Perico Preserve Restoration Project

Manatee County staff led the efforts on the Perico Preserve Restoration project, which was to create upland, wetland and intertidal fish and wildlife habitats and replace exotic invasive plants with plants native to coastal South Tampa Bay.

This project includes a variety of habitats from coastal scrub to mangroves and includes revegetation with more than 100 plant species to return botanical diversity to this site. This site is approximately 175 acres; once finished will include 2.5 acres - upland enhancement (hammock), 8.3 acres - upland restoration (from pasture to coastal and maritime hammock), 11.6 acres - upland restoration (from pasture to hydric and scrubby flatwoods), 3.7 acres - upland restoration (from pasture to coastal scrub), 3.5 acres - wetland creation (freshwater marsh), 3.6 acres - wetland creation (salt marsh) and 1.5 acres - wetland enhancement (salt marsh).

Work began on the ambitious Perico Preserve restoration plan in January 2010. Phase I is almost complete, with project certification expected in late 2013. Phase II is under construction; Phase III has been designed and is currently in federal/ state regulatory permitting.

A Focus on Conservation and Minimizing Impacts to the Natural Environment
Some of the challenges associated with this site included implementing an overall restoration of the property (including offsite mitigation projects), volunteer planting of wetland creation area, identifying a potential seagrass mitigation site and maintaining high quality standards for the ecological quality of planned upland habitats to be created from relatively low quality lands.

The Stantec project team successfully overcame these project challenges and presented a comprehensive restoration plan to the County which is currently being implemented. The sea grass beds created are crucial to fish habitat in this area. The over 100 plant species to be used in the upland mitigation process allows for plant diversification and the creation of a true native coastal dune habitat.

Innovativeness
With very limited funding to execute this project, Manatee County staff was extremely resourceful in finding creative and innovative funding sources to develop a financing plan to complete the project.

Other obstacles challenged the project team. Key among them was the need to remove approximately 150,000 cubic yards of fill as part of Phase II to create a 16.4-acre seagrass mitigation area. Prior to initiating this phase, the team found use for the removed soils as fill material on a nearby wastewater treatment plant improvement project, resulting in significant cost savings for the County.

The third and final phase of this project is the most innovative. The basin excavated from fallow farmland as part of Phase II will be connected to Perico Bayou to create valuable seagrass habitat which will bolster fisheries and water quality in this lynchpin area between Tampa and Sarasota Bays. The creation of seagrass habitat from uplands as advance mitigation for public infrastructure projects is the first of its kind in this area and represents Manatee County's commitment to long term conservation and protection of fish and wildlife habitats in the region.