

Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast, Inc.



Improve Land Saved for the Benefit of People and Nature

The mission of the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast (CFGC) is to protect land and water in Southwest Florida for the benefit of people and nature. Growth in southwest Florida is rapidly depleting our most valuable asset, the natural environment. Over the next 10 years, the last pieces of Old Florida will either be preserved or lost forever. To meet this challenge, CFGC is working to conserve, restore, maintain and monitor critical properties within the Southwest Florida Wildlife Corridor.

Land conservation, restoration, maintenance and monitoring are all elements of land stewardship management. For CFGC these activities include removing invasive plants and replacing them with native ones, implementing prescribed fires to promote diversity of plant and improve wildlife habitats, and periodic monitoring of all conservation areas. These activities are critical to save wildlife, protect the quality of our drinking water and secure public access to the land.

The Impact100 SRQ grant will allow CFGC to more efficiently and effectively focus its land stewardship activities across 24 conservation areas (3,000 acres), of which 82% are within Sarasota and Manatee Counties. For improved land access, \$81,070 will be used to purchase a 4-wheel drive pick-up truck, an off-road utility vehicle, one transport trailer and one storage shed. CFGC has none of these items today and must use an employee's personal car or rent vehicles. Additionally, \$7,400 will be used for prescribed fire supplies, eliminating their current need to hire third parties to perform the controlled burns. Lastly, \$22,030 will be used for the Land Stewardship Manager's additional hours towards this initiative over the 24-month period.

Program results include the restoration of 92 acres of wetlands on the Myakka River, prescribed fire on at least 40 acres of upland wildlife habitat, restoration of 68 acres of floodplain marsh, improved water quality, and monitoring of all 24 preservation areas to ensure that their beauty and function are maintained. In addition to the benefits for threatened species, improved public access will allow people, especially CFGC's 16 youth education partners, to benefit from enjoying acres of restored and well-maintained floodplain forests, marshes, pine flatwoods, mesic hammocks, and Florida scrub. Land stewardship vehicles will also be used to assess future land conservation opportunities

The initiative is sustainable because existing operating expenses will be reduced with CFGC no longer having to rent vehicles nor hire third parties for controlled burns. Ongoing costs of the initiative will fall within their operating budget and support from endowment funds.

Long term-impacts include enhanced restoration and management of wetlands and water conservation areas. These activities will benefit a diversity of wildlife threatened and struggling in the Southwest Florida Wildlife Corridor and will improve our water quality, while supporting all of us living in these communities, which we call home.