



Sanibel-Captiva
Conservation Foundation

Interpretive Master Plan

November, 2004



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Preface

Purpose of this Plan

In August, 2003, the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation entered into a contractual agreement with Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, to develop an Interpretive Master Plan to “enhance orientation and interpretive media at SCCF”. The “Scope of Work” described in the contract included:

Phase 1: Inventory and Analysis

- 1A. Affirm the SCCF mission and goals; develop a consensus on the SCCF vision for development.
- 1B. Conduct a market analysis of target audiences (members, residents, island visitors) in various seasons.
- 1C. Develop a comprehensive listing of the concepts, messages and themes to be communicated in SCCF programs and media.
- 1D. Analyze existing facilities, and wayfinding / interpretive media (signs, publications, exhibits and interpretive panels) as they relate to target audiences, site resources, program goals, objectives and messages.

Phase 2: Interpretive Plan

- 2A. Develop prescriptions to address issues and problems identified in phase 1.
- 2B. Develop facility, media and wayfinding conceptual plans.



*Spider web on SCCF trails,
February, 2004*



*White ibis at Sanibel Gardens,
February, 2004*

This plan is a diagnostic report to the SCCF Education Committee and SCCF Board describing the current status of the interpretive media and facilities. Prescriptive recommendations are made to enhance SCCF facilities and wayfinding / interpretive media as they relate to the mission, goals, target markets, resources, and messages of the SCCF. Included are conceptual renderings of proposed site, building and media developments, with cost estimates, which can be used as a marketing and fund-raising tool and be submitted to fabricators for bids.

This plan reflects the collective input of the many stakeholders and clients of the Foundation who expressed their ideas in interviews, focus groups and visioning meetings. It is tempered by the knowledge and insights of the interpretive consultant team who specialize in the development of similar plans and products.



SCCF Nature Center at sunset, February, 2004



Chapter 1

Introduction



Education has always been an important part of the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation's mission. Interior shot of the nature center in 1979.

The SCCF Mission

The SCCF was an outgrowth of conservation efforts that began in the 1930's under leadership from J. N. "Ding" Darling, resulting in the establishment of Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge in 1945. The Ding Darling Memorial Committee, established in 1962, succeeded in rededicating the refuge in 1967 as Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge. The 1960's were a time of rapid development on the islands, and the committee saw an urgent need for renewed conservation efforts. Under the leadership of the Memorial Committee, SCCF was incorporated on October 31, 1967 to "protect the islands' rich treasury of wildlife



Aerial view of the SCCF nature center circa 1980.

and vegetation through land acquisition, wildlife protection, promotion of orderly development and education". Since incorporation, SCCF has been successful in this mission.

Land Acquisition. By 2004, more than 1,800 acres of land had been purchased as preserves. Almost 65% of Sanibel island had been set aside for preservation from development.

Wildlife Protection. SCCF preserves are actively managed for wildlife habitat. Exotic plant species are being removed. Research and wildlife conservation efforts are well established in the wetlands, uplands, beaches and estuaries. The Marine Lab is thriving and growing.

Promotion of Orderly Development. The Foundation provided leadership in the incorporation of the City of Sanibel and the establishment of the Sanibel Plan which promotes the vision that people "live in harmony with the island's wildlife and natural habitats." Development has been limited to about 9,000 units rather than the 35,000 units envisioned prior to incorporation. Ordinances direct residents to landscape for wildlife and the SCCF Native Plant Nursery provides plants and guidance.

Education. From the beginning, education has been a core activity of the Foundation. By the tenth anniversary in 1977, trails including a lookout tower had been developed on the 207-acre “Center Tract.” Plans were underway for a conservation center, which was opened in December of 1977. Two naturalists and a director of science and education were on the staff. By April of 1978, the center had hosted 10,000 visits. Of those, 8,500 went on the trails, 8,000 with one of the 40 trained volunteer guides. A lecture series called “Tuesdays at the Center” was so popular that people were turned away.



Bill Webb teaching the popular lecture series, “Tuesdays at the Center.”



Interior shot of SCCF Nature Center in 1978.

Current educational programs reach over 50,000 people each year. These include native plant and butterfly gardening workshops and seminars, programs for new island residents, school programs in the Pick Preserve or off-island in the Lee County Schools, and a host of tours, special events, and lectures.

The Need for this Plan

On its 35th anniversary in 2002, the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation was in transition. Over its history, preservation had been a highly visible activity widely supported by the residents of Sanibel and Captiva. Now, however, little if any land is available for purchase and the work of the Foundation must turn to management,



“Wetland Walk” led by Richard Finkel in February, 2004.

research, and education. These activities have less tangible benefits, and make it more challenging for this private non-profit organization to gain the necessary funding and program support.

The islands are also in transition. People who were staunch supporters of the SCCF mission age and leave the islands while new residents take their place. It is essential that these new residents be imbued with the environmental ethic that has made this “The Sanctuary Island”.

Looking to the future, in 2001 the SCCF established long-range goals in each of the following areas:

- Land Protection Strategies
- Resource Management Strategies
- Environmental Education Strategies
- Capacity Building Strategies

The goal statement for Environmental Education at SCCF:

Inspire the community to increase its dedication to the preservation and stewardship of natural resources and wildlife habitat.

Strategies for achieving this goal:

- Engage the island community and visitors in experiences designed to increase their awareness and understanding of the natural world and participation in its preservation.
- Create and maintain partnerships with businesses, government agencies and educational institutions to promote environmental education and stewardship activities.
- Integrate education programs with other activities of the Foundation.
- Undertake ongoing research to assess the educational effectiveness of programs at SCCF.

Redevelopment of the Nature Center as an Education Complex

In 2002, the Education Committee gave careful consideration to the role and effectiveness of the nature center in serving the Environmental Education goal. The committee concluded that renovation and redevelopment is needed to better serve all audiences. Information traditionally targeted to island residents and SCCF members is also relevant to island visitors. Therefore, visitors should be included as an equal status target audience. Further, it was recommended that the entire SCCF facility, exclusive of offices, become the SCCF Education Complex in order for visitors to be guided through all elements of the property: the present or enlarged nature center exhibits, the gift shop, the butterfly garden, the native plant nursery, and the nature trail.

The Education Committee Plan identified eight specific recommendations:

1. Establish a clear entrance to the Center at the main building.
2. Renovate and enlarge the existing nature center to provide a visual and auditory introduction to the basic mission: To foster a community dedicated to the conservation and preservation of natural resources and wildlife habitat. The goal of the complex will be to prepare people to be good stewards of natural resources wherever they live.
3. The mission should be intertwined throughout exhibits around three basic concepts: Cultural Heritage, Natural History and Island Ecology and a Launch Pad to the Living Laboratories.
4. Guide persons from the Center to the on-site living laboratories: the butterfly garden, the native plant nursery, and the nature trail. In each location, interpretive media will explain the program area and ways that each person can be a good steward of native plants and animals.
5. Place signs and maps on SCCF properties to identify the various habitats and the type of habitat



The SCCF Education Committee recommended that the current Nature Center entrance be made more distinct.



Visitors should be guided from the Nature Center to on-site living laboratories, like the butterfly house.



Interpretive media should be developed for off-site living laboratories, like Periwinkle Preserve.

management being conducted in each property. Post temporary signs where stages of habitat restoration/management are underway.

6. Provide interpretive media (either seasonal or year-around) at off-site living laboratories: Periwinkle Preserve interpretive kiosk and trail, the Marine Laboratory and beach-based events.
7. Post current programs as well as up-to-date reports on various current events (sea turtle nests, bird nests, etc.).
8. Establish an exterior entrance to the nature trails for after-hours use with an honor contribution system.

Recognizing the benefits of assistance from professional interpretive planners, the SCCF Board, at the recommendation of the Education Committee, entered into a contractual agreement with Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters to develop an interpretive master plan for the SCCF.



*An exterior entrance to the nature trails should be developed.
February, 2004*

The Planning Process

The National Park Service Interpretive Development Program defines interpretation as “facilitating a connection between the meanings of the resource and the interests of the visitor.”

Planning for interpretation involves the following processes:

Why?

Establish the vision and goals of the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation for developing an interpretive master plan.

- *Chapter 1—Introduction*
- *Chapter 2—Vision for Program and Facility Development*

Who?

Determine who the visitor is (or will be) and the experiences they are (or will be) seeking.

- *Chapter 3—The Audience*

What?

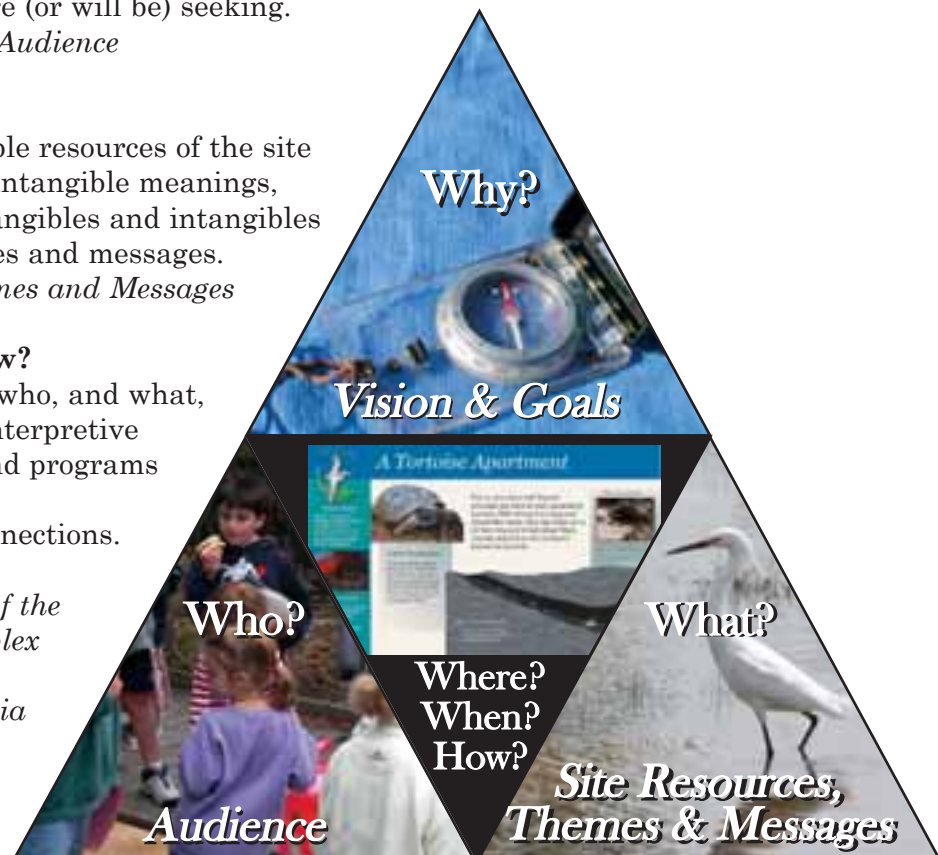
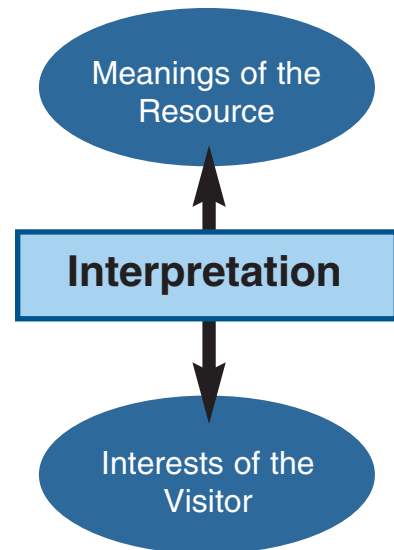
Examine the tangible resources of the site and describe their intangible meanings, then distill these tangibles and intangibles into unifying themes and messages.

- *Chapter 4—Themes and Messages*

Where? When? How?

Based on the why, who, and what, plan and develop interpretive facilities, media, and programs that best facilitate resource/visitor connections.

- *Chapter 5—Redevelopment of the Education Complex*
- *Chapter 6—Interpretive Media*





Chapter 2

Vision for Program and Facility Development



A shared vision among key stakeholders of the SCCF is an important element of interpretive planning. SCCF volunteer banquet, February, 2004.

