



## June 2022 Newsletter

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## Monthly Conservation Note

### Defend Open Space!

All over the most densely populated areas of southeastern Florida, local governments believe they have discovered a “Win-Win” solution to a suite of funding challenges: sell (or essentially give away) **publicly owned open space** to private developers. This while Comprehensive Plans have adopted policies that prioritize the importance of these same areas to human wellbeing and local economies. Achieving sustainability and averting the biodiversity extinction crisis depends on more open space, parks, and conservation areas, not less. The current thinking is that we need to conserve 30% or more of total land area to prevent a global ecological collapse, in addition to restoring native ecosystems to sequester carbon, recover depleted populations of native animals and plants, and provide essential ecosystem services.

The most recent proposal to give away public open space comes from IRC’s hometown of Delray Beach, where the City has initiated a process aimed at **giving up six acres** or more of open space along Atlantic Avenue. The intent is to raise

should be defended. Rather than using those areas for the creation of more concrete canyons, we should be pouring resources into them to restore nature, create habitat, and enhance our green infrastructure. Our economies and communities will both benefit.

Negotiations going on right now at the United Nations call for the initiation of restoration on at least 20% of degraded lands globally by 2030. Let’s do our part and use the open space assets we have to restore native ecosystems, plant native trees, and build habitat for birds, butterflies and other wildlife. Selling or giving away these open space assets, for whatever reason, is just bad business as usual.

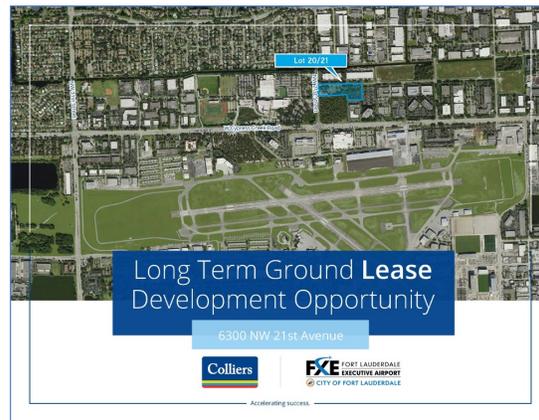
**George Gann**  
*Founder and Executive Director*

funds to renovate the municipal golf course. Setting aside legitimate arguments of what that would do to the heritage or design of the golf course, this is not good public policy because we give up valuable assets that we can never get back. Unfortunately, this kind of thinking is common, and these types of deals have proliferated in South Florida as the value of land has increased. For example, just north of the Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport in Broward County, ecologically valuable lots immediately adjacent to critically rare native habitat have been offered up for long-term lease as warehouse space. What are we thinking? Countywide, Protected Natural Areas designation has been removed from thousands of acres of publicly owned open space, making it easier for sales and leases to proceed.

As illogical as it may seem, a biodiverse future depends on what we do with golf courses in need of repair and underutilized lots. In highly developed landscapes like South Florida, every square foot of publicly owned undeveloped real estate



Some Delray residents are not too happy with what seems like a Win-Win decision by the City. Photo courtesy of Jim Chard.



Richard Brownscombe, past President of the Broward chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, has fought valiantly to prevent the destruction of endangered open space.

## New Summer Projects

While we continue working on our Pine Rockland Initiative in Miami-Dade County and gear up for the launch of Phase II of Restoring the Gold Coast, we also have three new projects we are excited to work on this summer.

1. **Corridors of Invasion** - For the fourth consecutive year, we are a part of this Early Detection Monitoring project with the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) with the goal of catching plant invasions early before they become a big problem or nuisance. The concept is Early Detection, Rapid Response! Surveying is conducted in areas that are more likely to be introduction sites for invasive, non native plants. The surveys are throughout south Florida including Palm Beach, Broward, Hendry, Collier, and Miami-Dade counties.
2. **Delray Beach Coastal Management Plan** - We are assisting Aptim Environmental & Infrastructure, LLC and Delray Pubic Works in the development of an updated and comprehensive coastal management plan for the City of Delray Beach. We are conducting a dune assessment on the municipal beach and Atlantic Dunes Park and contributing to an invasive species removal program and restoration planting

program.

