

University of Florida

Natural Area Teaching Laboratory (NATL)

2001-2002 Annual Report

During the 2001-2002 school year the Natural Area Advisory Committee consisted of Michael Bond (Ethnoecology Society), Mark Brown (Environmental Engineering Sciences), Mark W. Clark (Soil and Water Science), Donald W. Dickson (Entomology & Nematology), Deb DiPetro (Florida Museum of Natural History), Donald A. Graetz (Soil and Water Science), Shane Hill (Entomology & Nematology Student Organization), Susan Jacobson (Wildlife Ecology & Conservation), Linda Jones (Teaching & Learning), Kaoru Kitajima (Botany), Doug Levey (Zoology), Alan J. Long (Forest Resources & Conservation), Francis E. Putz (Botany), Marilyn Roberts (Florida Museum of Natural History), Benjamin Skulnick (Wetlands Club), Carol Stiles (Plant Pathology), Thomas J. Walker, chair (Entomology & Nematology), Alison M. Fox, ex officio (Lakes, Vegetation & Landscaping Committee).

The Committee met twice: 12 Oct. 2001 and 20 Mar. 2002. Minutes are posted at <http://natl.ifas.ufl.edu/ann-mins.htm>. (Between meetings, business is conducted by e-mail.)

Pavilion planned, approved, and funded

Classes in the 76 courses (in 9 departments and 4 colleges) that use NATL have no protection in the event of rain or lightning. Students have no place to sit during briefings by their instructor except on the ground, and they have no table space on which to write or to examine specimens.

Hoping to remedy this, the Natural Area Advisory Committee [NAAC] proposed specifications for an academic pavilion and a site for it just south of the NATL kiosk. These were approved by the Lakes, Vegetation, and Landscaping Committee in October and the University Land Use and Facilities Planning Committee in December. The \$14,400 estimated cost of the pavilion and six park-type tables was met with a pledge of \$5,000 from CALS Dean Jimmy Cheek and \$9,400 from UF Provost David Colburn. IFAS Facilities Planning & Operations agreed to manage the construction.

As finally planned and bid, the pavilion will be all-steel, with no walls but with closed gable ends. It is supported by columns at each corner of a 24x27 ft concrete pad. The steel roof of the pavilion has eves that extend 4 ft beyond the edge of the pad on the east and west, making the footprint of the roof 32x27 ft. There will be six tables that will seat a maximum of 38 students (including two in wheelchairs).

The pavilion is scheduled to be in service by the middle of the Fall Semester 2002.

NATL included in Cultural Complex master plan

The UF Cultural Complex master plan, as developed by Buford Davis & Associates and approved by relevant UF committees, proposes an improved interface between The Cultural Complex and NATL. This involves an inviting entrance to NATL from the west area of the Complex made possible by eliminating the pavement presently connecting the areas behind Powell Hall and the Phillips Center. On the east end of the Cultural Complex the plan has a second entrance into NATL via a "Natural Area Park" just north of the retention pond.

In March, Mr. Davis met with the Natural Area Advisory Committee to explain the interfaces and discuss their impact on NATL.

Restoration of upland pine continued

On 6 March 2002, for the fourth time since 1996, the tract of upland pine north of NATL's Division Trail was successfully burned. In contrast, most of the upland pine south of Division Trail has yet to be burned for the first time. However, the laurel oaks in this tract have been cut or girdled, to open up the canopy and to improve the chances of an effective prescribed burn.

In mid December, the Physical Plant Division planted more than 2,300 longleaf pine seedlings in NATL's upland pine area, where there had been no natural regeneration of longleaf pines for more than 30 years. Establishment was good, and the seedlings in the area burned in March had begun to put out new leaves from their underground terminal buds when this spring's severe drought resulted in high mortality of transplants in all areas.

Plots display old-field succession

One of the management goals for NATL's upland areas is to maintain five plots of about an acre each that will continually display five representative stages of old-field succession. Plans for meeting this goal remained on schedule with the tilling of Plot A early in 2002 and of Plot B in fall 2001. Four plots have now been tilled and lie fallow: Plot A (to be tilled any year that no other plot is tilled), Plot D (10-year rotation, started 1997), Plot A (10-year rotation, started 2002), Plot C (40-year rotation, started 2000). The remaining plot (E, 40-year rotation) is to be tilled in 2020.

Poppy mallows in NATL

Poppy mallow (*Callirhoe papaver*) is a perennial plant that annually produces deep crimson or magenta flowers that are about 6 cm across. It is classed as a threatened species in Florida with known populations in Leon and Alachua counties. A population just north of NATL may be impacted by the construction of the McGuire Hall addition to the Florida Museum of Natural History. NAAC approved tests to see if poppy mallows could be established in NATL. In mid July, nursery-grown poppy mallows were transplanted to four pairs of 5x5 ft plots in NATL's upland pine area. Thus far, they are thriving.

NATL history: aerial photos and interview on Web

The history, from 1950 to 1990, of the land that became NATL in 1994 is revealed in 8 aerial photographs and a narrative from an interview of George Freeman, who supervised the area when it was part of the University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station farm. (Go to <http://natl.ifas.ufl.edu/freeman.htm>.)

NAAC fiscal status

During the year that started 15 Aug. 2001, the balance in NAAC's account decreased from \$693.64.19 to \$124.69. Expenditures greater than \$100 were \$165 for signs and \$189 for Garlon herbicide. There was no income for the period.

Committee membership changes

Alison Fox, who served on NAAC by virtue of being Chair of the Lakes, Vegetation, and Landscaping Committee, will be replaced by the new Chair, Tina Gurucharri. Because the Ethnoecology Society dropped its plans for using NATL, its representative was not continued as a NAAC member. Tom Walker was re-elected as Chair for 2002-2003.