

**Spring 2014 Meeting of the Natural Area Advisory Committee**

17 April 2014, NATL Academic Pavilion, 12:00-1:00pm

Recorded by Morgan Conn

**In attendance:**

Ethan Carter (NATL TA)

Morgan Conn (NATL Graduate TA)

Jaret Daniels (FLMNH)

Jennifer Gillett-Kaufman (NATL Chair, Entomology and Nematology)

Stephen Holland (Tourism, Recreation and Sport Managements)

Linda Jones (School of Teaching and Learning)

Erik Lewis (Facilities Planning and Construction)

Lary Reeves (NATL Vice Chair)

Beverly Sensbach (FLMNH)

Matthew Smith (Plant Pathology)

Thomas Walker (Friend of NATL, Entomology and Nematology)

Emma Weeks (Entomology and Nematology)

Elise Morrison (Wetlands Club)

Ashley Mortensen (Entomology and Nematology Student Organization)

Voted via email- Katie Sieving.

**12:10 PM**

**Introduction (Jennifer)**

Jennifer talked about the ongoing projects in NATL and what to expect for the next year.

**1. Budget FY 2013 update- fiscal report on adherence to and/or deviation from 2013-2014 spending plan (Appendix 1) (Jennifer)**

The fiscal plan has been on track for 2013-2014 spending. There may be an additional cost for creating handicap access to NATL from the Florida Museum of Natural History (FLMNH) Cultural Plaza entrance that will be covered by our online donations and a possible ADA Office match (discussed below).

**2. Preliminary draft of 2014-2015 spending plan for approval at Fall meeting (Appendix 2) (Jennifer)**

Jennifer also explained that there are to be no expected increases to the budget for 2014-2015. The group voted to approve the 2014-2015 budget.

**3. Discussion of NAAC membership to insure that it remains representative of the units that use NATL. Introduce new member- Dr. Emma Weeks (Jennifer)**

Jennifer introduced Dr. Emma Weeks, a new member of the NAAC, who represents the Entomology and Nematology Department. Dr. Weeks took over the spot vacated by Dr. Dickson. Another new member is Elise Morrison, the newest president of the Wetlands Club (replacing Anna Normand). Jennifer reminded NAAC members to find new representatives from their departments if they feel they can no longer serve on the committee. Ashley Mortensen served as a temporary replacement for Mike Bentley who was unable to attend.

**4. Vote on Ethan Carter to replace Amanda Abel as the next NATL Graduate TA beginning Fall 2014 (Jennifer)**

Jennifer then introduced Ethan Carter, NATL's undergraduate TA, as a candidate for the graduate assistantship beginning Fall 2014. He will be pursuing his Master in Agronomy, which will take one year. The NAAC approved Ethan Carter to replace Amanda Abel as the newest NATL Graduate TA. Jennifer also alerted the group to the need for another Graduate TA once Ethan has completed his program, and urged them to think of and nominate potential candidates. Jennifer suggested that Doctor of Plant Medicine (DPM) students (like Morgan Conn) may make excellent candidates in the future, as they tend to have more stable schedules and can more easily meet the assistantship's demands.

**5. Research proposal form suggestions (Jennifer)**

The NAAC had no suggestions for the Research Proposal form attached to the Agenda and approved the document and its inclusion on the NATL website (**Appendix 9**).

**6. Wheelchair access in cultural plaza (Jennifer)**

Jennifer outlined one of the newest project ideas: making the trail to NATL from FLMNH handicap accessible. Jennifer and Dr. Emma Weeks have been working on establishing contacts for this project. This project may require extra funding, outside of what is in the budget. Jennifer hopes to find volunteers to help with the work, since the SEEP-accessibility project was accomplished with only around \$200.

**7. New Kiosk signs/invasive species brochure (Lary)**

Lary summarized recent progress on two projects by NATL volunteers to enhance visitor education on NATL's invasive plants and our efforts to control them. Volunteer Chris Johns (a M.S. student in Entomology and Nematology) has been working alongside OpComm members to design a large sign titled "NATL's Most Wanted" featuring mug shots of the Natural Area's worst invasives. To compliment this, volunteer Nicole Casuso (a Doctor of Plant Medicine student) has developed a brochure highlighting the invasives that require active control.

