

Natural Resources Branch

Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

9:30 AM – 11:00 AM | SEPTEMBER 07, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 100, FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

At 9:30 AM on September 7, 2023, Dan DeLisi, Branch Lead, convened the Natural Resources Branch meeting. The following members were present:

- Dan DeLisi, Branch Lead
- Daniel Andrews
- Ron George
- David Willems
- Holly Milbrandt
- MaryBeth Saunders
- Maya Robert
- Kate Gooderham

Facilitator and Branch Support:

- Jon Romine, Collaboratory
- Tessa LeSage, Collaboratory
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting
- Tracey Phillips, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Mr. Romine, Facilitator, provided a review of the work of the Recovery Task Force (RTF) and its Branches since the last meeting. Mr. Romine provided an update of the involvement of all stakeholders, including Lee County. He noted the purpose of the meeting to discuss the Draft Branch Initiative Profiles.

Overview of RTF Member One-on-One Meetings

Mr. Romine provided a summary of the meeting conducted by the ResilientLee Support Team (Support Team) to meeting with jurisdictional staff and leadership. Mr. Romine explained that twelve meetings have been conducted to date to brief each member of the Recovery Task Force.

Branch Action Plan

Ms. Phillips reviewed the purpose of the Branch recommendations development and explained to members that the term for those could change but that the process would remain the same. The Support Team provided a review of the current recovery planning processes. The Support Team also provided an overview of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery Program. Members discussed the different potential grant funding programs and the planning process for increasing the resilience of the area.

Draft Branch Initiative Profiles

Mr. Romine introduced the structure of the Initiative Profiles. He explained the Branch's original intent of Initiative Profiles and the proposed new recommended format for the Initiative Profiles. Mr. DeLisi stated that for green infrastructure there are regulatory actions, direct actions, and educational programs that could be included. Members were given a Google form to provide feedback on the Initiative Profiles. Mr. Romine explained the importance of Branch member feedback and confirmed that feedback can be submitted via the QR code or link provided in the email members received for this meeting.

Members discussed if the role of education should be included throughout the Initiative Profiles or if it should be included as a standalone Initiative Profile. The Support Team recommended that both should be included in specific projects that encompass Education & Outreach and the fact that each Initiative Profile has a strong learning opportunity for the community.

Mr. DeLisi suggested that flood control and management should be included as its own Initiative Profile. Members discussed the distinction between water management and flood control practices. Mr. DeLisi suggested that the initiative should describe the actions for flood control and not to create additional point source pollution. Members requested that water quality could be its own Initiative Profile to provide additional context to Infrastructure Initiative Profiles. The Support Team said it would be very beneficial for the

group to look at the Infrastructure Initiative Profiles due to overlap in the topics of wastewater, potable water, and septic to sewer. Members discussed water resources and the impacts of stormwater on water quality. Ms. Phillips stated that the Branch members are the experts on these topics and empowered members to provide feedback on splitting of Initiative Profiles. Mr. Willems discussed regional impacts of water quality. Members discussed water resources and the impacts of stormwater on water quality. Ms. Phillips stated that the Branch members are the experts on these topics and empowered members to provide feedback on splitting of Initiative Profiles.

Members brought up multi-use trails and how that concept fits within the Initiative Profiles. Members suggested that the Initiatives highlight the alternative transportation and environmental benefits of multi-use trails. Members discussed that multi-use trails can have educational and community outreach components and lead to an overall increased level of commitment to and betterment of the environment. Some members suggested multi-use trails could be incorporated into wildlife management or land management initiatives. Members stressed the misalignment of the multi-use trails Initiative Profile being grouped with the Natural Resource Branche. Members discussed the potential for multi-use trails to be included in the Plan as a project.

Mr. Romine reiterated the instructions to provide feedback on the Natural Resources and Infrastructure Initiative Profiles by September 13, 2023. Ms. LeSage stressed the importance of the structure of these Initiative Profiles and the funding that comes along with the structure, especially when talking about infrastructure funding. She encouraged members to take the funding of these Initiative Profiles into account when providing feedback about these Initiatives.

Questions and Next Steps

Mr. Andrews described the Hurricane Idalia impacts in North Florida. He stressed that the natural areas and buffers protected those areas from storm surge, emphasizing the importance of keeping those resources intact.

Ms. LeSage stated that Collaboratory was working with Florida Gulf Coast University to provide an analysis for the valuation of ecosystems in Southwest Florida. They are working to identify the feasibility of a full study and how it can inform Initiative Profiles.

Public Comment

Susie Hassett, representing the School District of Lee County, commented that Winter Garden, in the Orlando area, is an example of a successful initiative for the use of natural

resources. The lakes and trails have native plants and rain gardens that mitigate stormwater runoff and can be used for recreation. The extra tree cover over the waterways provides cooling. There are opportunities for improvement in the quality and recreational use of the location. In Cape Coral, they have created water storage.

Elly McKuen commends the Branch and the expertise of the members. She requested confirmation that specific projects for Bonita Springs have been included, including those submitted by the local non-profits. She stated that the Branch initiatives should be available to the public to provide their comments as well.

Alvin Henderson commented on the importance of collaboration and prevention of silos for these Initiatives; there is benefit for organizing Initiatives holistically, in between Branches so that funding opportunities are not lost. In addition, Mr. Henderson stated that Initiative Profiles will need to be aligned to meet the funding opportunities, which can have strict processes. He commented that other [other than HMGP and CDBG-DR] funding opportunities should be explored for longer term projects. Mr. Henderson advocated for not losing sight of other funding sources in this process and bigger opportunities.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Mr. Romine thanked the Members for attending and then adjourned the meeting at 11:02 AM.