Introduction

The first step in the planning process was to determine the vision of the key stakeholders for this plan. Three visioning techniques were used by the planning team: A nominal group meeting with the Education Committee; focus group meetings with various groups who have a stake in the outcomes; and interviews with staff and community leaders probing their views as to the desired outcomes. Descriptions of these techniques are provided in the methods section. Results of all three techniques are offered in the summary section. Complete data for the nominal group meeting is provided in Appendix 1. Complete data for the focus group meetings is in Appendix 2. Interview data is included in the summary section.



The planning team conducted several focus group sessions, one of the methods for determining the vision.

Methods for Vision Assessment

Nominal Group Process: Vision and Parameters for Interpretive Development

On October 14, 2003, a nominal group process was conducted by Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters with members of the SCCF Education Committee to achieve consensus on the vision and parameters for interpretive development on SCCF properties. This session furnished insights into the intensity of feelings that committee members held regarding directions that the organization should be taking. It assisted the planners in discerning values held by SCCF stakeholders and helped to identify the limitations and parameters of development to be proposed in this plan.

Twenty individuals participated in the process representing all aspects of SCCF: habitat management, native plant garden, butterfly house and garden, environmental education, management, board members and volunteer leaders. Also present were two members of the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge interpretive staff.

Four “Driving Questions” were presented to the group:

Driving Question 1: *The Education Plan describes the need to redevelop the Education Complex to better serve all audiences. **What is your vision for this redevelopment?***

Driving Question 2: *One identified need is to enhance the orientation and wayfinding for the Education Complex. For example, this may include providing a more public entrance from Sanibel-Captiva Road or better access to the education building. **What are your parameters and guidelines for this kind of development?***

Driving Question 3: *Another identified need is to better serve (not increase) island visitors. **What suggestions and concerns do you have for accomplishing this goal?***

Nominal Group Process

It is a fair and equal process which results in increased ownership of ideas and consensus.

1. “Driving questions” are distributed in advance.
2. The facilitator poses a question and asks each member of the group to provide a single response.
3. Each response is recorded on flip charts. No response may be judged or criticized. Rounds continue until all pass.
4. Responses are categorized and like-items combined. Each set of responses is weighted by group members who each apply 20 sticker dot “votes” indicating which ideas they consider most important (Limit of five votes for any one item).

Focus Groups

Focus groups are open-ended discussions used to elicit opinions about any experience or product that all members of the group have had in common.

- The ideal group size is 8-12 participants, a size which encourages participation from all and stimulates a free flow of ideas.
- The facilitator plans a question-probe sequence, typically only 3-4 questions, based on pre-determined objectives.
- All questions are open-ended, meaning they are simple, clear and unambiguous, cannot be answered by a yes or no, and that they can be answered in any direction.
- Questions are non-threatening so that participants never feel as though they might give a wrong answer or are being led to some pre-conceived conclusion of the interviewer.



Driving Question 4: *What “off-site living laboratories” should be developed with visitor services? What are some suggestions and concerns you have for interpreting these sites?*

The complete nominal group data is reported in Appendix 1.

Focus Group Meetings: A Critique of Facilities and Programs

Focus group meetings were conducted by Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters from February 10-19, 2004. The groups were organized in representative cohorts from a variety of island resident categories including SCCF volunteers, lapsed members, SCCF committee leaders, parents of school children, off-island conservation leaders, and service-club representatives. Attempts were made to hold focus group meetings with Captiva residents, but there was a low response from those solicited to participate.

The objectives for the focus groups were to:

- A. Determine how island residents use and value the SCCF facilities and programs.
- B. Solicit recommendations from island residents on how the SCCF facilities and programs could be improved.

The complete focus group transcripts are reported in Appendix 2.

Interviews with Key Stakeholders: Vision for SCCF Programs and Facilities

To confirm desired outcomes of this planning process, Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters conducted interviews with 20 stakeholders. The City of Sanibel planner, city manager, Chamber of Commerce director, Sanibel Historical Village and Museum manager and the Ding Darling NWR Assistant Manager were interviewed. Nine staff program leaders at SCCF and six key committee leaders were also interviewed.

Summary of the Vision Assessment

These are the principle findings of the vision assessment that will guide the planning process. It should be noted that many specific ideas and recommendations not included in this summary can be found in Appendix 1 and 2. This summary represents a consensus of the SCCF stakeholders and patrons as to what facility and media development is needed, and the parameters—what is desirable and what is not desirable—for those developments.

Wayfinding and Flow Through the Education Hub Complex (EHC)

There is universal agreement that wayfinding and visitor flow is the most serious problem with the EHC. Some representative comments: “There is a need to create a better flow here, especially for first-timers. Not many people find things. It’s confusing. The entrance from the road, the parking lot, the entrance to the building, the entrance to the trail—all need improvement.” (Volunteer Focus Group). “We need better accessibility for the disabled. It is difficult to get in the building...Trails need to be chair and stroller friendly.” (Volunteer Focus Group). “Improve the logistics of the place. Now you come to offices first with the visitor areas in the back. You need to reverse this.” (Service Club/Volunteer Focus Group). “Working in the plant nursery I saw many people looking for Ding Darling. We need a better way to orient visitors.” (Nursery Volunteer).

Some suggestions for solving these problems:

- On San-Cap Road, clearly indicate that Ding Darling is further down the road. On the entry sign rethink the names and symbols to answer the question, “Why should I turn in?”
- Create a wide, combined entry and exit similar to the Shell Museum. Eliminate the drive-through.
- Develop the first parking lot for visitors. Clearly define the parking spaces using a limestone border.
- Develop the second parking lot for staff and nursery customers. Designate three stalls as nursery customer parking.

“There is a need to create a better flow here, especially for first-timers.”



Wayfinding and visitor flow are major issues at the SCCF site.



An interpretive loop could lead visitors through on-site living laboratories, like the native plant nursery.

“[The center] represents Old Florida and engenders a family atmosphere.”

- Develop a 24 hour kiosk in the visitor parking lot that provides basic information about the SCCF, the EHC including upcoming programs, and the interpretive trails.
- Develop a new interpretive building adjacent to the parking lot that has ramped access and that connects to the existing building. This new building will house restrooms, the gift shop, information desk, exhibits and audio-visual programs and provide direct access to the trails.
- Develop an interpretive loop through the nursery and butterfly house that includes demonstration gardens. This should be clearly visible from the interpretive building and parking lot.
- Develop a trailhead from the parking lot and interpretive building to a fully accessible loop trail. Other trails would branch from this loop and would not be universally accessible. (Front desk volunteers report that people are disappointed with the trails—poison ivy and muddy surfaces).

Building Architecture and Design

The aspect of the center architecture most valued by SCCF members is that it represents “Old Florida” and engenders a “family atmosphere”. The porch is considered an important asset. Many are concerned by lack of space for programs and gatherings, lack of views to the swale, and the confusion between visitor and office functions. Others expressed a need for additional office space and a larger gift shop.

Some suggestions for building development include:

- Build a separate building to house visitor facilities (restroom, reception, gift shop, exhibit and audio-visual spaces). This building should be architecturally unified with the existing structures and connected by a roofed walkway. This building will have a view to the swale.
- Convert the existing exhibit space to program/classroom space. Create a large window opening in the current classroom with a view to the swale.
- Convert the current reception and gift shop to additional office space.

- Extend the deck around the building to join with the existing porch that leads to the trails. Design the deck addition to adequately serve the needs for gatherings.
- Have large glass doors from the classroom onto this deck as the primary entrance to the classroom.
- A Hammerhead concern is that all windows should be easily coverable in a hurricane alert.

Interpretive Media Development

There is a strong consensus that a new approach is needed to more holistically tell the story of the SCCF. There is also a consensus to use the Education Hub Complex to introduce and guide people to satellite areas. Media that is engaging, interactive and child-friendly is most desired. Text narrative should be kept to a minimum. Audio-visual programs are viewed as most effective to tell the historic and on-going story of preserving the islands—how to live in harmony with nature. There is a strongly held feeling that the education complex not increase “destination” traffic, but instead simply increase the positive experiences enjoyed upon arrival. “The education complex should be the place where visitors learn what makes these islands worth visiting.”

Some suggestions for media development include:

- Create exhibits that incorporate tactiles, interactives, and audio-visual media that relate the work of SCCF with sea turtles, nesters and resters, the estuary and work of the Marine Lab, gopher tortoises, native plant gardening, how/what it takes to maintain habitats.
- Have opportunities for temporary exhibits (perhaps as part of the more permanent exhibits) that provide current topics and events. This could include sea turtle nesting, shore bird nesting, wildlife sightings, management activities. There is a “need to communicate the basic values.” Don’ts—live shelling, disturb shore birds, dogs off-lease. Misunderstandings—beach seaweed, red tide.
- Create a dramatic audio-visual program that tells the SCCF story and how this is a model for every community. This should be an inspirational program that shares the vision of past and present leaders



The porch is an important asset of the current SCCF building.

“The education complex should be the place where visitors learn what makes these islands worth visiting.”



Exhibits like the touch-tank involve visitors and provide them with a memorable experience.



A unified signage plan would tie diverse panels together, enhance the identity of SCCF, and provide a template for future media.



Regular sign maintenance helps to keep panels clean, readable, and attractive.

and what can be achieved through the collective efforts of dedicated people.

- Have an interactive map of the islands near the information desk that volunteers can use with visitors.
- Develop demonstration gardens adjacent to the nursery parking area with interpretive information on the plants, their culture and the wildlife they attract. This should include gardening for gopher tortoises and butterflies, upland and wetland gardening.
- Create interpretive media (panels and kiosks) at selected satellite areas where residents and visitors can be engaged in the work of the SCCF. This should include the Marine Lab, the Periwinkle kiosk and trail, gopher tortoise sites, bike trail access/overlooks to selected preserves.
- Develop thematically unified interpretation for a universally accessible trail loop at the EHC that incorporates a trailhead kiosk, the ethnobotany exhibit, existing and additional interpretive panels, existing and additional plant labels, tower panels that interpret the landscape and the preserves of SCCF.
- Develop a publications plan that identifies all publication needs and creates graphic standards to unify all publications.
- Institute regular sign maintenance. Many are currently dirty or degraded.
- Develop a sign plan with graphic standards to unify all future panel development.
- Develop cooperative media with the partners in island conservation. This could include information at Ding Darling, Tarpon Bay Explorers, the Sanibel Historical Village and Museum and the Shell Museum. The outdoor kiosk at the Chamber Visitor Center should have a unified message, not just the Shell Museum, and Steve Greenstein is amenable to that.
- Develop the website to visually tell the story of SCCF and to export the model off-island.

Program Development

There is general agreement that SCCF offers valuable and relevant programs, especially for island residents and school children. Well respected programs include the new resident’s tour, native landscaping workshops and activities, gopher tortoise and sea turtle efforts, the various regular tours and lectures, and the special events. Some individuals feel that the new residents and native plant landscaping efforts need more proactive, less passive programming.

A strongly felt need is to “reach out across the causeway”. “We are myopic about focusing on Sanibel. There is a need to reach out.” There was a suggestion that the work of the Marine Lab will be of equal importance in the future as the work on the islands has been in the past and that programs will be developed to reflect that. There are many Lee County and regional organizations that SCCF has partnered with in the past and must partner with in the future. “There is a need for a huge shift in mind-set that the region includes the Caloosahatchee watershed and the need for good science and good information to ameliorate its impacts on the estuary.” “SCCF cannot remain on an island. Regional problems affect the island. SCCF can support regional sustainability.”

Committee and volunteer leaders are appreciative of the strong mission-driven programming. They see the organization as having great credibility, gained by being very selective in which issues it addresses. “SCCF doesn’t chase every issue. There is a good balance here.”

This document focuses on facility and interpretive media development. Educational program development is beyond the scope of this plan. The Education Committee may wish to consider the program-related suggestions that were offered during the visioning meetings.



“To the River Walk” led by Richard Finkel in February, 2004.



Pick Preserve, site of many educational activities with Sanibel School.



