

Project Update:

# Place-Based Recreational Fishery Conservation in Charlotte Harbor

Presented December 19, 2023

to

Charlotte County  
Board of County Commissioners  
Board Workshop



Bonefish  
& Tarpon  
TRUST



RESTORE  
SCIENCE PROGRAM

# Economic Impacts of Sport Fishing

- Natural resources & Ag. is a quarter of Charlotte County's economy <sup>1</sup>
  - \$5.6 B Real GDP generated by 49,000 workers in 2021 <sup>2</sup>
- **Recreational sport fishing generates 8 – 9% of total economic output**
  - \$497.3 M economic output & 4,300 jobs in 2021 (CD 17) <sup>3</sup>
  - \$108.6 M economic impact of Harbor tarpon fishing in 2010 <sup>4</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> [Coastal & Heartland NEP](#), 2020; <sup>2</sup> [Federal Reserve](#), 2022; <sup>3</sup> [American Sportfishing Assoc.](#), 2023; <sup>4</sup> [Everglades Foundation](#), 2011



# Social Impacts of Sport Fishing

- Local cultural icons



- The harbor and its fishing is central to attracting residents and tourists
- Tarpon Fishing Capital of the World
  - Boca Grande Pass
  - Peace River, Harbor grass flats, creeks & backwaters





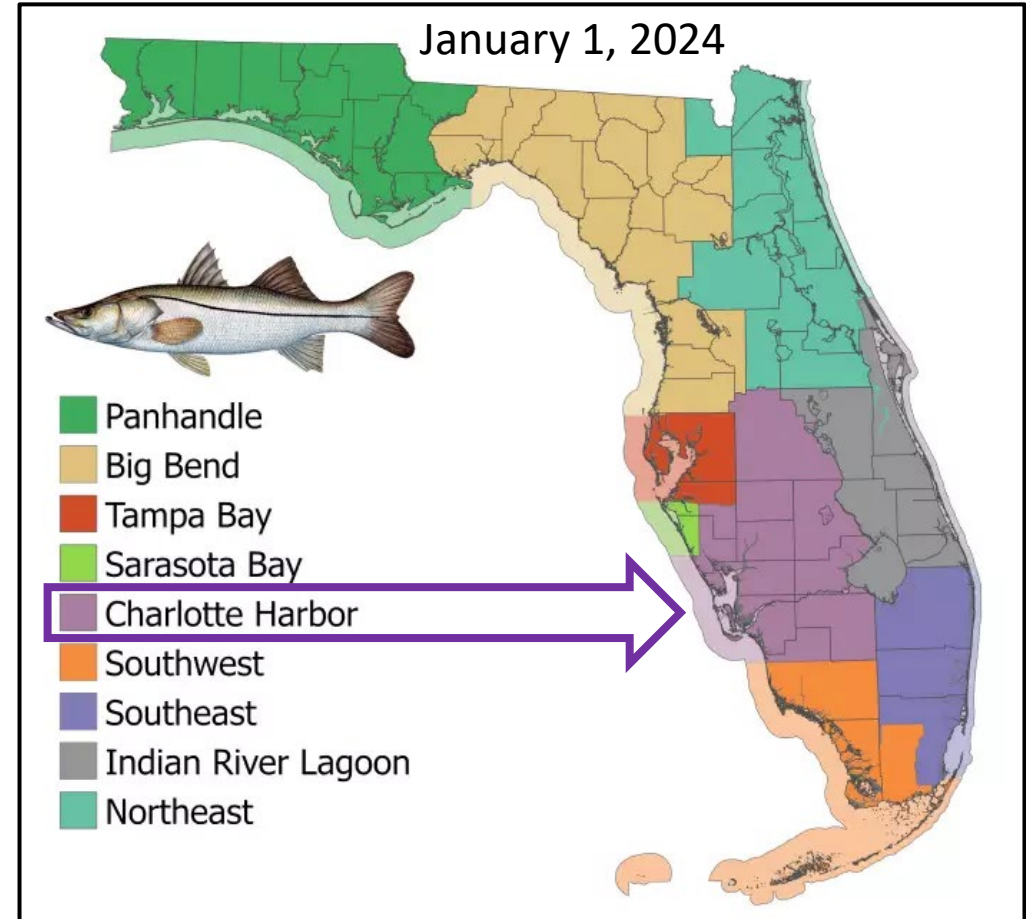
The conservation of natural resources is the fundamental problem.  
Unless we solve that problem, it will avail us little to solve all others.

