



Panhandle Wildflower Alliance 2017–18 Annual Report

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The Panhandle Wildflower Alliance continues to build awareness and support for the goals of the Florida Wildflower Foundation to expand conservation of roadside wildflowers within the 16 counties that are encompassed by FDOT District 3. Volunteer advocates are working with local governments to request modified mowing of state roads with naturally occurring wildflowers. There are many miles of state roadsides designated for conservation encompassed by the District's Turf Management Plan, and more are pending. Wildflower resolutions are in place for 15 out of 16 counties in D3 (Liberty County being the exception). There are only two counties out of 16 — Escambia and Holmes — that do not have an active wildflower conservation program.

PWA's 2017–2018 accomplishments include:

- Initiation of the PWA Wildflower Program in three counties by providing technical support and recruiting leadership and volunteers – Walton, Bay and Gadsden
- Quarterly newsletter established with contributions by PWA volunteers, DOT District 3 staff, and others.
- Contributions to social media to promote outreach goals of DOT and the Foundation
- Development of an infogram in progress highlighting the economic importance of wildflowers to agriculture, tourism, and increasing linear corridor habitat for pollinators.
- Presentations given to multiple conservation interest groups and garden-focused organizations.
- _____ miles of state roadsides designated as Wildflower Areas (WA). *Total pending inclusion of Gadsden County road report*
- Revised and expanded Panhandle Wildflower Brochure:

In July 2018, the Florida Wildflower Foundation partnered with Visit Florida to publish an expanded edition of the Panhandle wildflower brochure. The original publication featured only the eastern half of counties in the Panhandle. The new edition was expanded westward to include 16 counties that stretch between Escambia and Jefferson Counties, the area managed by FDOT District 3. This map is available at Florida Visitor Welcome Centers and has been a very popular publication with 100K copies distributed to date. The Foundation chose to print a

limited quantity of brochures with hopes to get more Panhandle counties engaged in wildflower conservation and then revise and publish again in November 2018.



FDOT District 3 Regional Accomplishments

Paths of Sunshine Award

The DOT District Three Midway Maintenance Unit received the Ella P. Wood 'Paths of Sunshine' award sponsored by the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs. This award was for exemplary management on SR 20 on a stretch between Geddie Rd. to Ft. Braden School. The application was submitted by Eleanor Dietrich on behalf of the PWA and the Magnolia Chapter of the Native Plant Society.



Interactive Wildflower Mapping Project

District 3 is working with a contractor to develop an interactive map of existing wildflower distribution in the Panhandle's 16 counties. The project is still under development.

Interstate Management

Planting and modified mowing of medians is being decreased although some planting still occurs. The focus is more on reduced mowing of the backslopes along I-10.

Progress in each county in District 3 (west to east)

Escambia

This county has no active wildflower group at present. Outreach efforts continue to identify leadership among local interest groups.

Santa Rosa

This county continues a robust wildflower program thanks to a motivated Master Gardner group and inspired leadership of Suzanne Spencer, a retired science teacher. The group applied for a Wells Fargo Corporate Grant this summer to fund a traveling exhibit to take to rural communities sharing the many economic benefits of the wildflower program.

No changes:

- SR 87 within Eglin AFB from south of the Yellow River to Vonnie Tolbert road (14 miles total, both sides)
- SR 4 from western boundary to the Blackwater State Forest to the Okaloosa county line (23.2 miles total, both sides)
- SR 8 from the Okaloosa county line to the Escambia Bay (60 miles total, both sides)
- SR 281 from Romano St to the south trailhead of Garcon Point road (10 miles total, both sides)

Okaloosa County

No changes:

- SR 285 from the Walton county line to SR 293 (17 miles total, both sides)
- SR 85 within Eglin AFB from Shoal River to SR 123 (17 miles total, both sides)
- SR 189 within Blackwater River SF from Shockey Springs road to north of High Springs rd (4.5 miles total, both sides)
- SR 4 from Beaver Creek Tower Road to the Santa Rosa county line (3.5 miles total, both sides)
- SR 85 southbound from Gen. Robert Bond Blvd to Lewis Turner Blvd (1.2 miles)

Walton

Walton County Commissioner Cecilia Jones gained support from fellow Commissioners to approve designating wildflower areas on selected state roads. A request was made to DOT and Bob Farley, FDOT's District 3 Vegetation Specialist, has been working on a management plan and placing wildflower signs to delineate the areas. The county road designations are still a work in progress. There is a meeting pending with the Public Works Director and PWA members to review recommended county roads for inclusion in wildflower conservation management.