Ethnobotany activity led by Dee Serage at Open House, February, 2004



Chapter 3

The Audience



Knowing your visitors (who they are, where they come from, and what they are seeking) helps establish effective interpretive programs and facilities. Visitors on a beach hike led by Odia Wood, February, 2004.

Introduction



SCCF Open House, February, 2004

Historically, island residents have been the primary focus of the SCCF educational efforts. It was policy that 60% of the effort be directed to residents, 25% to island businesses, and 15% to visitors. In 2002, the Education Committee determined that island visitors should be included as an “equal status target audience”. This was based on the rationale that there is little difference in the various concepts to be presented to the various audiences who visit the center. In the visioning meeting of October, 2003 (Appendix 1), the committee felt that all audiences could benefit from the stewardship model offered by the SCCF and that visitors should have a take-home message that supports an environmental ethic.

This chapter includes survey and interview data that develops a profile of potential visitors to the SCCF Education Hub Complex and satellite facilities. This data provides insights that guide the development of facilities, media and programs so that they are targeted to the needs of the audiences they serve.

The Lee County Visitors and Convention Bureau provided insights into visitors coming to Lee County, including Sanibel-Captiva Island.



Sources of Visitor Data

The visitor profile is based on data collected by Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau, Sanibel-Captiva Visitor Center, Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Shell Museum, and interviews conducted by Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters in various seasons.

Lee County Visitors and Convention Bureau: 2003 Visitor Profile developed by Research Data Services, Inc., Tampa, Florida.

Sanibel-Captiva Visitor Center: Monthly visitor data and discussions with Steve Greenstein, Director, and the visitor information staff.

Ding Darling NWR: Monthly 2003 visitor data.

Shell Museum: Monthly 2003 visitor data and discussions with staff.

Interviews: Visitor interviews conducted in the SCCF parking lot and off-site at various venues.

The Lee County Visitor

In 2003, 2,001,828 people visited Lee County. The following profile for 2003 has been developed from statistics provided by the Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau (www.leevcb.com/statistics/index.php).

- Out of state visitors stay 6.7 days, Florida residents 4.0 days.
- The party composition was 58.9% couples, 39.1% families and 1.7% single.
- The average party size was 3.0 people.
- Overall, 2.8% listed Ding Darling NWR as an attraction they visited, however, in Feb. 5.4% and March 4.6% visit the refuge.
- 71.7% of all visitors obtain travel information on-line. 51.1% buy travel services on-line.
- Congestion is the Lee feature liked least in winter (28% of March visitors complain of congestion). Insects are the largest complaint in summer (July 9.8%).
- The most influential factors in choosing Lee County in 2003 were warm weather (97.5%), safe destination (97.4%), non-commercialized beaches (96.3%), complete relaxation (92.6%), good value for the money (91%), white beaches with shelling (89.5%).
- Related to the SCCF mission, 83.3% reported clean, unspoiled environment, and 79.8% reported tropical plants and animals as influential factors in choosing Lee County.
- Occupations of visitors were 46.9% professional / technical, 18% executive / managerial, 11.8% retired, 10.6% sales / buyer, 6.4% craft / factory.
- Visitor origins were 758,285 from the Midwest (principle feeder cities were Chicago 10.5%, Twin Cities 7.2%, Detroit 4.5%, Indianapolis 3.7%, Milwaukee 2.5%); 568,610 from the Northeast (principle feeder cities were New York 9.5%, Boston 4.3%, Cincinnati 3.9%, Philadelphia 3.1%, DC 2.5%, Hartford/New Haven 2.5%); 255,182 from Florida (principle feeder cities were Orlando, Jacksonville, Miami); 169,188 from Europe (principle countries were Germany and Great Britain); 139,233 from the Southeast; 46,404 from Canada.



Visitors at Calusa Nature Center, February, 2004



Visitors at the Shell Museum, February, 2004



Ding Darling NWR had 405,000 visitors to their wildlife drive in 2003.



Tarpon Bay Explorers, a concessionaire of Ding Darling NWR, had 208,000 visitors in 2003.



The Shell Museum had 45,941 visitors in 2003.

- Florida resident visitors come primarily in the summer (27.8% of visitors in August vs. 3.3% in December). Libby Grimm, Public Relations Manager at the Shell Museum interpreted this as “Florida people can’t take a vacation in the high season. They take a summer circuit to Orlando, Sanibel, Key West.”
- Another bubble reported by Libby is from Great Britain and Germany (and all of Europe) when they are on their scheduled summer vacations. Price is a factor in summer visitation.

Visitors at Sanibel Attractions

Table 1 compares the monthly visitor attendance of four Sanibel attractions in 2003, including the SCCF Nature Center.

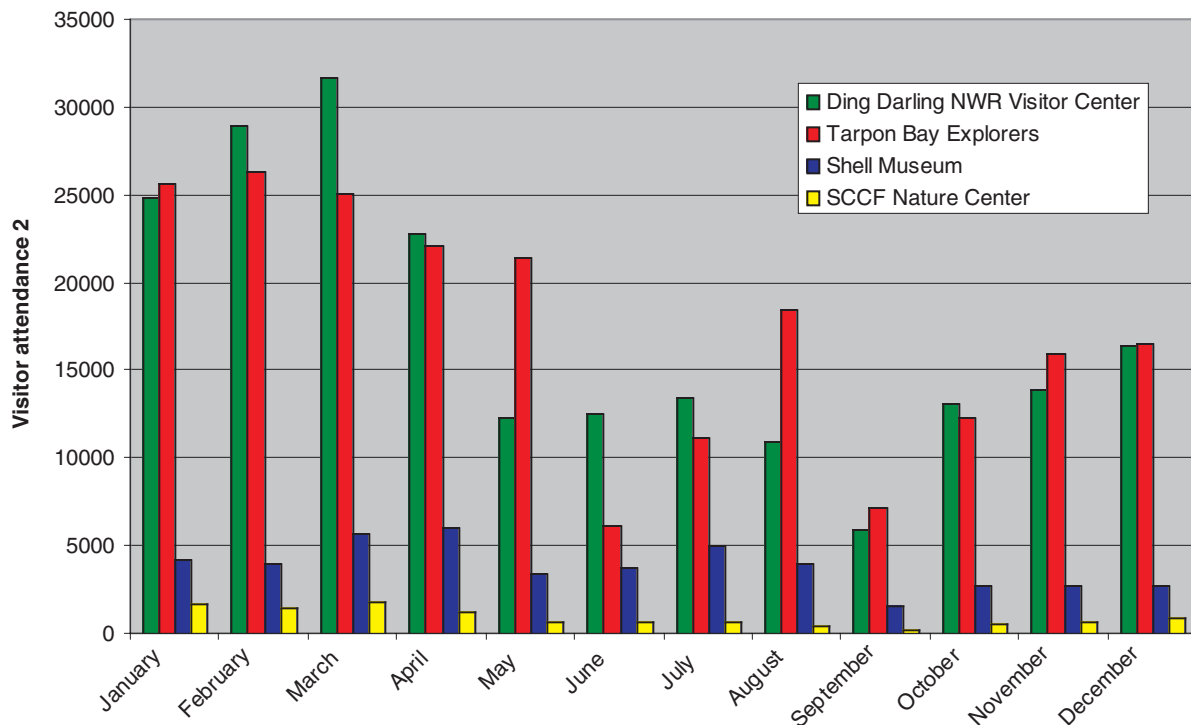
Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge is a major attraction that brings thousands of visitors to the islands. Renowned as one of the top bird-watching sites in the nation, the wildlife drive attracted 405,000 people in 2003. More than half (207,000) started their visit in the visitor center. Over 108,000 of those coming to the visitor center were in the winter months, January to April. **Tarpon Bay Marina**, which operates as a refuge concession by Tarpon Bay Explorers, had 208,000 visits in 2003. The marina is second only to the wildlife drive as a major recreational opportunity.

The **Shell Museum** attracted 45,941 visitors in 2003. This is a rather modest total considering the amount of promotion and marketing done by the museum. Perhaps this reflects a specialized niche market that the museum attracts. Although collecting shells is a principle activity of island visitors, their motivations for collecting are aesthetic and recreational; to take something home as a trophy of their visit. In-depth knowledge of seashells is probably beyond the interest of most tourists.

The monthly data for Ding Darling and the Shell Museum shows a typical winter maximum with a minor bubble in July and August. Libby Grimm, Public Relations Manager of the Shell Museum, attributes this summer bubble to

Table 1: Monthly Attendance for Sanibel Attractions 2003

	Shell Museum	Ding Darling NWR Visitor Center	Tarpon Bay Explorers	SCCF Nature Center
January	4,249	24,900	25,685	1,674
February	3,958	28,937	26,283	1,493
March	5,690	31,711	25,093	1,867
April	6,019	22,831	22,130	1,231
May	3,408	12,342	21,380	678
June	3,806	12,529	6,160	687
July	4,974	13,446	11,184	629
August	4,008	10,947	18,443	504
September	1,614	5,903	7,140	266
October	2,784	13,097	12,263	571
November	2,711	13,945	15,925	681
December	2,720	16,468	16,573	929
TOTAL	45,941	207,000	208,000	11,210





The planners conducted interviews with several groups of visitors at the SCCF Education Complex.

tourism by Florida residents and by European visitors during their traditional vacation periods.

The 11,210 annual visitors at the **SCCF nature center** in 2003 is indicative of the limited marketing conducted by the Foundation. Development of facilities and interpretive media, along with a proactive marketing effort as called for in this plan, should significantly increase visitation. The consensus of the key SCCF stakeholders (Chapter 2—Vision) is that visitors should be served in order to share the environmental ethic embodied in the SCCF mission. However, there is a strong feeling that any new development should not increase visitation to the island, and that it would not be desirable to attract visitors in numbers like those at Ding Darling. Perhaps, like the Shell Museum, there is a niche market that the SCCF Hub Education Complex should serve. There are alternatives to communicate environmental values and behaviors other than through visits to the HEC. Cooperative efforts with other conservation and heritage organizations could accomplish this broader goal to educate as many people visiting the island as possible.

Visitors at Captiva Attractions

Captiva Cruises

The Dolphin Watch and Wildlife Adventure is a daily, 1.5 hour tour of Pine Island Sound narrated by SCCF volunteers. This is a cooperative program between SCCF and Captiva Cruises coordinated by Education Director, Kristie Anders. This cruise is also provided to new Sanibel and Captiva residents as part of their orientation programs.



Captiva Cruises offers daily guided cruises to Pine Island Sound narrated by SCCF volunteers.

Although no statistics are available, Captiva Cruises reported that they fill their 145 passenger vessel during the high season, February to April, and during the summer vacation period between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Typical Dolphin Watch cruises have between 40 to 70 passengers the remainder of the year. Based on these figures, an estimated 35,000 people participate in this tour.

Captiva Cruises also offers other cruises that focus on

historic and park resources along the Gulf Coast. Other than a nature center at the gated South Seas Resort, Captiva Cruises offers the most significant nature-related attraction on Captiva.

Visitor Interview Data

In order to identify this potential niche market of enthusiasts and the types of services they would value, Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters conducted interviews with visitors at the SCCF nature education center and off-site, including the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center. The following is a summary of key findings from these interviews.

SCCF Education Complex Interviews (27 interviews for groups representing 72 individuals—9 first-time visitors, 14 repeat visitors, 2 part-time residents, 2 full-year residents). The following is a tabulation of the responses to each interview question.

Why did you choose to come here today?

- We enjoy nature.
- Came for program information.
- Came for the river program.
- Local person told us. We like nature.
- Wanted to take a walk. Have been to Ding Darling and wanted to see what this was about.
- Saw signs on the road and decided to check it out.
- Maggie at the Marine Lab recommended I come here.
- Wanted to see the butterflies. Unfortunately it's a cold day and they're not flying.
- To learn more about Florida.
- Poor weather—looking for indoor activities.
- Read about it in the guidebook.
- Came for a walking tour—read about it in the paper.
- Came here for the connection to nature—love nature related activities.
- Came for the turtle show.
- Came for “To the River” program.

What did you enjoy most about your visit here today?



Nearly 35,000 people annually board Captiva Cruises to watch for dolphins and learn about the Sanctuary Islands.



Most visitors value the peace and quiet of the SCCF trails.



Eliminating muddy trails was the most requested improvement from visitors to the SCCF Education Complex.



