

# ENGLEWOOD SUN

Thursday  
May 26, 2016



www.yoursun.com

AMERICA'S BEST COMMUNITY DAILY

\$1.00

AN EDITION OF THE SUN

## Wildflower Preserve project to enhance Lemon Bay

By **ELAINE ALLEN-EMRICH**  
COMMUNITY NEWS EDITOR

ENGLEWOOD — Once land is cleared of invasive plants and another estuary is created, the Wildflower Preserve will serve as a filtration system for cleaning water before it reaches Lemon Bay.

The preserve will also help restore diminishing habitats for juvenile tarpon and snook.

Through two grants of more than \$1 million, the Lemon Bay Conservancy, which oversees the preserve, is moving forward with a

huge habitat restoration project.

Located at an abandoned 80-acre golf course now known as Wildflower Preserve, the project will also enhance the existing freshwater and estuarine wetlands. It will add 14 acres of estuarine wetlands and five acres of freshwater wetlands, and add native wetland and coastal upland plantings.

"It will take about two months to take out about 50 acres of exotic vegetation including Brazilian pepper trees, and Australian pines and melaleuca," said Eva Furner, chair of the Wildflower Preserve Planning

committee, board member and volunteer. "It is scheduled at the end of next week. Once the acreage is cleared, we will use herbicides to stop the regrowth of the invasive plants and maintain it.

"After a year, we will go back in and plant about 3,000 pine trees and a variety of other natural species," she said.

Another important part of the project is adding new wetlands by digging up a portion of the golf course which will take in water

**PRESERVE | 7**



SUN PHOTO BY ELAINE ALLEN-EMRICH

At left, Eva Furner shows a map of improvements proposed for the 88-acre Wildflower Preserve.

## PRESERVE

FROM PAGE 1

that flows onto the property from nearby communities.

The nutrient-rich water will flow through the wetland and treat it naturally.

"Reducing excess nutrients that go into Lemon Bay is very important because it helps prevent algae, which blocks out seagrasses and causes problems in the natural communities," Furner said.

Some of the new brackish water created by digging out the course will be part

of the estuary. It will provide an important area for native fish to develop.

"Snook is hatched in the Gulf and then migrate to backwater creeks," Furner said. "By having these creeks, we will have an area where a lot of young fish like tarpon and snook develop for about a year and a half. Then they make their way back to the Gulf."

The project will not only improve the quality of water entering into the bay but increase the resilience of neighboring communities to the potential impacts of climate change — flooding and storm protection.

Jim Cooper, president of the Conservancy, said it's exciting to see the project move along after several years of planning and coordination with the South West Florida Water Management District and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, both of which gave grants for the renovations.

"It's not just moving forward as a vision but now as a reality," Cooper said. "We will need volunteers to help in the fall with lots of different things that are directly and indirectly involved with this ongoing project."

Email: [eallen@sun-herald.com](mailto:eallen@sun-herald.com)