**8. WiFi/cameras grant update (Lary)**

Work to extend utilities into the Natural Area began in late 2013 and was completed by early 2014. Electrical outlets are now available at the shed, pavilion and several additional sites within the public area. All outlets can be controlled via a utility box inside the shed. Installation of WiFi equipment is scheduled to begin shortly, with the recent arrival of the necessary equipment. Once WiFi equipment is in place, the first live-streaming camera will be installed overlooking SEEP's larger pool. An additional camera will be installed at the barn owl nest box following successful installation of the SEEP camera.

**9. Minigrant updates (Lary)**

Two minigrants were awarded this year to Elena Ortiz-Acevedo and Joe Geisel. Elena has been developing 5x8" signs on the Lepidoptera of NATL that are designed to compliment exhibits at the Florida Museum of Natural History. Museum visitors will be encouraged to visit the Natural Area to learn more about butterflies and moths. Joe has been working to establish the ages of the loblolly pines and sweetgum trees in NATL's hammock using core samples and samples from recently fallen trees. Both recipients have done an excellent job communicating with the

Operations Committee and have made substantial progress towards completing their projects. An extension was requested and granted to Joe by the NAAC. Joe has requested additional time to complete his project, this was approved unanimously by the NAAC.

#### **10. Volunteer update (Ethan)**

Ethan discussed the different volunteer events that took place in NATL since the last NAAC meeting. These include Gator Plunge volunteers folding scavenger hunt booklets, the Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity making SEEP more handicap accessible, Student Senate helping with an Ardisia pull/trash pickup for MLK Day of Service, the Wetlands Club replacing boards on the boardwalk, and the Running Club helping with trimming and trash pickup. Monica Camacho and William Beach are two undergraduate students that volunteered their time helping the NATL TAs with any tasks they needed assistance with. These events brought a total of 91 volunteers who worked a total of 243.5 hours. In addition, Tom Walker, Ken Prestwich, Nicole Casuso, and Sam Hart collectively donated 410 hours of their time to NATL.

#### **11. Trail Master Update/People Counter Report (Ethan)**

Three TrailMaster units are installed at NATL's Academic, Cultural Plaza and Natural Area Park Entrances. These units measure NATL usage by counting the number of people passing through each of the three entrances. Because most NATL visitors are counted twice (as they enter and exit), all counts are divided by two in order to estimate the number of visitors NATL receives. The collected TrailMaster data from the Excel table showed that in the past 4 years, we have had over 49,000 visitors. Due to technical issues with the TrailMaster at the Cultural Plaza entrance, our recorded numbers for March and April are lower than expected.

#### **12. Rain monitoring (Morgan)**

In March 2013, Dr. Mark Clark donated a data-logging rain gauge which records rain with a tipping bucket rainfall collector. This gauge gives digital readings of water level and temperature, and can be found on the East Trail near the SEEP, beside the original milk can rain gauge. Data collected by the gauge is uploaded once per month. Dr. Stephen Holland suggested NATL get in contact with the local UF Journalism Weather station to see if they would be interested in covering a story about the NATL rain gauge, increasing the Natural Area's exposure. Many NAAC members agreed this is a good idea. Jennifer suggested waiting until the WiFi and webcams are installed, so those may be featured as well.

#### **13. NATL's Online Presence: Facebook, Twitter and website visits**

As of April 22, 2014, NATL's Facebook page has 572 Likes and NATL's Twitter account has 443 Followers. Since the Fall 2013 NAAC meeting last September, we have gained 114 new Likes for our Facebook page and 139 new Followers for our Twitter account. This is almost twice the number of new Likes and Followers gained between the Spring 2013 and Fall 2013 NAAC meetings. Considering that recent changes to Facebook have reduced our visibility as a "non-promoted" page, this is a nice surprise. Our social media accounts are important tools for spreading news about volunteer events and other happenings in the Natural Area. We are grateful to have a group of consistent contributors who "like" and share our posts on a regular basis. NATL's website is updated frequently, with new pages being developed and added over time.