- Theodore Roosevelt, 1907



# Holistic Fisheries Management Strategy

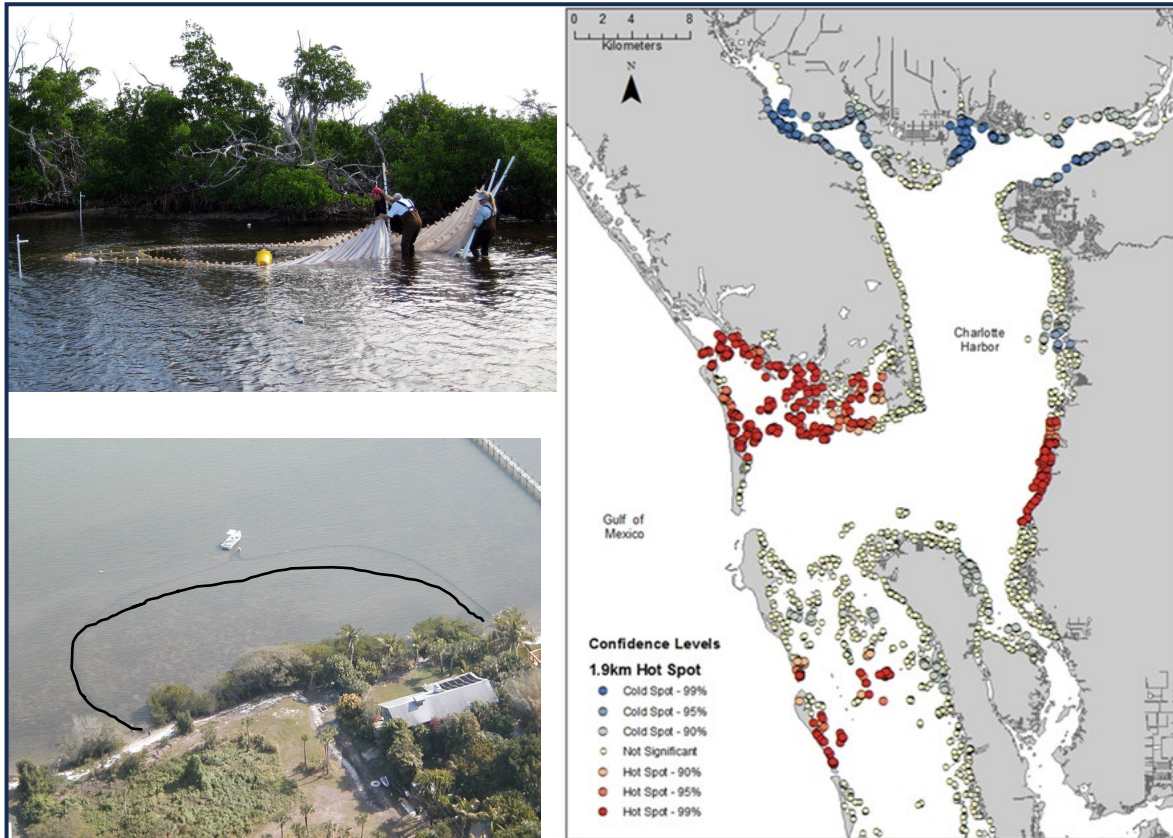
- New FWC regional fisheries management framework
  - Grassroots-driven by angler input
  - Explicitly includes regional differences in habitat and fishing effort into management process
  - Metrics evaluated annually
    - Includes **habitat** extent trends, etc.
- Collaborating with key partners
  - Habitat conservation & restoration



