Summary

From South Venice to the Gasparilla Island Causeway, Lemon Bay is dominated by beaches, barrier islands, and mangroves. Wildflower Preserve is an 80-acre section of land located in Cape Haze Peninsula that drains into Lemon Bay. This area once operated as a golf course. Due to man-made alterations and abandonment of the golf course in 2006, waterways on the property developed poor water quality conditions, an overgrowth of non-native vegetation, and a decrease in native wildlife habitat.

In 2010 Lemon Bay Conservancy acquired the property and began restoration efforts in partnership with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Project design, excavation, and wetland restoration began in 2016 and will continue through 2019.

CHNEP is partially funding the next phase of this project which entails the removal of exotic invasive species as well as the planting of Florida-native vegetation in approximately forty-two acres of the upland portions of the project area. The plantings will include saw palmetto, gallberry, coco plum, Florida swamp privet, firebush, yaupon holly, wax myrtle, red cedar, and South Florida slash pine.
Anticipated Results and Benefits

**Improved Aquatic and Terrestrial Habitat:**
Expanding tidally influenced marsh areas and wetlands will improve and increase habitats for aquatic species including juvenile snook and tarpon. Juvenile tarpon populations are being monitored by Lemon Bay Conservancy in partnership with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) as part of an ongoing fishery study. In addition, the added native vegetation and removal of invasive species will create new littoral zones and rookery islands which will also enhance wading and shorebird habitat.

**Community Outreach:**
This project will benefit the community by providing access to a number of nature trails that span the preserve. Along with this, a number of educational programs will be made available for both children and adults to enhance public understanding of environmental topics. Lemon Bay Conservancy also works with Lemon Bay High School STEM students to complete projects.

**Improved Water Quality:**
The planting of Florida-native vegetation and the merging of wetlands in this area will help to filter water that may contain high nutrient content before it reaches Lemon Bay. This will benefit the water quality of the project area itself, as well as the entire watershed this area flows into.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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