

Minutes for January 31, 2007 Pine Rockland Working Group Meeting

Thanks to IFAS Tropical Research and Education Center for the meeting space and to Everglades National Park staff for a great field trip.

Forty-five participants from 19 different agencies, NGO's, schools and individual pine rockland site owners participated. That may be a new record and we will need a larger meeting room in the future.

Brief Outreach, Science and Symposium Committee Updates and Other News

TNC is working with USFWS on outreach materials and displays for the National Key Deer Refuge and will present final products to the PRWG to see if these are readily adaptable to general pine rockland usage.

The USFS "Best Management Practices for Pine Rockland Fuels Management" report is underway. Joe O'Brien has forwarded a draft annotated bibliography from that project to Jim Snyder. Jim is going to add to it from his USGS collection and forward to the PRWG science committee for additions.

Jim noted recent relevant pubs; Jen Possley's/Fairchild's *Rhynchelytrum* paper, Jay Sah's Keys pineland fuels paper and Nancy O'Hare's Hole-in-the-Donut pine restoration paper. I believe these have all been forwarded to the PRWG. If not, they can be.

Here's a reminder to try to budget for participation in the winter 2008 Pine Rockland Conference and Bahamas Workshop (Andros anyone?). If your agency can provide funds to pay for the general workshop costs themselves please contact Chris Bergh.

The SFWMD-funded, TNC-led "South Florida 2050 Fire Plan" is in a data gathering phase. Short surveys have been circulated to land managers in the 7-county region. During summer 2007 TNC will conduct a series of workshops, one/county, to present initial findings and gather additional data and input. The next step is development of a draft plan which will go out for additional review before finalization and implementation.

Anne Morkill, Manager of the Keys Wildlife Refuges, announced that on March 28-30 the USFWS will host a no-cost workshop on Big Pine Keys focused on Keys pine rocklands. The first two days will consist of indoor sessions and the last day will consist of field trips. PRWG members are invited and encouraged to contact Anne if they have questions. 305 872 2239.

Presentations and Discussions

"Recommended Monitoring Procedures for Pine Rocklands," Jim Snyder, U.S. Geological Survey. Jim described the impetus for a recommended monitoring procedure for pine rocklands and outlined three federal (USFWS, USNPS, USFS) standard fire effects monitoring procedures and a recent recommended procedure developed by Tall Timbers Research Station. He suggested that a bare minimum standard would include timing, mapping and photo points and that more in-depth versions could include age of rough/fuel loading, detailed day of burn environmental conditions and short/long term fire effects on various species or structural components (e.g. herb, shrubs, trees) of the forest. Jim recommends the Tall Timbers system as a

good starting place. The PRWG's recommendations for day of burn monitoring and photo-point procedures and links to the various monitoring schemes will be posted on the USGS-hosted PRWG website.

“Developing Corridors to Alleviate Problems of Urban Fragmentation on Rare Plant Populations in South Florida,” Joyce Maschinski, Fairchild Tropical Gardens. Joyce described Fairchild's new FWS-funded project which looks at this issue in Miami-Dade County's pine rockland fragments. She led a breakout exercise to gather input on corridor linkages. Fairchild is hosting a one day workshop to delve deeper into this project on February 23rd, beginning at 10:30 a.m. at FTG.

Discussion about this project also spurred a recommendation to list private lands habitat incentive programs on the PRWG website. Kathy O'Reilly-Doyle with USFWS Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Service can provide a link to an existing website which lists these programs.

“Jumpstarting Pinus elliottii var. densa reestablishment in the Hole in-the-Donut Restoration Area, Everglades National Park: a historical evaluation and influence of hydroperiod on pine germination and survival,” Lauren Serra, Everglades National Park. The name says it all. Lauren provided an overview of this massive restoration project, efforts to accelerate pine recovery in the roughly 10-20 of the restoration area that is suitable for pines and monitoring efforts associated with tracking success. This was an excellent preview for the afternoon field trip to ENP and the restorations site.

“Preliminary Results of Fire Effects Monitoring on Long Pine Key, Everglades National Park,” Jay Sah, SERC - Florida International University. Jay presented early results on analysis of ENP fire effects monitoring data comparing pre-burn pine density and size classes with pine mortality and burn severity. He also presented findings on woody (non-pine) species stem density in pine, cladium prairie and muhly grass prairie. During the afternoon field trip we saw and discussed a mock ENP fire effects monitoring plot and the methodology being used to capture the data that Jay is analyzing.

“Pine Rockland Management Plan for Miami-Dade County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program Properties,” Keith Bradley, Institute for Regional Conservation. Keith is working with a team of other authors to develop a 10-year framework for MDC-EEL sites. There are 24 sites totaling 474 acres and ranging in condition from outstanding to poor. Rare species abound. The plan structure will include a general management philosophy, habitat-specific and site-specific components. It will address acquisition, connectivity, veg structure, edge issues, rare organisms, exotics and fire. The initial fire recommendation is to burn at any opportunity rather than be constrained by philosophical or scientific predilections for a natural fire regime. Contractual arrangements to accomplish prescribed burning were strongly recommended.

Next Meeting Date will be set in July at Miami-Dade Community College Campus at the building. Details to come.