Visitors to the SCCF value educational nature-related activities.

- Highlight was the guided tour.
- Learning about plants—we are teachers.
- Looking for birds—saw a bittern!
- Liked the diversity of vegetation.
- Peaceful and quiet. Liked the touch tank.
- Quiet place to visit. Liked the tower view!
- Good to see butterflies in the butterfly house. Read about it in the guidebook.
- Liked the ethnobotany site—how people used this place, how plants and birds use it.
- Enjoy the trails—not crowded. A quiet place to enjoy the island.
- Loved the peacefulness. Saw a snipe today! Especially liked the labeled plants.
- Liked the butterfly house.
- It proves that developers don't run the show on this island like they do back home.
- Don't want it to feel like a zoo or theme park. Like the "old Florida" feel.

What suggestions do you have to improve this place?

- Demonstration gardens would be nice.
- Create view of the river.
- Enlarge the gift shop.
- We don't walk on the trails because they are muddy.
- Have a nature canoe "hike".
- Focus on your theme—freshwater and the different bird life than at Ding.
- Trails are too wet in places.
- Muddy trails are a problem. Would like a boardwalk.
- Boardwalk might be a good opportunity.
- Have viewing points on the river.
- Exploit the river more (canoeing?).
- Need one big trail that is always accessible—get out of the mud!
- Interest in plants—would like more labels.
- Birding trail—this organization isn't mentioned in the birding guides.
- Develop the ethnobotany area for non-guided use.
- Inaccessible trails! Need boardwalks to take people out of the mud and water.
- This is a too well-kept secret! You wonder if this is a research center closed to the public.
- Expand the butterfly house.

Discussion of SCCF Education Complex Interview

Data

The data clearly demonstrates that visitors to the Education Complex value nature related activities in an educational context. They also value the peacefulness of the Center Tract and its opportunities to see plants and animals representative of Florida. This is a market niche that SCCF could and perhaps should cultivate in its marketing efforts. Recommendations for targeting this niche market are offered at the end of this chapter.

Eliminating the muddy trails was the most requested improvement. Other suggestions such as providing opportunities on the Sanibel River, increasing the size of the gift shop, and offering more self-guided interpretive media are confirmation of these ideas identified by the Education Committee and focus groups (Chapter 2).

Off-Site Visitor Interviews

Interviews were conducted primarily at the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center; 96 individuals were interviewed. Only one individual per group was interviewed. Groups included 6 single people, 70 couples and 20 groups 3 or larger.

Please tell us what you hope to see and do while on the islands (Note: Some had multiple responses).

- 42 Beach/shelling
- 23 Recreation (canoe, boat, fish, shop, golf, swim, cruise, drive)
- 18 Nature related (see birds, Ding Darling, enjoy nature, wildlife—etc.)
- 16 Sight-seeing (heard it was beautiful, see what's here, scenery, have lunch)
- 16 Rest and relaxation, meet friends and family

Likert Scale Responses: 1-2 not interested / 3 somewhat interested / 4-5 very interested

How interested are you in learning about the plants and animals that live on the beach and inland wetlands and forests?

- Not Interested: 22



Interviewing visitors at the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center.

- Somewhat interested: 32
- Very interested: 42

(Follow-up) What are some specific interests that you have about the plants and animals of the island?

- See birds: 24
- See marine life: 10
- “Nature viewing”, wildlife, local plant and animal life, etc.: 12

How interested are you in learning the conservation story about how these islands are being protected and preserved?

- Not Interested: 34
- Somewhat interested: 36
- Very interested: 26

How interested are you in visiting the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation education center?

- Not Interested: 35
- Somewhat interested: 42
- Very interested: 19

How interested would you be in visiting the Marine Laboratory on Tarpon Bay if they provided exhibits on “Life in the Bay”?

- Not Interested: 18
- Somewhat interested: 20
- Very interested: 58

Discussion of off-site interview data

The data confirms that the majority of visitors come to the islands to participate in beach activities such as shelling or active and passive recreational activities. Only 19% of visitors in our survey came to the islands for specific nature related activities and for many of those it was a secondary choice. In spite of this, most (77%) would be somewhat or very interested in learning about the islands and their plants and animals. Almost two thirds (64%) would be interested in visiting the Education Complex and learning the conservation story (65%), although most are only “somewhat interested”. The strongest interest (81%) was in visiting the Marine Laboratory if there were



The majority of visitors to Sanibel-Captiva Island come to participate in beach activities.

exhibits.

A proactive marketing effort would inform those with a strong interest in nature that the SCCF Education Complex has something to offer them. This effort might also entice some of those with less of an interest in nature to come to the center.

Recommendations for Marketing the SCCF Experience

Visitors can be alerted to the SCCF experience by market information at the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center, including in their visitor guide and webpage, would alert visitors to the SCCF experience. Marketing should be aimed at the niche identified earlier: those seeking nature related activities who would value the peacefulness of the Center Tract. The staff at the Chamber Visitor Center already point out the SCCF nature center to people. A brochure should be available for distribution at the center. The number of people responding to this message will almost certainly be small. It should be noted that all of these marketing strategies are employed by the Shell Museum and their visitation is rather modest. People will self-select those experiences congruent with their



Marketing efforts should begin with the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center.



An interpretive kiosk on the Walker Tract would enlighten Ding Darling Wildlife Drive users about the SCCF role in conservation.

motivations for coming to the islands.

Having an interpretive kiosk at the end of the Wildlife Drive in the Walker Tract has marketing potential for this niche. Wildlife Drive users have a diverse range of interests in wildlife, some have strongly held interests, others have only idle curiosity. This was confirmed in a survey of wildlife drive users conducted in 1996 by Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters. The Walker Tract is an ideal place to interpret gopher tortoises. An invitation to learn more about the conservation of wildlife at the Education Complex should be included on the message.

Another opportunity for targeting these potential markets is at Tarpon Bay. Tarpon Bay Explorers serves more people than the Ding Darling visitor center (see monthly data above). Many of these individuals are motivated to learn more about the islands, especially the marine environments. A kiosk at the Marine Lab would inform visitors about the lab activities and provide information about opportunities at the Education Complex.

Kiosks which tell the story of the “Sanctuary Island” should be placed at the Chamber of Commerce parking lot and at the Sanibel Historical Village and Museum site. Managers of these facilities have expressed support for this. The Chamber of Commerce kiosk would tell about



A kiosk at the Sanibel Historical Village would focus on the history of SCCF in preserving the islands.

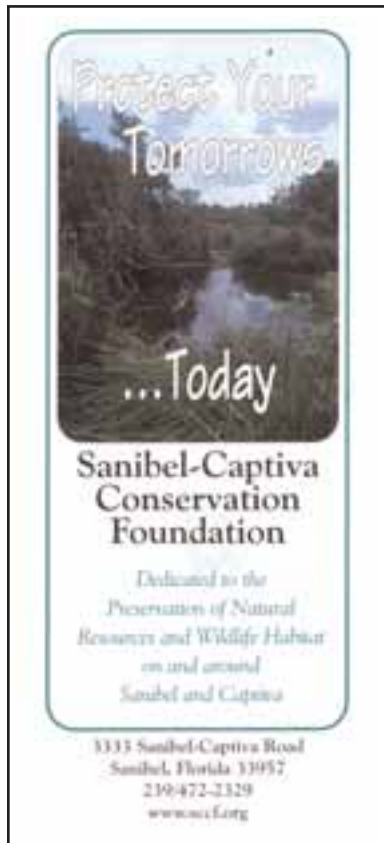
the cooperative efforts of all the organizations involved in developing and sustaining the “Sanctuary Island”, as well as point out places to visit where they can see and learn more about this idea. The Sanibel Historical Village kiosk would focus more on the history story of “saving the island”.

All interpretive panels at the various preserves should include an invitation to come to the Education Complex.

Summary of Marketing Strategies

- Develop a brochure on the SCCF Education Complex aimed at island visitors.
- Provide an appropriate article for inclusion in the *Sanibel-Captiva Vacation Guide* and the *Sunny Day Guide to Sanibel-Captiva*.
- Improve the SCCF descriptions on the Chamber of Commerce webpage; have a link to the SCCF webpage; improve this webpage to make it visitor-friendly.
- Develop kiosks that interpret the “Sanctuary Island” for the Chamber of Commerce parking lot and for the Sanibel Historical Village and Museum site. Make this a joint effort of all conservation entities on Sanibel and Captiva.
- Develop a kiosk at the Walker Tract which will target people as they exit the Ding Darling Wildlife Drive.
- Develop a kiosk at Tarpon Bay that interprets the Marine Lab and informs people of the Education Complex.
- Provide an invitation to the Education Complex on all SCCF interpretive panels at the various satellite facilities.
- Provide frequent press releases for local media that highlight new opportunities at SCCF.
- Provide a local access cable television introduction to the opportunities at the Discovery Center and other facilities of SCCF for viewing in hotel rooms (Kristie Anders has an introduction to the island’s wildlife that is currently shown).

Serving Island Residents



About 17% of Sanibel-Captiva Island residents are members of the SCCF.

The 2003 census reported 6,224 year round residents on Sanibel Island. This includes people living in the current 4,000 single-family and duplex dwelling units, and 4,200 multi-family units. The “build-out” projection for the island is 9,000 total units (800 more than present) which will be achieved by 2015. The island population will have only a modest increase in the future.

Captiva has 367 year round residents and an estimated 1,900 dwelling units. Almost half of the units are at South Seas. There are 66 active memberships whose primary residence is Captiva.

Current SCCF membership is 2,735. Accounting for spouses and others in the household, there are an estimated 3,635 members. However, there are only 1,007 active memberships whose primary residence is Sanibel Island. This represents 17% of the 6,224 residents. It is essential that SCCF focus its primary educational efforts on this constituency. The mission of SCCF and the goals of the Sanibel Plan can only be achieved through an informed and supportive citizenry.

The New Resident’s program and the Landscaping for Wildlife program are on-going efforts to reach these constituents. The redevelopment of the Education Complex will greatly aid these and other educational programs aimed at residents.



Residents purchase native plants and wildlife houses from the SCCF nursery.

Primary Audiences

Based on the visioning process and visitor analysis, the SCCF serves two primary target audiences: residents and niche visitors interested in nature and conservation. However, all visitors and residents should benefit from the interpretive media and programs offered by SCCF. The Delivery Matrix in Chapter 6 uses the following audience categories.

SCCF Audience Categories

I. Island Residents

- IA. Year round residents of Sanibel and Captiva
- IB. Part year residents of Sanibel and Captiva
- IC. Business and condominium owners

II. Island Visitors

- IIA. Visitors staying in hotels and time-shares with a special interest in nature and conservation
- IIB. Visitors staying in hotels and time-shares with no particular interest in nature and conservation
- IIC. Day-trippers with a special interest in nature and conservation
- IID. Day-trippers using the beach and recreational facilities with little interest in nature and conservation



Chapter 4

Themes and Messages



Themes and messages are the significant concepts to be communicated through the facilities, media, and programs of SCCF.

Interpretation facilitates a connection between the meanings of the resource and the interests of the visitor.

—The National Park Service Interpretive Development Program

Introduction

The tangible resources of Sanibel and Captiva include the estuaries, beaches, upland ridges and interior wetlands with all of their associated plants and animals adapted to this sub-tropical climate. Traditional programs (walks and talks) and media (exhibits, wayside panels, and publications) have been aimed at helping visitors understand these tangible resources. However, these programs are elevated to “interpretive programs” only when connections are made between the tangible resources and their intangible meanings. The intangibles are those concepts, values and events that have universal meaning to all residents and visitors. Therefore, it is essential to begin the development of interpretive media and programs with themes and messages that make these tangible-intangible links.

