

Southwest Region – Quarterly Report

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Addressing the Climate Crisis-Documenting archaeological sites impacted by Hurricane Ian



Photo 1-Calusa Island following Hurricane Ian

On September 28th, 2022, Hurricane Ian made landfall in southwest Florida as a Category 4. This storm was the deadliest in Florida since the 1935 Labor Day Hurricane, and the costliest storm in Florida's history. Area staff were extremely fortunate to have suffered only minor interruptions to work during evacuations for the storm and were able to immediately assist with repair efforts. The storm destroyed critical infrastructure like the bridge to Matlacha (vital for assisting with visits to Calusa Island, the Randell Research Center, and others), and the town of Fort Myers Beach. Ian also damaged numerous beaches and state parks in the area, some of which will not open until 2024. Staff immediately coordinated assistance to documenting damage at areas like Calusa Island, Mound Key, Cayo Costa, and various area cemeteries. This work will likely continue through 2024.



Photo 1: De La Torre Salas, Curator Austin Bell

Photo 2: Natalie De La Torre Salas (Above Right) and Austin Bell of Marco Island Historical Society (MIHS)

Address the Archaeological Heritage of All Florida Communities-Calusa Coast event series

Throughout 2023, Natalie De La Torre Salas collaborated with multiple organizations in the area including Lovers Key State Park, the Randell Research Center on Pine Island, the Marco Island Historical Society, and many others to put together a series of events in March highlighting the archaeological record of the area. The Calusa Coast event series included talks, festivals, and presentations.