

Southwest Region – Annual Report

July 2022 to June 2023

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Highlight: Assistance to the Florida Division of Historical Resources-Post Hurricane Ian Site Assessments



Photo 1: State Park Staff Assessing damage at Mound Key (note sign in middle of photo)

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.

First Quarter Highlight: Addressing the Impact of Climate Change Hosting Tidally United



Photo 2: De La Torre Salas (left) introduces self-moderated Seminole Tribe of Florida Climate Resiliency panel

FPAN SW staff partnered with the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Heritage and Environment Resources Office and Climate Resiliency Program to host the seventh annual [Tidally United](#) conference in August. This conference was hosted in person at The Water School at Florida Gulf

Coast University and online. The keynote panel for this event included Jill Horwitz (Climate Resiliency Officer, Heritage and Environment Resources Office, Seminole Tribe of Florida), Quenton Cypress (Community Engagement Officer, Heritage and Environment, Resources Office, Seminole Tribe of Florida) and Dave Scheidecker (Historian, Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Seminole Tribe of Florida), all speaking in person. The hybrid format also allowed for long distance participation from noted climate and heritage scholars like Dr. Isabel Rivera-Collazo, of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego. Following the academic program on Friday, attendees had the option to tour Mound House and learn about the impact of climate change to the site.



Second Quarter Highlight: Assistance to Host Institution Visiting FAU and Discussing Public Archaeology

Dr. Katharine Napora of FAU's Anthropology Department invited FPAN SW and FPAN SE Staff to present to her class about public archaeology and careers in archaeology. Public Archaeology

Coordinator Mal Fenn at

Coordinators Natalie De La Torre Salas and Malachi Fenn, along with

SE/SW Director Sara Ayers-Rigsby chatted with FAU students about the role of public archaeology as well as providing advice on job applications in archaeology, where to look for a job, and other practical advice.



Third Quarter Highlight: 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

Photo 4: De La Torre Salas with Marco Island Historical Society Curator Austin Bell

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.

Fourth Quarter Highlight: Addressing the Climate Crisis-Documenting sites at Cayo Costa State Park following Hurricane Ian



Photo 5: DEP Archaeologist Bill Stanton (Above Left) and Natalie De La Torre Salas (Above Right)

In April, FPAN SW staff continued to document the impacts of Hurricane Ian to sites in the region. Although the storm made landfall in September, staff are still in the process of documenting resources which were seriously and irreparably impacted by the storm. In April, FPAN staff accompanied State Parks and Department of Environmental Protection staff to Cayo Costa State Park at the request of park staff. FPAN SW staff will prepare a damage assessment to document the impacts to the site.