- SR 81, south of the town of Red Bay, from the beginning of the Nokuse Plantation to Seven Runs Creek.
- SR 20 two miles east of Bruce from the Choctawhatchee River Bridge to Cowford Road.
- West of Bruce on SR 20, on the other side of Black Creek Bridge, on the south side is already signed as a Wildflower Area. It is approximately two miles in length on the eastbound (south) side of the roadway.
- SR 883, north of Freeport, for 1.2 miles
- SR 285 (on Eglin Air Force base): This is already a designated and signed Wildflower Area through an agreement between Eglin and FDOT D3.

Bay

Mila and Ray Bentz from Panama City have recently volunteered to provide new leadership for a local Bay County wildflower group. They met with Keith Bryant, Bay Co Public Works Director, to submit request for new state roads to D3 for designation as Wildflower Areas. Segments of SR 20, SR 79 and SR 77 have been requested for wildflower conservation.



Holmes

Holmes has no active wildflower group at present. Outreach efforts continue to identify leadership among local interest groups.

Washington

In the spring of 2018, a small group of volunteers and head of TDC, Heather Lopez, met to identify state roads with naturally occurring wildflower areas. Construction on SR 77 & 79 continues so the group will not approach DOT for designation until a future date. Two loop routes were identified that include these two state roads plus stretches of county roads. The TDC plans to apply for a highway beautification grant in 2020 after construction completed on SR 77.

Calhoun

September 2018, Kristy Terry, TDC Director, submitted a segment of SR 69 to be designated by D3. This new route will be added to upcoming revision of wildflower brochure map.

- SR 71 starts at the intersection of SR 71 and CR 392, progressing in segments along the west right of way of SR 71 to the intersection with SR 73.

- SR 73 between SR 71 and CR 392. This area was designated at the request of the Calhoun County Commission, chosen for its diversity of habitats and presence of rare plants

Gulf

No changes:

- SR 71 from White City Bridge to City Limits of Port St. Joe
- SR 30 from City Limits of Port St. Joe to the Franklin County Line

Franklin

No changes:

- SR 65 within the Apalachicola National Forest
- US 98 has a modified mowing plan throughout the county

Jackson

April 2018, Christie Andreasen, Jackson Co TDC Director, submitted a request for state road designation to D3 and received approval for the following:

- SR2, from Sills Road to Cowart's Creek
- SR166, from River Forest Road to Florida Caverns State Park
- SR10 West, from London Road to State Correctional Road
- SR10 East, from Cypress Roadside Park to the Grand Ridge welcome sign



Gadsden

Gadsden County has recently become active with recruitment of several interested citizens and a newly hired TDC Director. Efforts are currently underway to identify suitable NOWA's and submit request to D3 for designation in October. Hopefully this will happen in time to be included in the pending wildflower brochure

Liberty

- SR 65 from the north boundary of the Apalachicola National Forest to the Franklin county line (total of 65 miles, both sides)
- SR 20 west of Hosford from NE Chester St to fenced utility (.4 miles) (presence of rare plants)

Wakulla

County Commissioners considered eliminating the entire wildflower program earlier this year. After citizen protest, the BOCC reconsidered and voted to continue the wildflower program with modifications.

- SR 267 from the Leon County Line to Hwy 98 in Newport (both sides, 29 miles)
- Hwy 319 (Sopchoppy Hwy) from Hwy 98 in Medart to the Franklin County Line (both sides, 12 miles)
- US 98 West from Hwy 319 in Medart to the Franklin County Line (both sides, 8 miles)
- US 98 East from Hwy 319 to the Wakulla River (both sides)
- US 98 East from the Wakulla River to the Jefferson/Wakulla County Line (both sides)
- US 98 East from Newport to the Jefferson/Wakulla County Line (as conditions warrant) (both sides)
- Woodville Hwy (Hwy 363) between SR 267 and US 98 (both sides, 2.5 miles)
- Landscaping pending completion of bike route along US98 includes wildflower planting and installation of plants salvaged from rare plant rescue by volunteers last summer, led by Scott Davis, USFWS Ranger at St Marks NWR

Leon

No changes:

- SR 267 from Wakulla county line to SR 20 (28 miles total of both sides)
- SR 20 from Geddie road to Ft. Braden School (9 miles total of both sides)

Jefferson

No changes:

- SR 59 from US 27 to US 98, (35.2 miles)
- US 98 from the Wakulla county line to the Taylor county line (14.8 miles)
- US 19 from CR 149 to the Georgia state line, (14.4 miles)