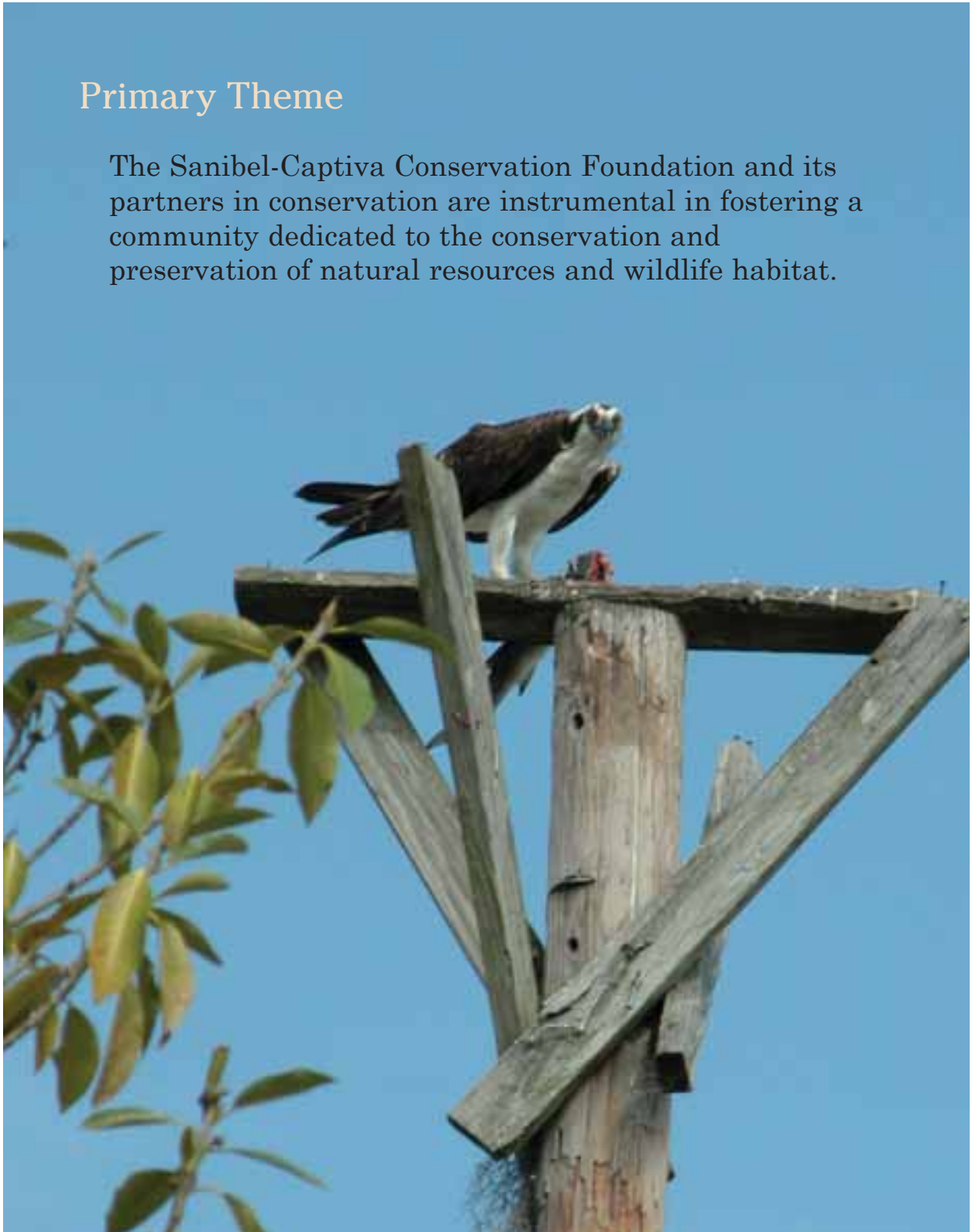
The “Vision Statement” for the Sanibel Plan (Appendix 3) is a comprehensive expression of intangible meanings. It reflects the implicit values of the Sanibel Plan and was drafted with the input of hundreds of citizens in public workshops and questionnaires. The sub-themes are taken from the Sanibel Plan Vision Statement.

The messages that elaborate each theme will guide the development of interpretive media. These messages incorporate the “concepts/messages to be fulfilled by the SCCF education complex” as reported by the SCCF Education Committee in 2002. Three categories were identified:

1. Natural History and Island Ecology.
2. Cultural Heritage of both SCCF and the Islands.
3. Launch Pad to Living Laboratories at SCCF.

Primary Theme

The Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation and its partners in conservation are instrumental in fostering a community dedicated to the conservation and preservation of natural resources and wildlife habitat.



Sub-theme 1

Sanibel-Captiva is a barrier island sanctuary, where people live in harmony with the island's wildlife and natural habitats.



The Gator Hole at the SCCF Main Tract, February, 2004.

Messages

- 1.1 The 18-mile long Sanibel-Captiva gulf-front beach and dune community is habitat to a rich diversity of plants and animals and offers people intimate contact with nature.
- 1.2 SCCF staff members and volunteers work to promote the successful feeding, nesting and resting cycles of loggerhead and green sea turtles and nesting snowy plovers and least terns.
- 1.3 The 7,930 acre midsection of Sanibel Island is a quilt of wooded ridges and wetlands with a diversity of sub-tropical plants and associated animals which provide the living space for the 6,000 residents and 20,000 visitors staying in the peak season.
- 1.4 SCCF has preserved and manages over 1,800 acres of interior habitats including much of the land on the Sanibel River.

- 1.5 SCCF removes exotic plant species such as Brazilian pepper and Australian pine from its preserves and develops suitable habitats for many native animal species such as wading birds and gopher tortoises.
- 1.6 SCCF staff members and volunteers offer programs to residents to help them live in harmony with nature. This includes the Native Plant Nursery, landscaping for wildlife (with an emphasis on butterfly gardens), monitoring and protecting gopher tortoises, elimination of harsh chemicals from the landscape, water conservation techniques, and the elimination of invasive exotic pest plants.
- 1.7 The SCCF promotes the protection of Pine Island Sound and its marine wildlife through the research and education activities of the Marine Lab at Tarpon Bay.
- 1.8 Each of the habitats between the gulf and bay host native plants and animals of great diversity whose life histories can engage and captivate residents and visitors, who upon gaining knowledge of these species will be committed to their protection.



SCCF removes exotic plant species as part of habitat restoration efforts.



View of the Sanibel River and surrounding land from the SCCF tower.

Sub-theme 2

Sanibel is a small town community, whose citizens historically have valued and protected the diversity, beauty, uniqueness, and character of the island.

Messages



*Sanibel Historical Village,
February, 2004*

- 2.1 Native peoples had a flourishing culture on and around the islands. The Calusa shell mounds are tangible evidence of habitation for as much as 2,500 years.
- 2.2 Spanish explorers and missionaries never settled on the islands, but the interactions of Europeans with native peoples led to the decline and disappearance of the Calusas by the end of the 18th Century.
- 2.3 In the early 19th Century, the U.S. government acquired Florida from Spain making possible the settlement and development of the islands by the Florida Peninsula Land Company in 1831. This first settlement failed due to the distances to cities to acquire and sell goods and produce.
- 2.4 The establishment of a lighthouse in 1884 created a new interest in settlement. The early settlers were farmers who had access to markets by newly developed steamship and rail lines. Farming failed due to the hurricanes of 1910 and 1921.

- 2.5 Beginning in 1928, tourism and seasonal residences started to reinvigorate the island's economy.
- 2.6 In 1935, noted conservationist J. N. Darling established a winter residence on Captiva. "Ding" led a wildlife protection effort which prompted the Florida legislature to establish Sanibel, Captiva and their contiguous waters as a wildlife refuge.

- 2.7 In 1945, parts of Sanibel and the southwest tip of Captiva became the Sanibel National Wildlife Refuge.
- 2.8 Darling worked with the Sanibel-Captiva Chapter of the National Audubon Society to fight the developments that threatened the islands and their wildlife. After his death in 1962 the Jay N. “Ding” Darling Memorial Committee was created. They succeeded in renaming the National Wildlife Refuge in his honor.
- 2.9 The opening of the causeway to Sanibel Island in 1963 opened the islands to tourists and developers. Rather than disband, the Memorial Committee reorganized in 1967 as the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, dedicated to “the preservation of natural resources and wildlife habitat on and around these barrier islands”. They began purchasing land for preservation.
- 2.10 In 1974, Sanibel voters passed a referendum to incorporate and in 1976 established the “Sanibel Plan” which regulated residential and commercial development for the long-term protection of natural resources.
- 2.11 Through the years, SCCF has been a partner with the City of Sanibel, Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge, and other conservation-minded entities to establish Sanibel Island as the Sanctuary Island whose citizens live in harmony with nature. Many dedicated members have devoted their time, money and talents to this cause.



Ding Darling fought against developments that threatened wildlife on the islands. Courtesy Ding Darling Foundation

Sub-theme 3

Sanibel welcomes visitors who are attracted by and respectful of the island's sanctuary and community qualities.



Visitors can protect sea turtles by removing trash and furniture and turning off lights along the beach.

Messages

- 3.1 Visitors to Sanibel and Captiva impact wildlife on the beach mainly through ignorance of the effects of their behavior.
- 3.2 They can help protect birds by not chasing them when they are resting, and by avoiding marked bird nest areas.
- 3.3 They can protect sea turtles by removing trash and furniture and turning off lights along the beach.
- 3.4 They can protect seaside vegetation by not picking sea oats or walking in vegetated areas.
- 3.5 They can protect all wildlife by keeping their dog on leash, not feeding alligators, raccoons or birds,

removing fishing line and bony fish carcasses, and by leaving live shells where they find them.

- 3.6 Visitors have the opportunity to learn about and take home the conservation story of the islands whereby visionary and dedicated citizens guided development in order to live in harmony with nature.
- 3.7 Many Sanibel-Captiva attractions cater to visitors yearning for a “natural” experience, like Ding Darling NWR, the Shell Museum, Tarpon Bay Explorers, Captiva Cruises, and the SCCF Nature Center.



Visitors can protect all wildlife by not feeding wild animals, like raccoons.



Tarpon Bay Explorers provides kayaks and canoes for visitors to the island.



Chapter 5

Redevelopment of the Education Complex



Introduction

The concepts presented in this chapter for site and building redevelopment are a response to the many issues and needs expressed by the SCCF stakeholders and staff during the visioning process. Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters has applied its expertise in interpretive center development to provide design solutions that synthesize the ideas and dreams of individuals which were expressed in the nominal group meeting, focus groups, and interviews.



To better imagine the opportunities at the new education complex, a "Narrative Walk-Through" describes the "discovery experience" through the eyes of typical visitors. This is followed by specific site, building and trail plans which include design concepts and drawings. These plans will focus fundraising and development efforts of the SCCF staff, committee members and volunteers and serve as the "design program" for architects, engineers and other professionals who will implement this plan.

Narrative Walk-through

An idealized visit to the new Sanctuary Islands Discovery Center

A family with three children ages 5, 9, and 12 is visiting Sanibel Island for the first time. The parents, who enjoy nature activities, are also in search of new ways to help their children learn about nature. Though they have never been to the island before, they were told about the SCCF at the Chamber of Commerce visitor center and are interested in checking out the Discovery Center.

Signs on San-Cap Road clearly identify the entrance to the Discovery Center. A wide driveway entry and exit offers a clear line of sight into the parking lot. It is clean, attractive with native landscaping, and well defined with limestone edging and concrete parking barriers. The public look and welcoming signs assure the family that they are in the right place.

Upon parking the car, the family heads to an inviting roofed kiosk near the Discovery Center where a welcome sign greets them. The father takes the five year-old into the bathroom located beneath the building, the other children get a drink of water, and the mother studies a colorful site map mounted next to the activity board in the kiosk. The parents follow their kids up a ramp that leads from the roofed kiosk to a porch that surrounds the Discovery Center. Rocking chairs give a nostalgic "Old Florida" feel to the building and invite the family to be comfortable and relax. A wide glass door and wall of windows give them a view into the spacious lobby where a woman behind the information desk smiles back at them.

The family enters the building, and the lobby is bright and inviting. Across the room, windows overlook the swale with its wading birds and give a glimpse of the boardwalk trail that leads into the site. The volunteer at the desk welcomes them and tells them that a "suggested donation" for a "family discovery pass" is \$10.00. She gives them a site map and explains that their donation helps support the Discovery Center. Each family member gets a sticker to wear that says "Sanibel-Captiva Discovery Pass".



Like the existing SCCF building, the new Discovery Center will have a spacious porch with rocking chairs, maintaining the "Old Florida" feel that visitors value.



