

January 12, 2021 6:30 pm

Council of Chapters - Strategic Planning Workshop

Attendees: Melanie Simon, Steve Gustafson, Diane Caruso, Kara Driscoll, Sande Habali, Patricia Burgos, Wayne Baker, Bonnie Basham, Al Squires, Jan Blue, Lucy Breitung

Reviewed FNPS mission and Council purpose:

The mission of the Florida Native Plant Society is to promote the preservation, conservation and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

The purpose of the Council is to facilitate communication among the chapters and with the FNPS Board. It serves as a conduit of information that supports and strengthens the FNPS Chapters in their pursuit of the FNPS mission, and elevates local and regional issues and shares solutions throughout the Society.

Brainstormed Ideas for Council Operational and Aspirational Goals

More communications, streamlined communications

Boosting virtual meeting attendance, broadening audience

Outreach – social media, TV ads

Coordination between chapters

Identify best practices, good ideas – reduce need to “reinvent the wheel”

Steve – better way of communicating goals – using the term “native plants” doesn’t communicate fully

How to approach a landowner

How to talk to your legislator (Policy handbook)

Patricia – desire for stronger chapters to help struggling chapters – call all chapters and have “super delegates” for regions

Keep track of what chapters are doing

Bonnie – online meetings, virtual field trips

Coalition of conservation groups – regional? Coordinated advocacy plans

Network for plant rescues

Pawpaw Chapter goal – working with developers, homeowners associations to encourage (or offer)

Patricia – works with landscape architects – hard to find native nurseries that can provide quantities of native plants needed for developers – collaborate with FANN

Protocol to work with developers to rescue plants on a site and replant after developed

Outreach and education about native plants – make more people aware of what native plants are. Unaware people aren't likely to tune into programs – need different outreach vehicles – newspaper ads, TV ads, etc. to get more people aware of and interested native plants. Pool resources for state-wide campaign. Good ideas for this were in Alachua County Lunch and Learn.

Chapter “Reports”

Wayne suggested having each chapter report what they are doing or what they hope to do so that he has a baseline when he reaches out to each chapter.

Kara agreed this would be useful for the Council to keep track of what Chapters are doing to see if it's worth expanding upon them and worthwhile for other Chapters to do. Also asked each chapter to comment on what they want from the Council and FNPS.

Bonnie B. (Sarracenia) – trying to figure out what is needed for the conference, doing virtual field trips. Chapter has also been working for several years on a park that has become a center of activity for the small town it is in.

Kara D. (Naples) – rebuilding with new board, looking at potential rescue (in Collier County - coordinating with Coccoloba), online meetings and programs, presentations to other local groups (gardening groups), site visits to member's yards, hoping to do some citizen science projects.

Lucy B. (Coccoloba) – virtual meetings with presentations, Cutting Horse planting with natives and propagating and selling plants (FGCU intern helps with this), yard visits (members volunteer to have yards on list – visit 3 or 4 on a Saturday – limited attendance set up through Eventbrite).

Al S. (Cuplet Fern) – very active with online programs. Weekly virtual programs, reaching out to broad geographic audience.

Gail Taylor (Citrus) – holding steady, virtual meetings and field trips with limited attendance. Would like to know how to light a fire under the board. Virtual meeting attendance is low.

Sande H. (PawPaw) – bullet key words (slogan?) to grab people's attention, large numbers coming to Zoom meetings, demonstration garden, piggy back with native nursery on festival, trash clean-up and roadside wildflower inventory, field trips

Steve G. (Mangrove) – many of same experiences as other chapters, investigating retention ponds to put in native plants, struggling with participation on remote meetings

Jan B. (Magnolia) – doing well, Nature parks/arboretum/Torrea keepers (local projects), not doing a lot of other things, getting involved with partners (Florida Trail Association, Audubon, FWF), difficult to find geographic partners

Patricia B. (Lake Beautyberry) – holding steady, focus has been GEL/IRS paperwork, upcoming annual meeting, getting new people in, plant sale, field trips, low Zoom attendance, making personal phone contact to connect with members.

Melanie S. (Passionflower) – Chapter actively doing things to engage and retain membership - Zoom programs, maintaining native plant garden at state park, plant adoption event, rescues. Membership stable, but not growing, and participation at some events low. Due to issues with participation in chapter governance do not have the bandwidth to try new things (have plenty of ideas, but no manpower) or come up with ways to reach out to potential new members or introduce/educate local population about native plants.

Summary

Items raised in meeting and other subjects Kara stated she feels should be a focus for the coming year should be:

- Boosting virtual meeting attendance and broadening audience
- Partnerships/Coalitions (conservation groups and native plant sources)
- Participation in Chapter Governance (top issue per Council Survey)
- State-wide ads/outreach to
- Training
- Regional Meetings
- Assisting struggling Chapters
- Rescues
- Diversity and Inclusivity

Melanie expressed the opinion that, while diversity and inclusion should be considered in all activities it should not in and of itself be a priority goal over other efforts to further FNPS and Council mission goals.

Discussed broadening definition of inclusivity beyond race – for example students, millennials, hearing-impaired. There are barriers for many joining FNPS (no time, no yard, no money), but these people have interest and passion. How to broaden ability (and lower barriers) to participation in our mission. Bonnie spoke about finding ways to bring our passion to diverse groups rather than asking them to participate in our activities that may not fit with their lifestyle, time and financial constraints.

Adjourned at 8:22 pm