Updates to the NATL website are happening constantly, between adding new content and making existing content more accessible. A list of specific improvements to the website can be found in Appendix 6.

#### **14. Current status of invasive plants (including Ardisia) (Appendix 7) (Tom)**

In 2012, the Tom Walker and Ethan Carter prepared a summary of efforts to control NATL's invasive plants from 1994 to May 2012. [That summary](#) is currently on the web. Afterwards they reconsidered which species were the greatest threat to NATL and assigned the species of greatest concern to places in a [new classification](#) of NATL's invasive plants. Now they are working on a framework to report annually the status of NATL's invasive species of greatest concern in a straightforward, revealing manner. Tom explained examples of how this framework may operate, taken from a [spreadsheet](#) that has notes to explain the details.

Linda Jones suggested creating criteria for rating the status of Coral Ardisia and suggested the "many" and "fewer" be replaced with "increasing" and "decreasing", for example. Tom explained that it is impossible to get exact counts of how many plants are present and said he would consider revising the wording in the spreadsheet, hoping for a more extensive spreadsheet by next year. Tom said the bottom line is that invasives are declining in NATL, but we are always on the look-out for new sightings.

#### **15. Restoration of Upland Pine (including controlled burns) (Appendix 8) (Tom)**

Tom Workman, NATL's new burn master, headed a controlled burn of Blocks C and D of upland pine on Sunday, 22 Dec 2013. The burn started later than originally planned due to the wind not shifting to the SW as early as NOAA had predicted. Because the winds were not as strong or as steady as forecast and the humidity remained unexpectedly high, the fire did not carry as well as had been hoped. Nonetheless, approximately 75% of the area of Block C burned. Block D did not fare as well, with the fire effective in about 15% of its area. (Block D has never burned well because most its large longleaf pines, whose needle drop would carry a fire, died after the 2002 hurricanes.) In the future, Block E, which has never been burned, will be burned with C and D. It was omitted this time because the >2000 wiregrass and lopsided Indiangrass plugs planted in late July 2013 would have been killed or stressed.

A burn of the Public Area upland pine (UP Blocks A and B) was conducted on Wednesday, 9 April 2014 by Tom Workman and his crew. The burn was successful, with details forthcoming. Jennifer noted that Tom Workman and crew will be paid using Upland Pine restoration funds built into this year's budget.

Mostly on a volunteer basis, Sam Hart continues to add to the botanical foundation of NATL's upland pine ecosystem. By the end of last year he had increased the species count [from 62 to 222](#) including 19 species that are new to NATL. He has also taken *and made easily accessible by species* more than 3000 digital photographs of various stages and parts of the species he has identified. These images are a valuable resource for making 4x5" photosigns - to complement the stock of photosigns already available for display along the UP and other nature trails.

#### **16. Vote on Fall meeting date and time. 12:00, Thursday, September 4, 2014.**

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Attending members unanimously approved 12:00 PM, Thursday, September 4, 2014 as the time and date of the Fall NAAC Meeting.

### **17. Wetlands Club update**

Elise Morrison, the new Wetlands Club President, introduced herself and talked about some upcoming club events. The anniversary of the SEEP will be celebrated as a volunteer event on 30 April, 2014 from 9:00-12:00, with students giving tours and providing educational demonstrations to the public. Another volunteer event is required to fix boards on the SEEP boardwalk, and this event is in the planning stage.

### **18. ENSO update**

Ashley Mortensen expressed ENSO's desire to be more involved in volunteer opportunities in NATL, suggesting that concrete events are more successful than more open-ended plans. She took note of the future NATL/Wetlands Club events for possible ENSO involvement.

### **19. Input from committee**

Jaret Daniels made an announcement about the Earth Day celebration at FLMNH on 19 April, 2014, inviting NAAC members to take part. Part of this event was a tree-climbing demonstration in NATL put on by the Avian Research and Conservation Institute.