A sea turtle monitoring jeep exhibit invites interaction and exploration.

A jeep in the exhibit room with the SCCF logo on it draws the attention of the children and they scramble into it and listen to a message about sea turtle monitoring on its radio. A volunteer invites the whole family to the saltwater touch tank and lets them handle and learn about sea creatures that live in the tide water near the beach.

The movement of fish attracts the children to a nearby saltwater aquarium. They see the giant "stuffed" manatee and dolphin. The father places them on the animals' backs and snaps a photo of them. The older children then use the touch-screen computer to learn about the marine mammals of the islands. Replica skulls challenge the children to figure out what manatees and dolphins eat.

The parents are attracted to a large aerial photograph of Sanibel Island that allows them to locate the hotel where they are staying and to study the conservation lands nearby. Next to them, a retired couple investigates a wall of human cutouts that frame the map and the entry to a small theater room. They all enter the informal theater and watch a dramatic production on the history and happenings of Sanibel Island. The video features action shots of the Foundation volunteers banding sea turtles, patrolling beaches, and netting redfish. The dramatic history of the Island is relived through the eyes of volunteers and "veterans" who lived the history of Ding Darling, the causeway, and other events that shaped the Islands. The film is punctuated by the sounds of surf, splashing fish, and tortoise eye-views of the islands. The film climaxes in an upbeat invitation to make Sanibel or your own community a more livable place for people and animals.



An informal theater interprets the story of Sanibel-Captiva Island (Delta Rivers Nature Center, AR).

As they leave the theater, the five-year old boy shouts loudly, "Hey, it's a tunnel!" On hands and knees, he climbs into a simulated gopher tortoise hole. His sister and brother peer into the entrance as he hollers his discoveries out to them. "There's a little mouse in here! Oh, a snake too! Hey! Here's a big turtle!" The two children scramble in to join the brother as the parents read about the ecological importance of gopher tortoises and share it with their children. Outside the hole, Dad "pulls a pepper" by rope and pulley that reveals before and

after photos of a restored preserve.

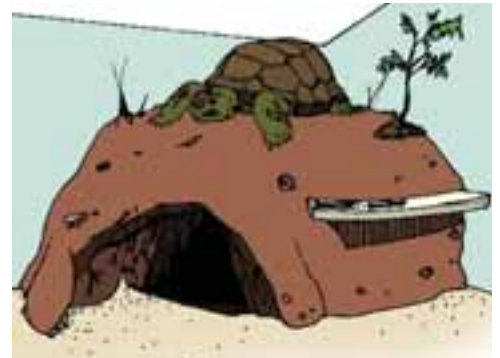
The movement of a butterfly catches the attention of the girl. She and her mother hurry over to an exhibit that introduces them to native plant gardening and to methods that attract butterflies. It includes an invitation to visit demonstration gardens, the native plant nursery, and the butterfly house. They round up the rest of the family and hurry out to see the butterflies.

The family enters the "Gardening with Wildlife" trail at the trailhead just off the porch. They look at the beautifully landscaped wetland and upland gardens and are excited by the butterflies that are feeding on the flowers. The children rush into the butterfly house and are delighted by the butterflies around them.

After finishing the loop through the nursery to the parking lot, the parents decide to leave the Discovery Center with the promise that they will come back later to walk the trails.

The older couple enjoyed the film because they have lived seasonally on the Island for 15 years. They are deciding if they should venture into the site. He is in a wheelchair these days and due to past visits, is concerned about the trail conditions. The volunteer at the desk assures them that the main trail loop is fully accessible for wheelchairs and hands them a colorful map and trail guide.

The couple heads out onto the boardwalk that gently slopes out through the swale and onto a crushed shell trail. Attractive, unified signs and maps contribute to their sense of the trail's importance and safety. Along the way they learn about the native plants of the island and how this site was purchased and restored by the SCCF. Unfortunately they can't climb the tower, but an interpretive panel shows them photographic views from the top. They are surprised that so much of the island is protected from development. On the way back, they linger at the Ethnobotany exhibit before returning to their car. They see the Native Plant Nursery, and vow to come back to purchase plants and take the Gardening with Wildlife trail.



A simulated gopher tortoise burrow is a mysterious and exciting place to explore.

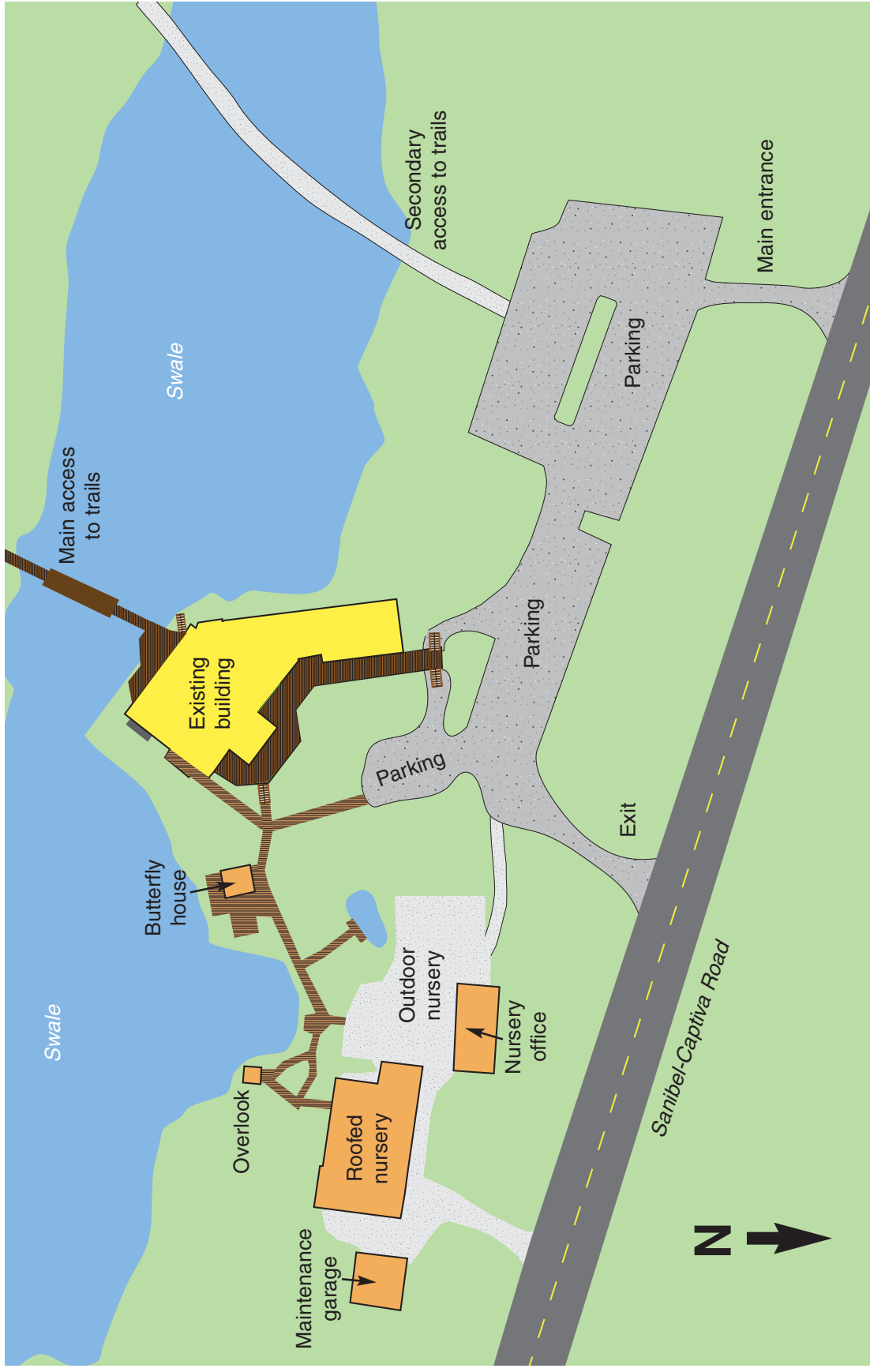


The movement of a butterfly attracts attention and invites visitors to the butterfly house and wildlife gardens.



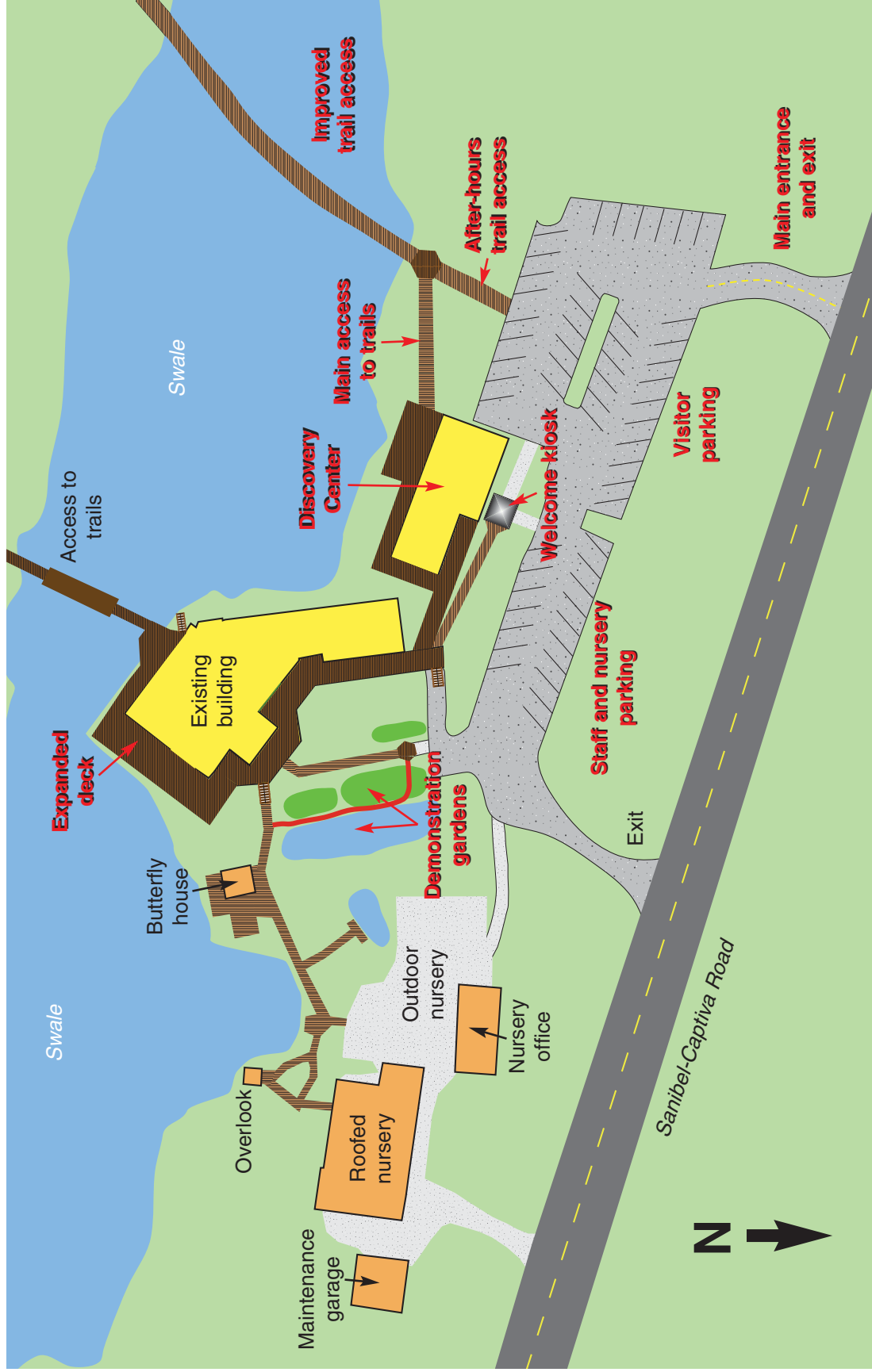
The main loop trail is accessible to everyone.

Existing Site Plan



Redevelopment Site Plan

Redevelopment recommendations are listed in red.





First impressions are important to visitors. Their first view of the SCCF site is of a dumpster and maintenance equipment.