3. **Invasive Control at Delray Beach Parks** - We have initiated restoration work at two Delray Beach owned parks - Barwick Park and Orchard View Park. Our crew will be treating nonnative, invasive species such as *Dioscorea bulbifera* (common air potato) and *Syngonium podophyllum* (Nephthytis). We are excited for this opportunity to help restore these incredibly rare native ecosystems in Delray Beach, with support from City Sustainability and Parks!



IRC Staff about to begin restoration work at Orchard View Park, in a sea of *Dioscorea* and *Syngonium*!  
With Mary Wozny, Assistant Sustainability Manager, City of Delray Beach.



**Thank you** to all who have supported IRC's programs with a \$20 or larger donation in the last month: Amy Nowacki, George Gann, Antonia Gary

Thank you to monthly donor Barbara McAdam and to our **Monthly Sustainers** who donate \$25 or more each month: Barbara McAdam and Valerie Seasholtz.

IRC has an E-Trade account. Please contact us about giving gifts of stock.

While we get funding for some great projects, those funds rarely cover all of our costs, so we really do need your support to continue our important work.

Donations allow us to provide important conservation services such as improving our free online resources, increasing protection of rare plants and animals, restoring native ecosystems, and advocating for better public policy.



**Atala** caterpillar. Photo by Beryn Harty.

DONATE

## "Meet Our Team" Spotlight

### Welcome, Melany!

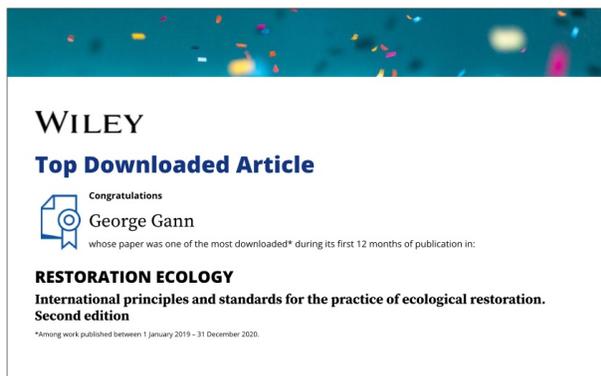
We are excited to announce that our Pine Rockland Initiative is growing as we have added Melany Flint to our Ecological Restoration Team as a field technician.

Melany graduated from FIU with a bachelor's degree in biology as well as a bachelors in natural and applied sciences. She also earned a certificate in biodiversity conservation. Melany was born in Miami and has had a deep appreciation for all things nature from an early start. She spent some time collecting data on butterflies endemic to the Everglades pine rocklands and hopes to one day conduct her own research.



Welcome to the team, Melany!

## IRC Contributes to Top Downloaded Article



'Vascular plant extinction in the continental United States and Canada' paper is one of the top 10 most downloaded papers in Wiley journals during its first 12 months of publication! George Gann, Wesley Knapp, Anne Frances, Reed Noss, Alan Weakley, and many others coauthored this paper. And we have contributed to data on the South Florida extinctions. Here's a [link to the article](#).

## Recent Events

"MAD Week" at South Beach Park  
in Boca Raton in Palm Beach  
County

Thank you to everyone who participated in our "Make a Difference Week" restoration volunteer day at South Beach Park in Boca Raton on 6/11/22. Together, we removed two large patches of nonnative, invasive *Scaevola taccada* to make room for native species. We also removed over 70 pounds of trash from the beach and planted 10 federally endangered *Jacquemontia reclinata* (beach clustervine).

We appreciate the support of the City of Boca Raton and all of our wonderful volunteers! For more photos from the event, [click here](#).

### "MAKE A DIFFERENCE" EVENT



June 11, 2022

### AT SOUTH BEACH BOCA RATON



INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE BEACH NAUPAKA WERE REMOVED AND 70LB OF TRASH WAS PICKED-UP

## "MAD Week" at Florida City Pineland in Miami-Dade County

In Miami-Dade County, IRC's Ecological Restoration Team gave community members a tour of Florida City Pineland Preserve on 6/11/22. As we discussed in last month's newsletter, we are conducting some major restoration work at Florida City Pineland. This site offers a unique opportunity to see pine rockland restoration in action.



We are a nonprofit conservation organization exempt from taxes under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)3.

The Institute for Regional Conservation | [Website](#)