Jennifer mentions that Dr. Emma Weeks has been attending NATL Operations Committee meetings and spending time getting acquainted with the Natural Area and its staff. She considers Dr. Weeks to be a candidate for the next NATL Chair, and encourages the NAAC to nominate other qualified faculty members for the position. The vote for a new NATL Chair will take place a month before the Fall NAAC meeting in September.

### **20. Group photo**

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**12:55 PM Meeting Adjourns**

**Appendix 1: Fiscal report for 2013-2014  
NATL Fiscal Plan for FY 2013-14**

Approved September 19, 2013

**Funds available for 2013-14, excluding stipends for Graduate TAs\***

Brought forward from 2012-13		-30	
Projected income for 2013-14			
Provost	6,000		
NATL endowment	4,625		
	Sum	10,625	
	<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>\$10,595</b>

**Spending plan for 2013-14**

OPS			
Undergraduate TA	4,322		
Control of invasives	1,320		
	Sum	5,642	
OE			
Miscellaneous expenses	2,500		
Upland pine restoration	1,000		
2000 NT fliers	400		
2 minigrants @\$500 each	1,000		
	Sum	4,900	
	<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>\$10,542</b>
To be carried forward			\$53

**NATL improvement fund** (from online donations)  
**Online donations to NATL** (implemented March 2012)      \$ 921

\* The Provost and the CALS Dean will each pay the stipend for a NATL Graduate Teaching Assistant

**17 April 2014 Report for FY 2013-14**

**Receipts**

Already received	Projected
-30	-30
6,000	6,000
3,506	4625
9,476	10,595

**Expenditures**

Already spent or encumbered	Projected
4,082	4,322
1320	1,320
	5,642
1,295	2,500
796	1,000
398	398
1,000	1,000
3,489	4,898
	10,540
	55

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**Appendix 2: Fiscal plan for 2014-2015**  
**Initial NATL Fiscal Plan for FY 2014-15**

Final version to be approved at Fall meeting

**Funds available for 2013-14, excluding stipends for Graduate TAs\*.**

Brought forward from 2013-14	55		
Projected income for 2014-15			
Provost	6,000		
NATL endowment	4,625		
		Sum	10,680
		<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$10,680</b>

**Comments**

Assumes no change  
 Assumes no change

**Spending plan for 2014-15**

OPS			
Undergraduate TAs	4,322		
Control of invasives	1,320		
		Sum	5,642
OE			
Miscellaneous expenses	2,500		
Upland pine restoration	1,050		
2000 NT fliers	400		
2 minigrants @\$500 each	1,000		
		Sum	4,950
		<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$10,592</b>
To be carried forward			\$88

Experienced help, 8 hrs/week  
 (does most of routine maintenance of nature trails)  
 Invasive specialist, 2 hrs/week

Continues efforts to restore 13 acres  
 of longleaf pine ecosystem  
 Based on quote

Program attracts student proposals  
 to fulfill NATL needs

**NATL improvement fund** (from online donations)

**Online donations to NATL** (implemented March 2012)      \$    921

**Appendix 3: Volunteer summary**

Since the last NAAC meeting in September 2013, NATL has hosted a number of volunteer events. Volunteers at these events worked on improving wheelchair accessibility on the SEEP trail, replacing boards on the boardwalk, creation of an invasive species informational brochure, Coral Ardisia control, trash removal, clearing grid lines, and folding NATL Top50 Booklets. These events brought 91 volunteers who worked a total of 243.5 hours. In addition, Tom Walker, Ken Prestwich, Nicole Casuso, and Sam Hart collectively donated 410 hours of their time to NATL.