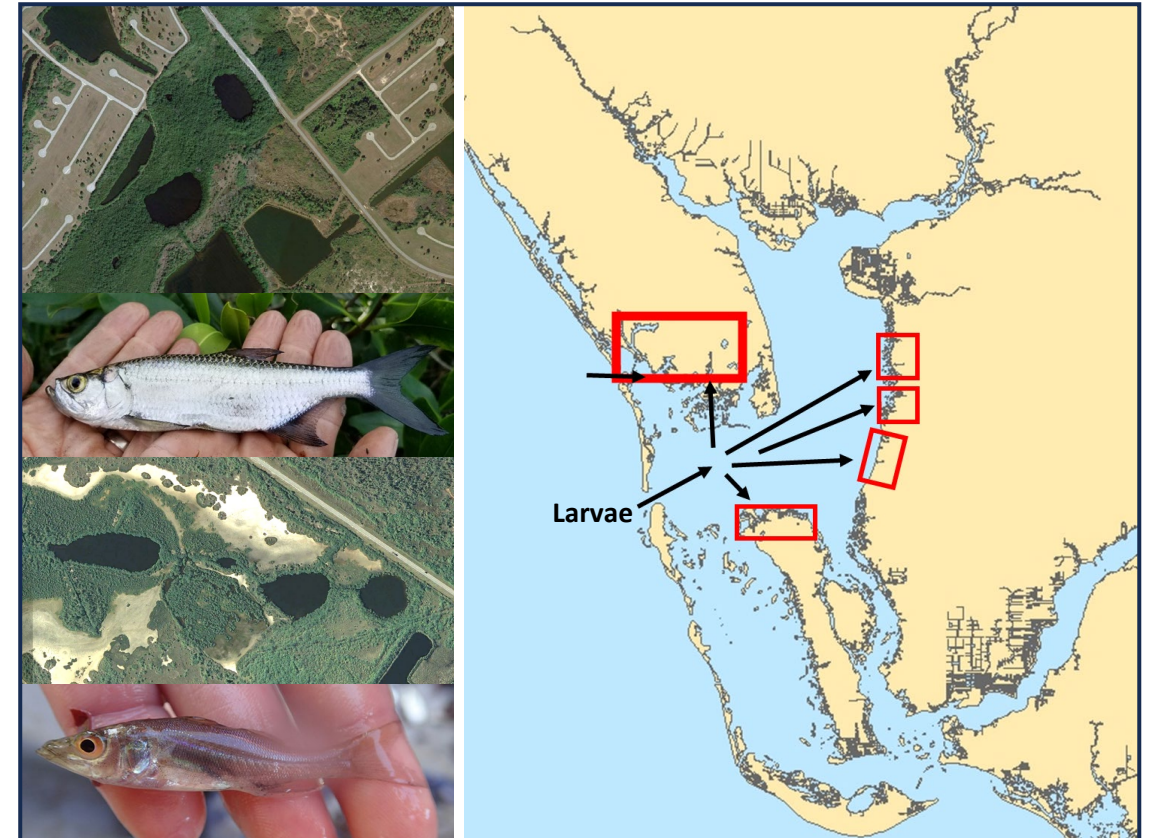


# Building Foundational Knowledge

## FWC Adult Fish Research Important Snook Habitat Locations



## FWC & BTT Juvenile Fish Research Juvenile Tarpon & Snook Habitats







# Complimentary Goal

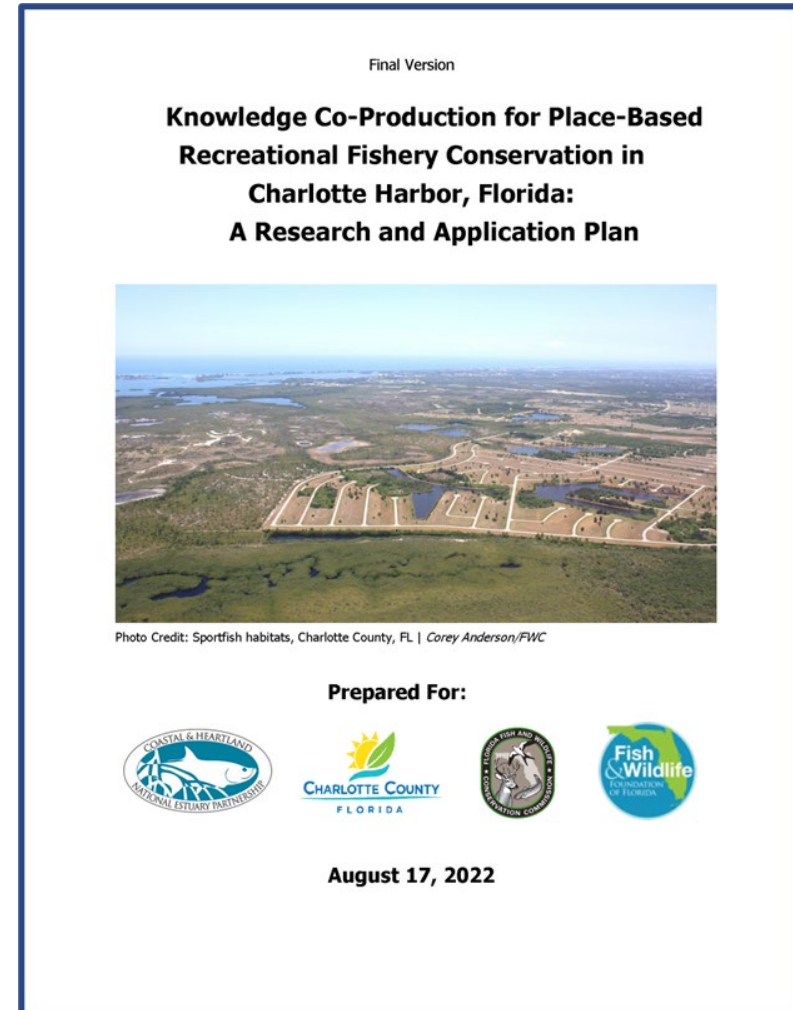
- How do we develop in a sustainable way?
- A 2-phase project gets at this question
  - Achieve county goals of sustainable development along Burnt Store and Cape Haze
  - Ensure a high-quality fishery
  - Collaborate across jurisdictions and expertise





