ABS-00353

Changing community landscape choices through relationships

D.M. McGinnis[*], B.P. Galligan, and N.M. Ewy

Naples Botanical Garden, Naples, Florida, United States of America

[*]Corresponding author email: dmcginnis@naplesgarden.org

Keywords: education, government, partnership, restoration,

At meetings and conferences around the world, scientists and professionals are working to develop technologies and solutions to combat climate change. Many of these solutions, while promising, are in the development stages and/or are not ready to scale. Financing options are not yet available. While the world waits for new technologies and solutions to emerge and scale, citizens want to take action – now. This presentation is a case study of how one community made the decision to radically change its practices when a unique restoration opportunity presented itself.In this region, white sandy beaches drive a massive tourism and real estate economy. Beach erosion is addressed every few years by mining and trucking in sand or dredging and pumping offshore. When replenished, these beaches are typically planted with only two or three plant species, often with genetics from other regions. This lack of diversity fuels the cycle of beach erosion and artificial replenishment. For several years, Naples Botanical Garden has been providing expertise and advice to local governments and elected officials regarding beach dune and stormwater plants, tree species, and other landscaping choices that can improve resiliency and require less irrigation and fertilizer. In September 2022, the region was hit by Hurricane Ian, a Category 5 storm that caused massive damage, loss of life, and the destruction of hundreds of kilometres of beach dunes. Shortly afterward, Naples Botanical Garden educated government officials about the mix of plant species that should be on a beach dune, and suggested that since the coastline must be replanted, it could be done properly. Local officials agreed. This session will tell the story of how this community permanently changed how it will restore and care for its coastal ecosystem.