Entry and Parking Lot

Improving Orientation and Wayfinding

When people feel safe and comfortable, they are more likely to spend time and explore a place. Apprehensions about driving to a site, finding parking, and feeling welcome can ruin or discourage a visit. Well designed maps, publications, and websites can help visitors to form a cognitive map in their own minds prior to setting out to find the Discovery Center.

Once they arrive, we can alleviate anxiety by providing visual cues that guide and set visitor expectations. Currently, the driveway entry and parking lot do not appear to a first-time visitor as being open to the public. Once a visitor enters the lot, they see no obvious signs that they are invited to stay or to enter the building. A driver's first view is of the dumpster, tractor, and maintenance equipment. The edges of the gravel lot are not clearly defined and appear non-maintained and perhaps part of a private enterprise where visitors are not welcome. There is a business-like look to the signage and the building, but no invitation for guests to enter. The planning team interviewed several first-time visitors who drove through the parking area and chose not to stop because they didn't think the public was welcome.

On the positive side, the signage on the road is attractive and relatively uniform. The porous lot is environmentally appropriate, the landscaping is natural, and the number of parking stalls is adequate for most events during the year.

Entry and Parking Redevelopment

A combination entry and exit will eliminate most drive-through traffic. This wider entrance will have the added benefit of making the Discovery Center more visible and to appear more public.

During the visioning process, it was suggested that the names on the entrance sign be changed to make the site more inviting.

Edging the lot with native stone and concrete parking blocks, along with the removal of extraneous maintenance equipment, will go a long way toward making the lot appear public. The addition of welcoming signs and an obvious route to enter the building will serve as a visual invitation to newcomers.



The edges of the current parking lot are not clearly defined and appear non-maintained. Equipment stored around the edges and the dumpster contribute to a visitor's feeling that the lot is not public.



Pieces of limestone rock can be a natural edging for the parking lot, providing a more public and formal appearance. The removal of maintenance equipment, dumpsters, and other "out-of-place" items enhances the aesthetics of the site.

Native Plant Nursery/Staff Parking

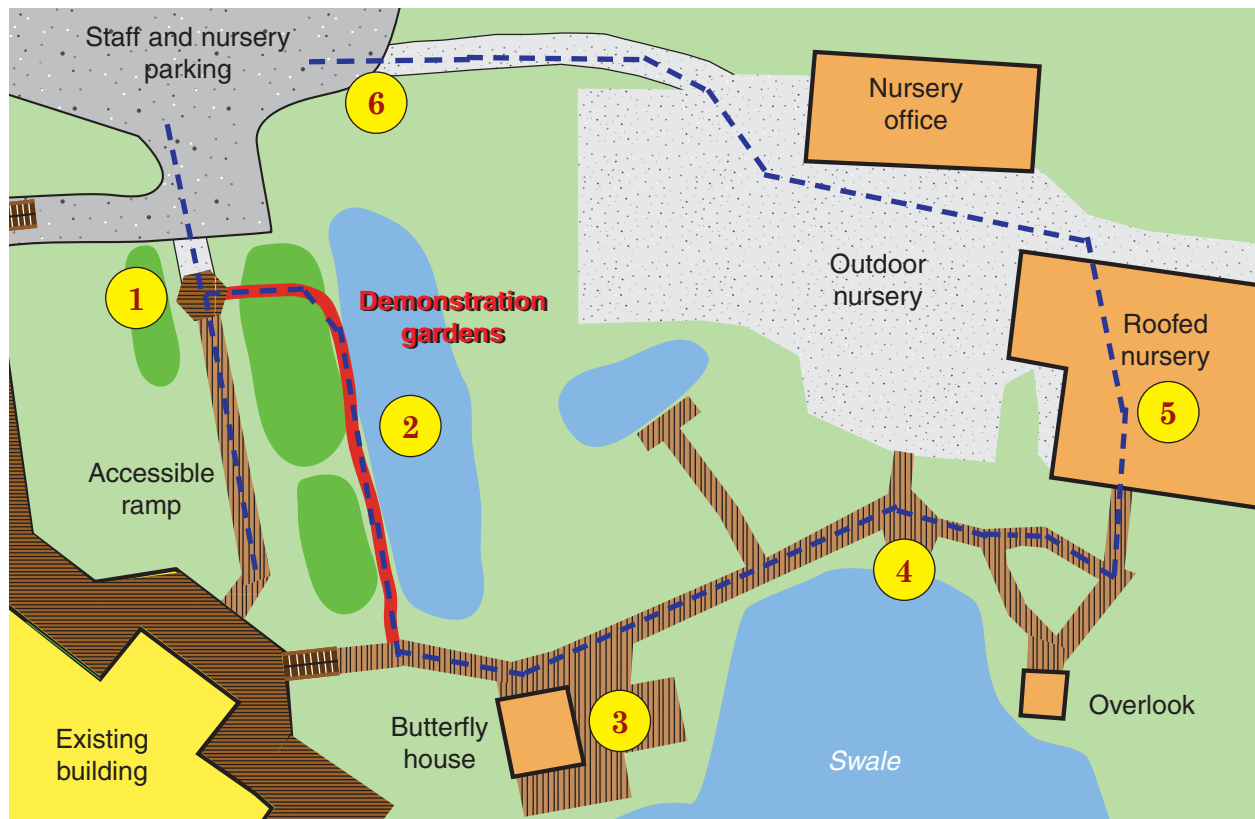
The second parking lot should be dedicated to staff and nursery customer parking. Staff can access the porch deck via the stairs or ramp. Three stalls adjacent to the nursery should be marked for customers. The exit from the nursery to San Cap Road should be maintained.



A wider entrance/exit eliminates drive-through traffic and makes the site look more public. It creates a natural rotation flow for visitor parking (indicated by red arrows). Staff and nursery customer parking flow (indicated by blue arrows) is maintained. Staff can access the building via ramps or stairs (indicated by dotted green arrows).

Gardening with Wildlife Trail and Butterfly House

The addition of demonstration gardens will provide a much needed educational extension of the butterfly house and native plant nursery. An interpretive trail will begin at the intersection of the ramp to the back of the building and the stairs to the front. It will incorporate the Butterfly House and Native Plant Nursery and loop back to the nursery/staff parking lot.



1. The trail begins at a hub accessible from the parking lot and via a ramp from the existing building.
2. Part of the existing parking lot will be removed and demonstration gardens will be developed that interpret wetland, butterfly, and upland habitats.
3. The existing butterfly house is a natural extension of butterfly gardening techniques.
4. Three existing panels at this overlook interpret “Landscaping for Wildlife.”
5. The trail enters the roofed greenhouse where visitors can purchase native plants.
6. The trail leads back to the parking lot and existing building.

Discovery Center

Introduction

In the visioning process, (the nominal group meeting, focus group meetings and interviews with staff and other key stakeholders), there was universal agreement that a major redevelopment was needed to better serve the visiting public and island residents. The present facilities offer a confusing mix of visitor and administrative functions, and lack adequate space for either function. There is a need to improve wayfinding and flow for the entire complex, from entrance to exit.



Proposed SCCF interpretive building

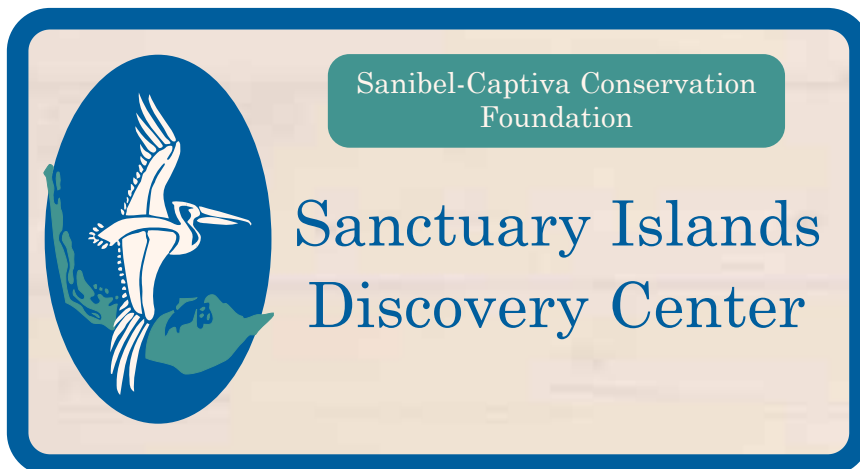
A new interpretive building will be more inviting to visitors and residents, while freeing up staff, volunteer, and meeting space in the existing facility.

A separate new interpretive building is proposed as the most effective way to address these problems. This new facility will greatly improve visitor services and the ability to accomplish the educational and interpretive goals of the SCCF. Specifically, a separate building addresses the following needs:

- Creates a welcoming image and clear portal of entry for visitors.
- Separates visitor services from administrative functions.

- Frees up space in the existing structure for additional offices and for an expanded meeting/program room.
- Provides a clear starting point for interpretive and educational programs and introduces, using a variety of media, the themes and messages that will make those programs more effective.
- Solves the current problems with visitor orientation, accessibility, and traffic flow through the building and grounds.
- Offers a public restroom and trailhead available at all hours.

The identity of the education complex was one issue that was raised in the visioning process. As one person expressed it, "Why should I turn in?" Others suggested that we "rethink the names and symbols of the San Cap Road signs to better communicate that this is a place worth visiting." With that caveat, the planning team proposes that this facility be called the **Sanctuary Islands Discovery Center**. This name suggests to the visitor that they will be engaged in activities and experiences that will be educationally rewarding and fun. It also incorporates the "Sanctuary Island" theme that has been set at the entry sign to the island near the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center. This name is applied directly to the proposed interpretive building and indirectly to the site-based experiences on the main trail loop, the primitive trails and the proposed Landscaping for Wildlife Trail and Butterfly House.



Naming the new interpretive facility the "Sanctuary Islands Discovery Center" sets visitor expectations about the experiences available at SCCF.

Specifications

In the visioning process, several ideas were offered for the new interpretive facilities. The exhibit room and sales area should be bright and invite leisure exploration. An expanded sales area is needed. Windows should offer views to the swale and to the ramp that leads to the trailhead. An audio-visual program will "help visitors learn what makes these islands worth visiting." The architectural impression of "old Florida" should be maintained.

To address these vision mandates, the following specifications for this facility are proposed:

- The interpretive building will be a stand-alone structure with approximately 2,520 square feet divided into 520 square feet for the theater, and 2,000 square feet for reception, exhibits, store, and a staff office.
- The interpretive building will be connected to the office complex porch by a 12' wide covered deck.
- Entry to the building will be from a kiosk and ramp at the parking lot. This ramp must be at least 6' wide and a maximum 5% slope to meet ADA accessibility standards. This ramp will join with the porch of the existing building and with the 12' wide entry porch on the interpretive building.
- A roofed porch will be constructed on the swale-side for use as a viewing and program space, and a ramp will access the trailhead kiosk from this point.
- Water-tight restrooms will be placed on the lower level adjacent to the parking lot (must be watertight from floods as required by code).
- The building will be built at 10' above sea level to meet code specifications (per City Planner, Bruce Rogers).
- The architecture will be compatible with the design of the existing structure. Windows (and perhaps a clerestory on the roof apex) will bath the exhibit area and sales area in natural light.
- The interior should have open ceilings in the reception, exhibit and shop space in order to engender a bright, open, and airy feeling. The theater should have a 10' high ceiling to accommodate projection over the heads of the viewers.

Conceptual Elevation

Sanctuary Islands Discovery Center and Redeveloped Existing SCCF Building



Existing SCCF building redeveloped for more office space and a larger porch and meeting area.

New interpretive building, called the Sanctuary Islands Discovery Center, houses interactive exhibits, a theater, and a gift shop. Restrooms are located on the ground level.

