). Attendance should be higher given meetings are now online, a proxy can be sent if a Chapter Representative cannot attend, and not having most Chapters represented at the meeting makes fulfilling the Council purpose to share and communicate difficult. In 2024, 40% of Chapters were represented at fewer than 4 (of 10) meetings.
 - Melanie suggested increasing the expectation to 80% of meetings (there are typically 8-10 Council meetings per year). Discussion ensued:
 - Bob, Lynn, Laura, Cate, Kimberly, Elizabeth, Rebekah and David felt 80% was reasonable (6 to 8 meetings per year), although higher expectations may not increase participation.
 - Greg, Dana, Janet, and Al felt 60% was more reasonable - hard to attend and hard to find a proxy (volunteer organization).
 - Jody said Sunday evenings are difficult. Melanie will do another poll to see if there is a better time to meet.
 - Group agreed to 60% - a 50% increase.
 - *Karen W. motioned to approve the change the voting method for Council elections from the form to Google forms or another online survey tool and the change the meeting attendance expectation from 4 meetings per year to 60% of meetings. Motion passed unanimously.*
 - Melanie will present the changes to the FNPS Board for approval.
- **License Frame**
 - Karen W. and Melanie reported on the license frame fundraising project.
 - It will not be possible to get the frames fabricated and distributed for Christmas as we still don't have closure on two issues: frame shape and distribution method.
 - Frame shape: Per Florida statute, "... your license plate frame can't cover or obscure any text or registration stickers on your license plate." The frame we have quotes for provides plenty of space for messaging, but might cover "Florida" or "myFlorida.com". We are looking for alternatives. A narrower top to comply with the law may preclude etched lettering – it would have to be printed. Al pointed out that etched still has paint in the letters.
 - Distribution: Mailing the frames to each purchaser would be prohibitively expensive, so distributing them to each Chapter at the early April conference seems like the most cost-effective and least labor-intensive alternative. Shipping to Chapters who are not attending the conference can be evaluated - If sales are high enough we could have funding to ship.
 - Presales: The plan would be to sell the plates (and collect the money) online, starting sales early enough to collect funds to pay for the frames when the order is placed and to get an idea about how many to order.

- Ethan A. asked if Chapters that purchase in bulk to sell at events could charge more. Melanie noted that nothing would prevent Chapters asking for whatever donation they want, but will also look at a discount for Chapter bulk purchases (again, if sales are high enough).
- In response to Cate's question, Melanie explained that the frame sales will go to FNPS to raise money for brochure printing and new educational materials. Money will go into the State accounts, but Chapters will have some say about how funds are spent.
- **FNPS Native Landscaping Brochures**
 - Melanie will post the suggested edits for the Native Landscaping brochure she has received on the website.
 - Melanie suggested a mid-December deadline to start reviewing edits. Changes will need to be made in January for the 2025 printing.
 - It may not be possible due to limited time and manpower to make all the changes for the 2025 printing.
 - Ixia, Paynes Prairie, Cuplet Fern and Pawpaw are meeting 12/4 to discuss region realignments.
- **Chapter Challenges**
 - A few representatives have signed up to work on Chapter challenges (identified in the Council survey in July) committees. A few additional representatives volunteered.
 - Leadership (challenge for 85% of Chapters) and Participation (challenge for 68% of Chapters) are the top challenges.
 - Ethan suggested combining the Leadership and Participation challenges as there is overlap.
 - Lynn sees the challenges as being very different – she sees great participation in activities, but has an issue getting volunteers for leadership.
 - Darla said they have leadership, but low participation in activities. Darla and Lynn will get together to compare notes.
 - Membership Management (challenge for 66% of Chapters) – discussion will be postponed until membership database changes are completed.
 - Programs and Speakers (challenge for 63% of Chapters) and Technology (challenge for 50% of Chapters) also seem related.
 - Melanie suggested combining the Programs/Speakers and Technology challenges.
 - Look at current Speaker list – reorganize and figure out how to add program ideas (such as making Christmas decorations with native plants).
 - Speaker availability could be expanded with hybrid meeting technology. Karen will collect information about how her chapter does programs with remote speakers.
 - One technology challenge is lack of WiFi in meeting locations.
 - Melanie will email information to the people who have volunteered. First step is to get a better handle on what the issues are (list that has been started will be sent out) – perhaps by talking to the chapters who reported the challenges to get specifics.

New Business

- **FNPS Calendar**
 - Cherice has changed the Chapter calendar displays (shown on most Chapter websites) so the events of other chapters in their regions are displayed. This gives members an option to find and attend interesting nearby programs (increased participation?).
 - Melanie noted the activities of six chapters do not appear on the FNPS calendar (see FNPS website under Events) because these chapters are either not using TeamUp or because they are

Council of Chapters Meeting Minutes 11/24/24

not entering their activities on the FNPS calendar: Cuplet Fern, Palm Beach County, Marion Big Scrub, Eugenia, Martin County, and Mangrove.

- Deborah noted they don't have a computer person to post, so they email about activities.
- Laura said the calendar link on their website isn't working.
- You are encouraged to get on the calendar as it provides benefits for FNPS, your Chapter, and members.
 - The calendar reinforces the picture of a strong and active organization – particularly important impression to give potential donors and partners.
 - Cherice uses the FNPS calendar to find events to publicize in newsletters and on social media.
 - Having Chapter activities on the FNPS calendar helps publicize your events
 - If you want a particular event publicized, email Cherice
 - Chapters can get program ideas by looking at what other chapters have done/are doing.
 - Members who are located a distance from where their chapter meets (a common complaint in the FNPS survey) may be able to find another chapter's events closer to home.
- You can get a TeamUp login from Cherice. TeamUp is fairly easy to use – anyone needing a tutorial can contact Melanie.

Motion to Adjourn

- *Rebekah K. motioned to adjourn. Ethan A. seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.*

Meeting Adjourned at 8:11 PM

CHAPTERS BY LANDSCAPING BROCHURE REGION

Panhandle

- Longleaf Pine
- Sweetbay
- Magnolia
- Sarracenia

North Central

- Paynes Prairie
- Marion Big Scrub
- Citrus
- The Villages
- Hernando

Northeast

- Ixia
- Pawpaw

Southeast

- Eugenia
- Palm Beach County
- Broward
- Dade
- Conradina
- Sea Rocket
- Martin County

Central

- Lake Beautyberry
- Cuplet Fern
- Tarflower
- Pine Lily
- Heartland
- Passionflower

West Coast

- Pinellas
- Suncoast
- Serenoa
- Mangrove
- Coccoloba
- Naples
- Nature Coast