

Administrator's Update for 5/20/15

By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator

Onsite work on the Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Harbor Walk project began this week of May 18, 2015. The project includes the replacement of the seawall and construction of a bathroom facility, small boat launch, parking area, and pedestrian promenade. This Harbor Walk is located at the foot of the northbound U.S. 41 Bridge on the Port Charlotte side of the harbor. During construction, public access to the site will be restricted—construction is expected to be completed in March 2016. Nearby Bayshore Live Oak Park, 23157 Bayshore Road, Port Charlotte, is available as always for fishing and recreation. Updates to this project are available online—visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov and click “Project Status Updates” in the Popular Links on the left.

Public Meetings for Parks Master Plan

Yesterday was the first of three public meetings for the Parks Master Plan. To find out more about the Plan and be a part of the process, there is another meeting scheduled for tonight and one tomorrow night: 6 to 8 p.m. tonight, May 20, at Harold Avenue Park Recreation Center, 23400 Harold Avenue, Port Charlotte; 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, May 21, at the South County Regional Park Recreation Center, 670 Cooper Street, Punta Gorda. At these meetings the plan, process and framework will be covered by staff and stakeholders, with time for questions and input. For more information call 941.625.7529.

The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is also holding public workshops on the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan. MPO staff and the consultant for the plan will be conducting the workshops. The next workshops are this afternoon and tomorrow, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.—Wednesday, May 20, in the Myakka River Room, Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center; 75 Taylor Street, Punta Gorda; Thursday, May 21 at the Cultural Center of Charlotte County, 2280 Aaron Street, Port Charlotte.

Land Management

The staff at Parks and Natural Resources Land Management division has been working on scrub management at Amberjack Environmental Park, currently focusing on the reduction of overstory (vegetation high up at the canopy level) and perch tree options for avian predators. The scrub habitat at Amberjack is in relatively good health and meets much of the “ideal” for Florida Scrub Jays, however the Florida Scrub Jay is not a particularly acrobatic flyer and is often predated by raptor species including the Cooper’s hawk. Recent evaluations of the area indicated significant overstory and perch tree options for predators such as Cooper’s hawk. With Amberjack scrub being unoccupied, it has the potential for becoming a recipient site for trans-located Scrub Jays as the countywide Habitat Conservation Plan is implemented. Reduction in perch options will increase the survival potential for birds that have been trans-located and are potentially disoriented.

Land Management staff recently assisted with the identification of a potential exotic grass on Oyster Creek Environmental Park. The grass in question is likely Guineagrass, an exotic and invasive species. Exotic/invasive flora and fauna is not inherently “bad,” the problem is that it did not develop in our local natural landscape and therefore we have nothing in our habitat that controls or limits its growth or spread. Without these controls, the introduced species usually spread unchecked and often compete with our native species. In the case of native flora, the complete value to our natural system is seldom fully recognized and often many other species rely on a specific plant or animal for survival.