

Southwest Region

July 2024 to June 2025

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First Quarter Highlight: Responding to Hurricanes Helene and Milton

At the end of September, Southwest Florida was impacted by Hurricane Helene, which was followed shortly by Hurricane Milton in early October. Staff in the region, including Ayers-Rigsby and De La Torre Salas are continuing to work with partners in the region including local governments, state parks, aquatic preserves, and others to document impacts to the archaeological sites.

Photo 1: Ayers-Rigsby examining a root ball at an impacted archaeological site



Photo 2: De La Torre Salas with families at Lakes Park

Second Quarter Highlight: Honrando Nuestra Historia

In September and October, FPAN SW led by De La Torre Salas worked to lead a statewide series of events recognizing Latine culture across Florida. This series, [Honrando Nuestra Historia](#), takes place in collaboration with heritage organizations across the state including the Cape Coral Museum of History, the Clewiston History Museum, the Bonita Springs Historical Society, Collier County Museums, Mound House, the Randell Research Center at Pineland Florida Museum of Natural History, the Marco Island Historical Society, and the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge System. Over 400 participants came to the event held with Ding Darling at Lakes Park.

Other Highlights

- De La Torre Salas led a Heritage Disaster Preparedness Workshop with University of Florida and Pineland
- De La Torre Salas and the Marco Island Historical Society partnered to 3-D scan the Olde Marco Inn.



Photo 3: De La Torre Salas and Rachael Kangas (Director, FPAN Central and West Central) assist students in cleaning headstones

Third Quarter Highlight: CRPT with Immokalee Interact Club

In February, FPAN SW led by De La Torre Salas and assisted by Malachi Fenn (FPAN SE), Sara Ayers-Rigsby, Rachael Kangas, and Michaela Candia, partnered with the Immokalee Pioneer Museum to lead a Cemetery Resource Protection Training (CRPT) for the Interact Club from the Immokalee High School. 20 students and teachers met in the museum to learn about historic preservation and cemetery management from FPAN staff before going into the field to clean headstones and collect trash at the Jane Brown Grave Site. FPAN staff hope to continue this collaboration with the Interact Club in 2025!

Other Highlights

- De La Torre Salas participated in the Immokalee Cattle Drive and Jamboree in March
- Ayers-Rigsby presented on resiliency and archaeological sites at the Mound House in Fort Myers Beach
- FPAN staff including De La Torre Salas and Fenn partnered with Latino Outdoors Miami and the Healthy Ocean Coalition for a panel on Black History and underwater archaeology



Photo 4: Archaeology Lab at Mound House

Fourth Quarter Highlight: Archaeology Lab with Mound House

In April, FPAN Southwest staff hosted the first-ever Open Public Archaeology Lab Day in the region — and it also marked the official opening of the Artifact Preservation Center (APC) at Mound House in Fort Myers Beach.

Over 20 attendees joined staff to explore the behind-the-scenes world of archaeology, learn about the essential role of lab work in interpreting the past, and discover why protecting cultural heritage is important.

The workshop was led by De La Torre Salas, Malachi Fenn, and Michaela Candia.