**Volunteer Events**

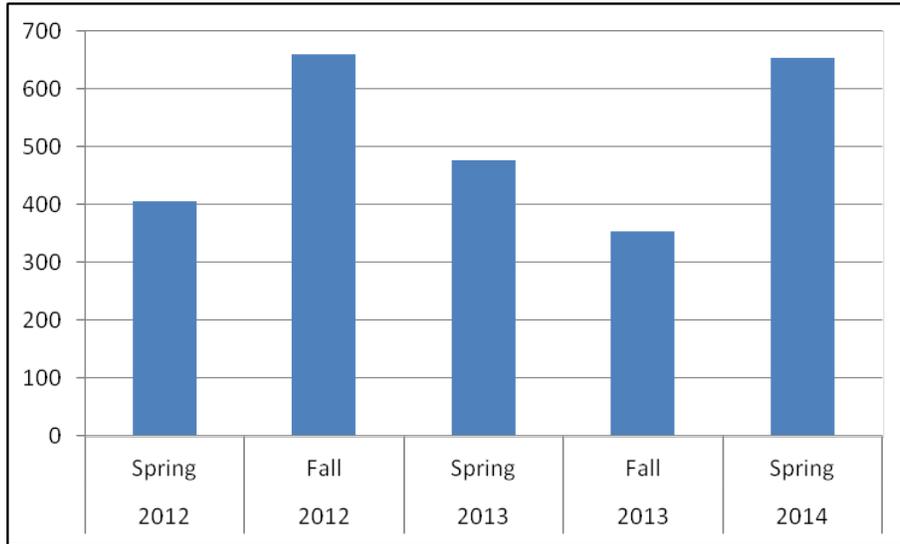
<b>Sept</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>February</b>
9/28: Gator Plunge volunteers folded 140 scavenger hunt booklets (17 people x 2 hrs) <b>34 hrs</b>	10/20: Chris Johns sat at NATL's table at Butterfly Fest <b>7 hrs</b>	11/1: Monica Camacho helped trim trails and pick up trash <b>1.5 hrs</b>	MLK Day of Service volunteers picked up trash on south trail (2 lg bags) and pulled Coral Ardisia (54 plants) (26 people x 2.5 hrs) <b>65 hrs</b>	Running club volunteers folded 70 top50 booklets (3 people x 2 hrs) <b>6hrs</b>
	10/20: AGR fraternity helped improve wheelchair accessibility on the SEEP trail and reviewed nature trail photo signs (17 people X 3.5 hrs) <b>59.5 hrs</b>	11/9: Monica Camacho folded top50 booklets <b>1.5 hrs</b>	1/17 Monica Camacho helped clear gridlines in the restricted area <b>2 hrs</b>	
		11/13: William Beach trimmed trails <b>5hrs</b>	1/31 Monica Camacho helped pick up trash in NATL East and folded top 50 booklets <b>2 hrs</b>	
		11/19: William Beach trimmed trails <b>5hrs</b>		
		11/21:William Beach trimmed trails <b>5hrs</b>		
		11/24: Members from the UF Running Club picked up trash and trimmed trails (7 people X 2 hrs) <b>14 hrs</b>		
		11/24: members of the SNRE, WEC, TCD, and Forestry Clubs pick up trash, trim trails, and remove coral ardesia (18 people X 2 hrs) <b>36 hrs</b>		

**Volunteer Hours September 2013-April 2014**

Miscellaneous Volunteer Projects	243.5 hours
Tom Walker	267 hours
Ken Prestwich	14 hours
Nicole Casuso	62 hours
Sam Hart	67 hours

<b>Total</b>	<b>653.5 hours</b>
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**Volunteer Hours Reported at NAAC Meetings- Spring 2012-Date**



*SEEP trail wheelchair accessibility improvements- In the past one portion of the SEEP nature trail sloped so steeply that wheelchair users feared they would turn over. In another portion of the trail a swale also made wheelchair accessibility difficult. On October 20, 2013, the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity, helped by Tom Walker, leveled the trail by placing railroad ties downslope and cutting soil from upslope and using it to fill behind the ties. They also built a small bridge across the swale.*



