

GCCF Awards \$75,000 to Conservation Foundation

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Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast recently received a \$75,000 grant from Gulf Coast Community Foundation in support of their joint project with Sarasota Audubon Society to re-wild the Quad Parcels at the Celery Fields. The grant was made possible through Gulf Coast’s Environmental Initiative Fund and is designated to implement strategies from their *Community Playbook for Clean Waterways*.

Released in early 2021, the *Community Playbook for Clean Waterways* is a comprehensive online manual highlighting activities to reduce and remove manmade nutrient pollution in our region’s waterways. Conservation Foundation and Sarasota Audubon Society aim to implement activities from five of the *Playbook’s* ten chapters as part of the Quad Parcel re-wilding.

“Gulf Coast Community Foundation is committed to improving water quality and stewarding initiatives to help improve our environment. The re-wilding of the Quad Parcels at the Celery Fields will improve our environment in many ways, and we are honored to support this amazing project,” said Gulf Coast Community Foundation’s Vice President of Community Leadership, Jon Thaxton.

The re-wilding includes improvements to an existing stormwater pond on the northeast parcel, along with the addition of a stream on the southeast parcel. This will allow for enhanced water filtration and storage, thus improving the water quality that flows into Phillippi Creek and ultimately Sarasota Bay.

The re-wilding also includes extensive plantings of native species, benefitting birds and other wildlife while at the same time enhancing the ability of the soil to naturally process nutrients and retain water. A no-mow shoreline will be established as part of the improvements to the existing pond which will prevent grass clippings from directly entering the water and releasing nutrients that stimulate algae growth. The pond will also serve as a learning tool to demonstrate how effective stormwater ponds can filter pollutants when they incorporate native plants and are sustainably maintained.

“Ensuring water quality and quantity is a top priority for Conservation Foundation and safeguarding our local water resources is one of the primary goals of the Quad Parcel re-wilding,” says Christine P. Johnson, President of Conservation Foundation. “We are incredibly grateful to Gulf Coast Community Foundation for their investment in this community project and their ongoing commitment to both our work and the future of our region.”

To learn more about the re-wilding of the Quad Parcels, visit conservationfoundation.com/quads.

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