

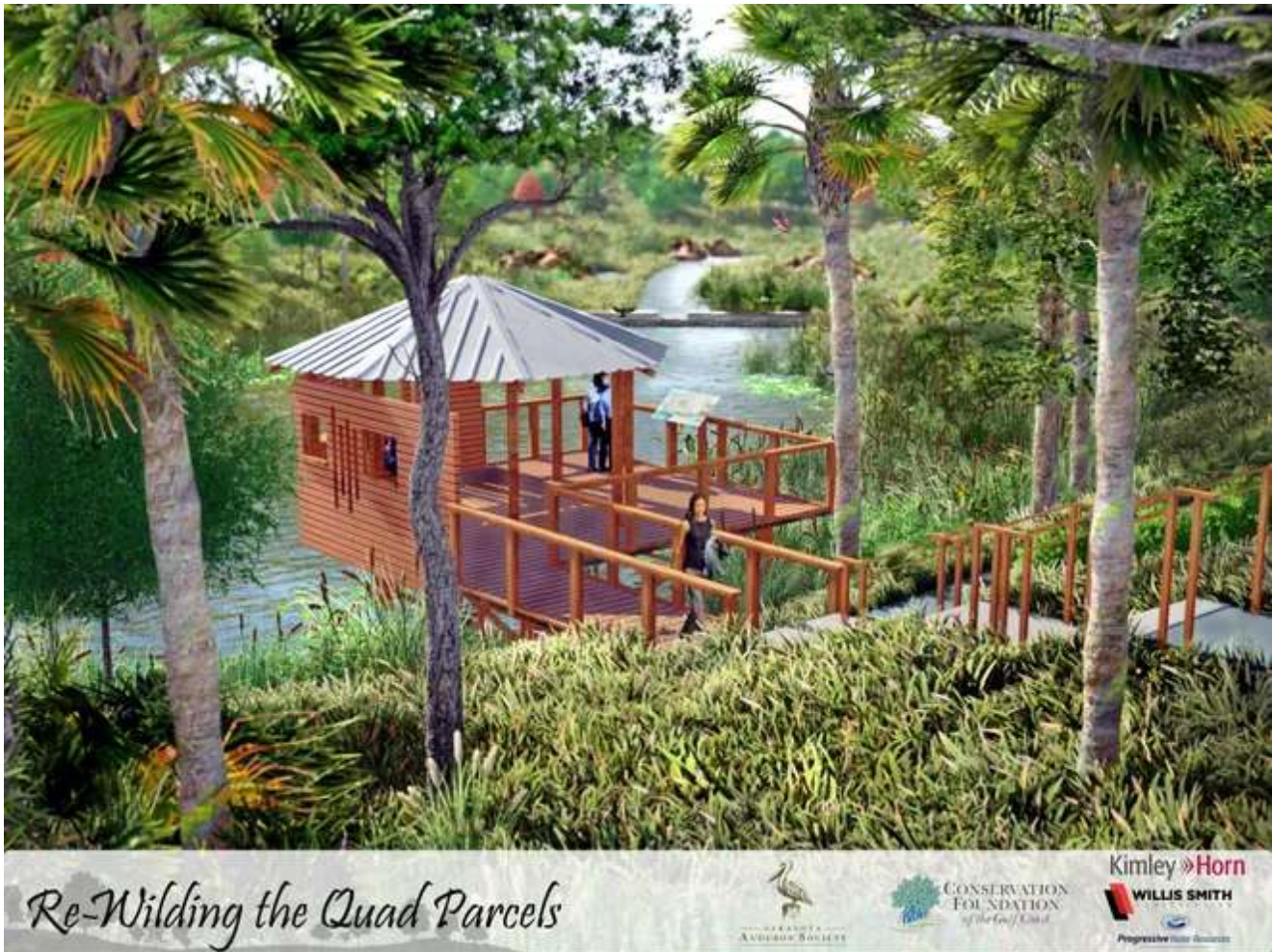
Grant funds to pay for interns to monitor water quality at Quad Parcels 're-wilding'

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Staff Report

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SARASOTA COUNTY – Sarasota Audubon recently received a \$10,000 grant from the Gulf Coast Community Foundation for interns to test water quality at the 33-acre Quad Parcels near the celery fields.

The water quality monitoring is a feature of the “Re-Wilding of the Quad Parcels,” an effort to transform the land into suitable wildlife habitat.

“Working with partners like Sarasota Audubon to improve our environment and include area students in the process is a win-win for our region,” Jon Thaxton, senior vice president of community leadership for Gulf Coast Community Foundation, said in a prepared statement. “We are grateful for organizations like Sarasota Audubon Society who conserve and restore our natural ecosystem, creating thriving opportunities for all.”



Related: [Sarasota residents get first look at plans for Quad Parcels](#)

Previously: [Celery Fields project is taking shape](#)

The Quad Parcels, so named because they straddle the intersection of Palmer and Apex roads, are just east of Interstate 75 off Fruitville Road, east of downtown Sarasota.

The northwest parcel already contains Sarasota County's Apex Road fire station.

The Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast and Sarasota Audubon hope that transplanted native plants and trees will provide a haven for a variety of wildlife.

Water features in the Quad Parcels will undergo regular water quality testing – a huge benefit to wildlife that feeds and shelters at pond edges.



Best practices for stormwater pond management will be used to ensure maximum filtration of pollution from runoff as water enters the ponds.

Sarasota Audubon and the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast are working with site engineers on the design.

“Our goals are to improve the water quality by following the Healthy Ponds Collaborative guidelines, to establish an internship program to monitor our changes, and to educate the public about the benefits and vital importance of healthy ponds for our birds, wildlife, and the community,” Sarasota Audubon President Jeanne Dubi said in the same statement. “The grant will enable us to monitor changes and share data with the public to show how healthy stormwater retention ponds improve water quality.”

Water from the Quad Parcels currently flows into Main C canal which then flows into Phillippi Creek and subsequently Roberts Bay.

“Safeguarding the quality of our water at the Celery Fields before it heads downstream has been a priority of re-wilding the Quad Parcels design,” said Dubi. “We are looking forward to creating demonstration ponds for our community.”



According to Dubi, students from area high schools and colleges accepted into the paid internship program will learn water quality monitoring techniques from sustainability leaders and academics with expertise in water flow and water quality. Based on the water analysis and data reporting, Sarasota Audubon will monitor the effects of the ponds' improvements and make adjustments as needed.

Interns will also assist with carbon sequestration monitoring; public park management including the recruitment and managing of volunteers; coordinating with environmental agencies; working with Sarasota County and the academic community; and developing and managing education programs for the general public.

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In 2019, the Sarasota County Commission dedicated a perpetual conservation easement on the northeast, southeast and southwest SW Quad Parcels to the Conservation Foundation, tasking Sarasota Audubon to manage the habitat and public access. To learn more about the re-wilding and concept design, visit <https://www.SarasotaAudubon.org/quad>.