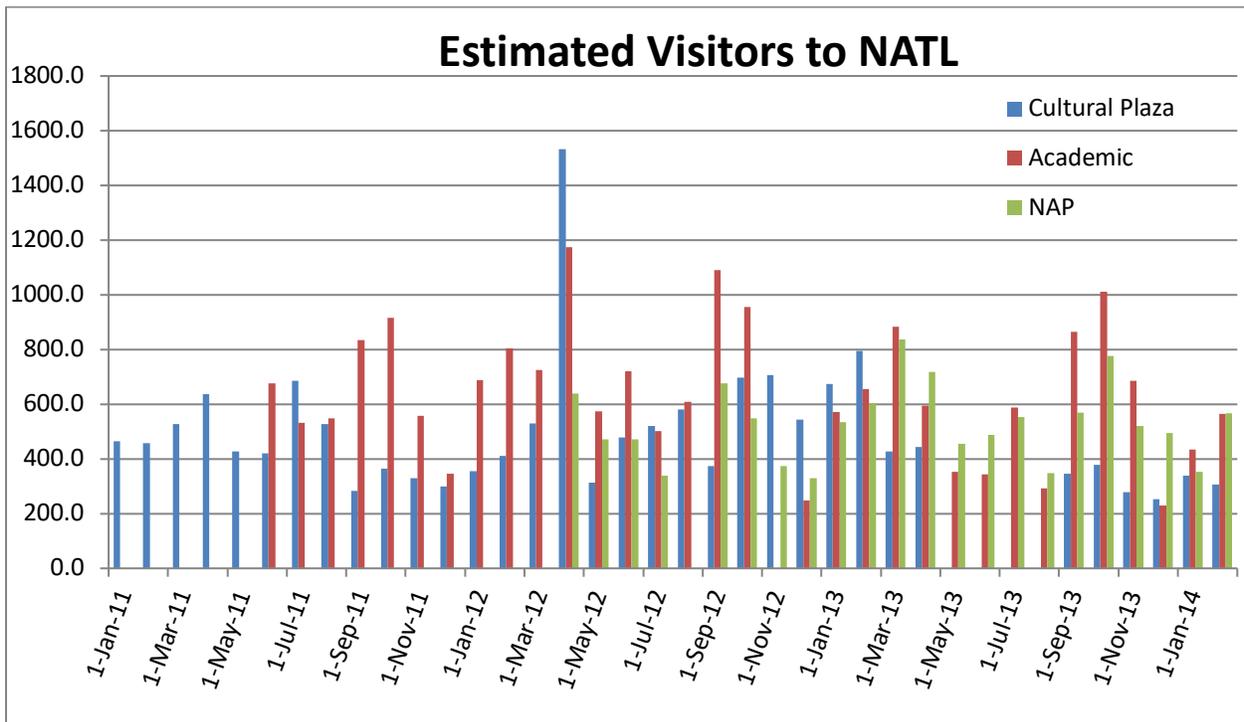
*The Student Government Volunteers at the MLK Day of Service*



**Appendix 4: People Counter Summary**

Three TrailMaster units are installed at NATL’s Academic, Cultural Plaza and Natural Area Park Entrances. These units measure NATL usage by counting the number of people passing through each of the three entrances. The Cultural Plaza Entrance has had a TrailMaster installed since July 2010, however initial technical difficulties yielded unreliable data in the first few months. Subsequently, two additional units were installed at the Academic Entrance (June 2011) and Natural Area Park Entrance (April 2012). Figures 1 and 2 summarize information collected by the TrailMaster units since 2010. Because most NATL visitors are counted twice (as they enter and exit), all counts are divided by two in order to estimate the number of visitors NATL receives.

**Figure 1.** Summary of TrailMaster counts for 2011-2014 at the Cultural Plaza, Academic and NAP entrances (all numbers are TrailMaster counts/2 because most users are counted twice, as they enter and exit).



