

Report of the CHNEP Policy Committee Meeting, January 25, 2024

9am, Charlotte County Centennial Park(1120 Centennial Blvd. Port Charlotte) **Submitted by Mayor Alice White**

Report on the **Management Committee meeting** that was **held on January 12, 2024**. Items presented included State and Federal Landscape-Level Conservation and Funding Opportunities for the CHNEP Area.

- First presentation was by Jaime Doubek-Racine of the **US National Park Service** on the **“Peace and Myakka Wild and Scenic Rivers Designation Opportunity”**.

Question: Would tributaries be included? **Answer:** They could be if the local stakeholders so desired.

Question: Who writes the plan and if it would have any regulatory impacts on state or regional water supply policies?

Answer: Local stakeholders can write the plan or the National Park Service can write the plan based on the stakeholders’ input. The plan would not impact state water supply polices.

Benefits would include additional funding via Federal monies and resource assistance.

The action desired for the Committee to act upon was “...to support the designation process for purposes of creating a study for the Peace and to implement the Myakka Study recommendation to designate the portion of the Myakka River in the State Park.”

The **Management Committee** voted to recommend that the Policy Committee

“...support the ‘Partnership’ Wild and Scenic Rivers designation of the Peace and Myakka Rivers for the purposes of conducting a study of the Peace River as well as implementing the 1984 Myakka River Study recommendation to designate at least the 12 miles of river within Myakka River State Park.”

Votes to abstain were cast by SWFWMD, SFWMD, City of North Port, FWC.

During the CHNEP meeting there was a great deal of discussion about this item, in particular concerns about adding additional “layers of permitting”. It was subsequently clarified that “Wild and Scenic River” designations (state and/or federal) have no involvement with the permitting processes already in place.

A motion was made to have only the portion of the Myakka River within the Myakka State Park be considered for a **National Wild and Scenic River** designation. After discussion, it was voted to be **continued** to next meeting for further discussion.

Additional presentations at the CHNEP meeting included:

- **Proposed Everglades to Gulf Conservation Area (Julie Morris, Florida Conservation Group)**
 - *Identifies a 4-million-acre Conservation Area, with conservation easements being acquired from willing sellers for up to 10% (400,000 acres) of the Conservation Area identified.*
 - *Public scoping began in 2023 with 2,600 comments which were compiled into a Draft Land Protection Plan, Environmental Assessment, and Conceptual Management Plan.*
 -
- **The Florida Wildlife Corridor (Mallory Dimmitt, Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation)**
 - *The Florida Wildlife Corridor Act was signed into law in 2021. The Corridor comprises nearly 18 million acres of contiguous wilderness and working lands critical to the survival of many of Florida’s 131 imperiled animals.*
 - *120,000 acres have been approved to date, with \$2 billion being budgeted for land acquisitions since 2021. Next meetings: May 23, and September 20, 2024*