# Phase 1: A Co-Produced Plan

- Planned Research Needs and Applications
  - Experts and community-guided CHNEP advisory committee workshops
  - Grant funded in 2021-22 by NOAA RESTORE Science Program
- Recommendations
  - Additional fish habitat research
  - Habitat and stormwater modeling
  - Public outreach for residents
  - Conservation decision support tools



# Phase 1: Plan Collaborators





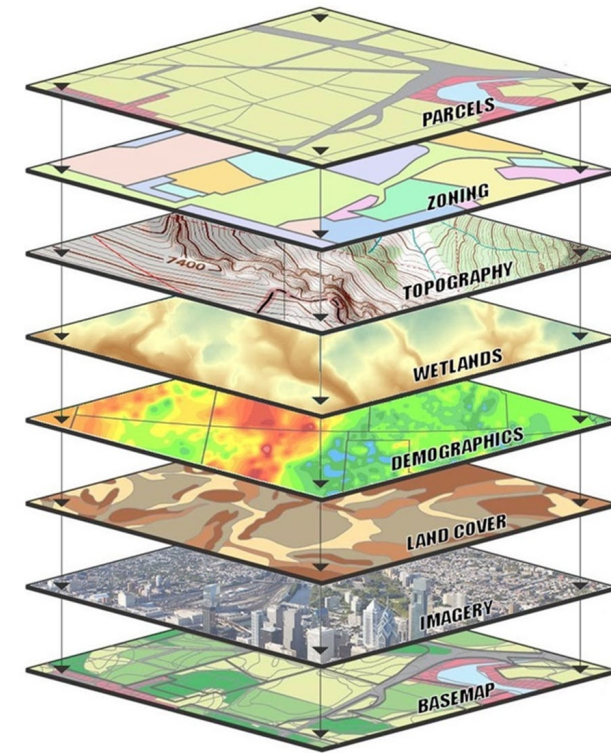
# Phase 2: Inform Local Conservation

- FWC received \$1.2 M from NOAA to implement the plan and recommendations over the next 5 years
- Purpose of this phase is to identify priority locations
- Develop decision support tools for conservation policy
  - Which habitats are most important to sport fish (now & future)?
  - Where are they most vulnerable and why?
  - Maps and geographic information available to partners



# Decision Support Tools

- Products and applications
  - Fish habitat location maps
    - Assess fish habitat conservation opportunities [Cape Haze and Burnt Store]
  - Storm water management modeling
    - Fish habitat and smart growth compatibility [Rotonda Meadows & Villas]
  - Habitat restoration effectiveness
    - Compare existing projects, identify appropriate new locations for habitat restoration [Cape Haze and Burnt Store]





# Applying the Research to (Local) Management

- Develop urban planning recommendations from results
- Find solutions that ensure economic resilience through environmental stability
  - Prioritized list of habitats for restoration or conservation
  - Incorporate into State fisheries and habitat management plans
- Expand the model to other localities



# Let's Continue to Work Together!

- The project team appreciates county staff's engagement with pursuing shared goals:
  - Preserving sport fish nurseries to sustain iconic and economically important sport fish populations into the future
  - Growing the economy and enhancing community life by conservation of wildlife and natural resources<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> [Charlotte County Community Scorecard](#)



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