**Figure 2.** Summary of NATL usage estimates via TrailMaster counts (all numbers are TrailMaster counts/2 because most users are counted twice, as they enter and exit).  
 \*Technical difficulties, possibly due to ants and/or laser sensitivity setting, caused data to be unreliable from May-August

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
<b>CPE</b>	2010												324	324
	2011	465	457	528	636	428	422	686	527	283	366	330	300	5428
	2012	356	412	529	1532	313	478	521	582	373	697	706	543	7042
	2013	673	796	428	443	*	*	*	*	346	380	279	253	3598
	2014	338.5	305.5											644
<b>AE</b>	2011						676	533	549	835	916	558	346	4413
	2012	689	804	725	1175	573	720	502	609	1090	955		249	8091
	2013	572	656	883	595	352	344	587	291.5	864	1010	686	229	7069.5
	2014	434.5	564.5											999
<b>NAP</b>	2012				639	471	472	321	384	677	549	375	331	4219
	2013	534	605	838	717.5	455.5	488	553	347	568.5	776	521.5	495.5	6899.5
	2014	353	567.5											920.5
													<b>Grand Total</b>	49647.5

**Appendix 5: Rain Monitoring**

In March 2013, Dr. Mark Clark donated a data-logging rain gauge which records rain with a tipping bucket rainfall collector. This new gauge gives digital readings of water level and temperature, and can be found on the East Trail near the SEEP, beside the original milk can rain gauge. Data collected by the gauge is uploaded once per month, at the same time as the trail masters. Rainfall (in inches) recorded since installation in April 2013 is summarized below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>2013</b>				3.68	3.5	7.28	11.74	6.95	4.25	0.27	3.38	3.43
<b>2014</b>	5.79	4.24										

**Appendix 6: Web presence**

*NATL's Online Presence: Facebook, Twitter and website visits*

Recent notable changes to our site include:

- a new page displaying TrailMaster data (<http://natl.ifas.ufl.edu/naturetrails/trailmaster.php>)
- a new page displaying Rain Gauge data (<http://natl.ifas.ufl.edu/naturetrails/raingauge.php>)
- a new page to accompany the Top 50 Species booklet (<http://natl.ifas.ufl.edu/naturetrails/top50.php>)



### **Appendix 8: Restoration of Upland Pine**

*Tom Workman, NATL's new burn master, headed a controlled burn of Blocks C and D of upland pine on Sunday, 22 Dec 2013. The burn started later than originally planned due to the wind not shifting to the SW as early as NOAA had predicted. Because the winds were not as strong or as steady as forecast and the humidity remained unexpectedly high, the fire did not carry as well as had been hoped. Nonetheless, approximately 75% of the area of Block C burned. Block D did not fare as well, with the fire effective in about 15% of its area. (Block D has never burned well because most its large longleaf pines, whose needle drop would carry a fire, died after the 2002 hurricanes.) In the future, Block E, which has never been burned, will be burned with C and D. It was omitted this time because the >2000 wiregrass and lopsided Indiangrass plugs planted in late July 2013 would have been killed or stressed.*

*A burn of the Public Area upland pine (UP Blocks A and B) is planned for April 2014--as soon as conditions permit (NW wind, Phillips Center not hosting a major event, etc.) and our burn master can arrange it.*

*Mostly on a volunteer basis, Sam Hart continues to add to the botanical foundation of NATL's upland pine ecosystem. By the end of last year he had increased the species count [from 62 to 222](#) including 19 species that are new to NATL. He has also taken and made easily accessible by species more than 3000 digital photographs of various stages and parts of the species he has identified. These images are a valuable resource for making 4x5" photosigns—to complement the stock of photosigns already available for display along the UP and other nature trails.*



Describe the objectives, justification and methods of the project. Describe any potential impacts on NATL, specifically noting materials (flags, equipment, etc.) that will be left in NATL. Please use the [NATL grid](#) to indicate where the materials will be placed, how your materials will be labelled (i.e. with your name or initials) and how long they will be left in NATL. Also note any temporary or permanent ecological changes in NATL that may be expected. **This project description should be as concise as possible - not exceeding one page (excluding the NATL grid document) – and submitted with this form.**

**Project title:**

**Proposal submission date:**

**Estimated start date:**

**Estimated end date:**

**Project description:**