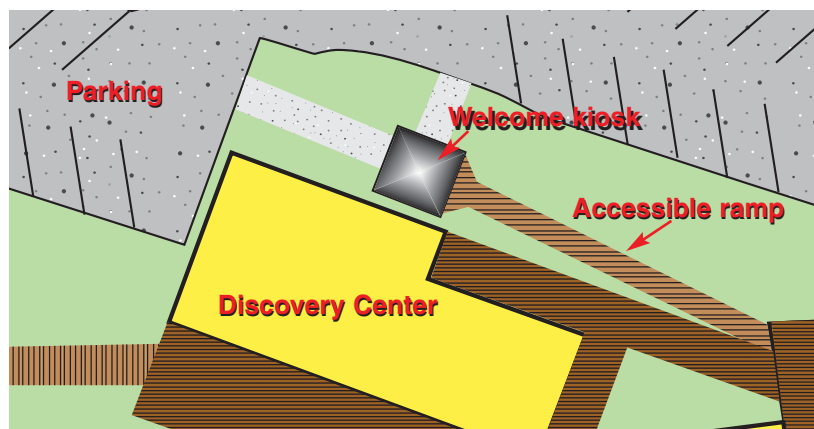
Kiosk and Entrance Ramp

The present ramp to the building is hidden and therefore unknown to first-time visitors and is essentially a backdoor entrance to the facility. We observed several elderly people struggling to enter from the main stairway adjacent to the office meeting room.

A gently sloping ramp with handrails could be used equally well to lead all people up to the porch and could serve as an inviting public gateway to the front desk. Large handicap parking spaces near the ramp would also assure that the entry to the ramp is generally visible to people in the parking lot. Trail lights just over the ramp surface would illuminate the route after sunset and avoid light pollution spillover into the wetlands. There should be just enough light to permit safe entry and exit.



The existing ramp is located behind the building, hidden from first-time visitors.



A welcome kiosk and distinct accessible ramp visible from the parking lot invite all visitors into the Discovery Center.

The kiosk, which is architecturally unified with the building, will be clearly visible from the parking lot so that visitors know that this is the starting point for their visit. They will walk through the kiosk to the ramp that takes them into the Discovery Center.

Panels will welcome visitors to the Discovery Center and briefly describe the mission and work of the SCCF. A large site map will orient them to the opportunities available to them including the theater, exhibits, shop, Sanctuary Island Discovery Trail, and the Gardening for Wildlife Trail and Butterfly House. Another panel will illustrate and describe opportunities available at the SCCF satellite areas. Brochure dispensers and a bulletin section will announce programs and events.

Entrance, Exhibit, and Store Space

Entrance to the Discovery Center from the porch is through a 12' wide glassed-in wall and glass door. Placed immediately to the right of the entrance is a 6' x 12' Sales/Reception Desk. This desk has a curved front and two levels on the counter, one to accommodate standing adults and the other to accommodate those in wheelchairs or children.

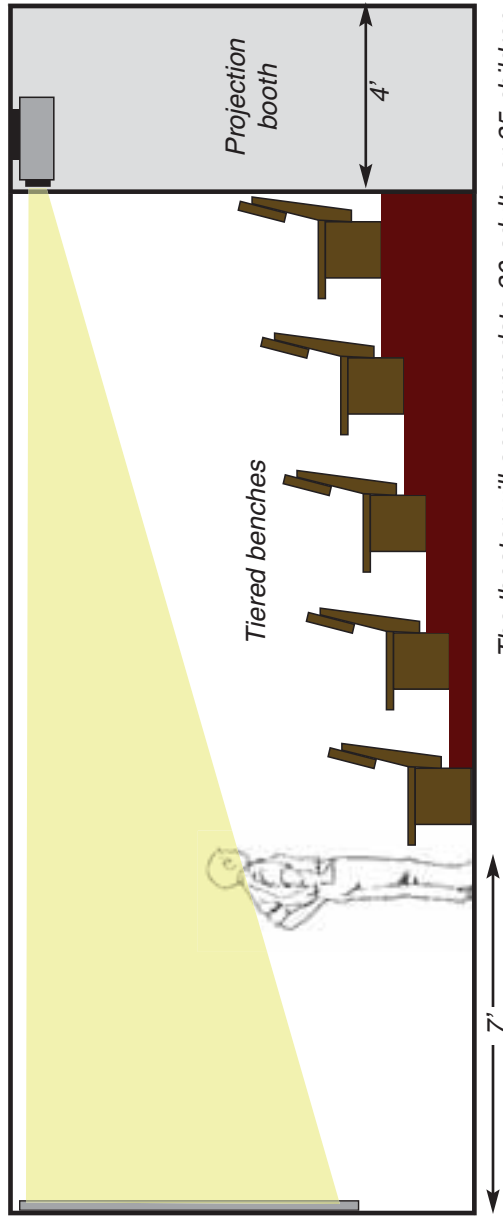
The entire space is open including the ceiling. Windows ring the exterior with the exception of the area dedicated to the Beach and Dune and the Ridge and Swale exhibit modules. Approximately 1,150 square feet are dedicated to exhibits and 750 square feet are dedicated to the store.

In order to maintain the open, airy feel of the space and to maximize the usable space, there is no room divider between the store and the exhibits. The sales/reception desk is strategically positioned to allow volunteers to monitor the store, exhibits, and front and back doors.

Theater

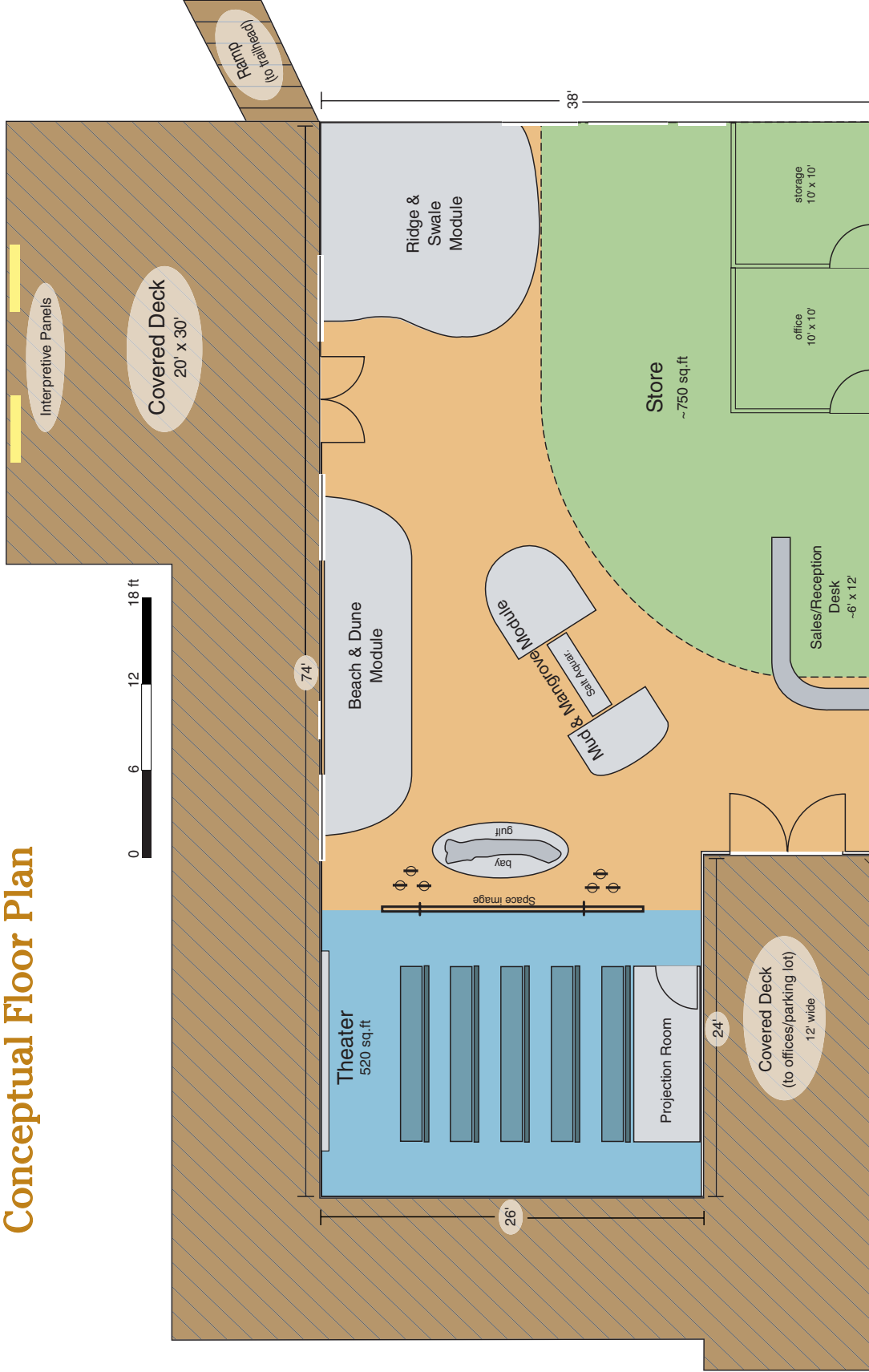
The theater measures 20' x 26' (520 square feet) with five 12-foot wide tiered benches that will accommodate 30 adults or 35 children. A 4' x 12' projection booth houses the digital projector and other equipment. This booth is accessible from a small door on the end. Surround-sound speakers are placed on shelves in each corner.

Two 3-foot wide entrances from each side of the exhibit space provide easy entrance and egress. A vertical curtain on the doors maintains darkness in the room. The theater program and lighting are operated by a switch at the Sales/Reception Desk.



The theater will accommodate 30 adults or 35 children. Seats on risers assure everyone a clear view.

Sanctuary Islands Discovery Center Conceptual Floor Plan



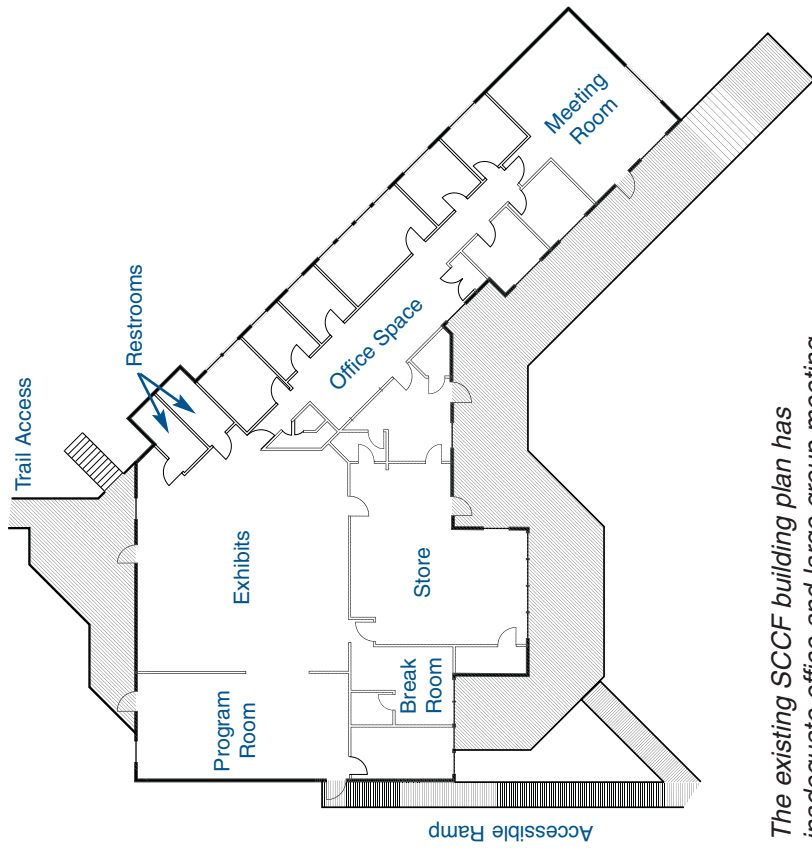
Redevelopment of the Existing Building

The construction of a separate interpretive building frees much needed space in the existing building for additional offices and auditorium space. Removal of the reception and gift shop will provide approximately 600 square feet for offices. Removal of the exhibits will add 1,200 square feet to the existing 600 square feet, providing a total of 1,800 square feet for the auditorium.

In the visioning process, there was a strongly felt need expressed to increase the size and usability of the porch and to open up the auditorium with views to the swale. It is proposed that the porch be expanded on the swale end of the building and wrap around to connect with the existing deck that leads to the trails. A hipped roof would cover the porch and match the hipped roof of the office complex.

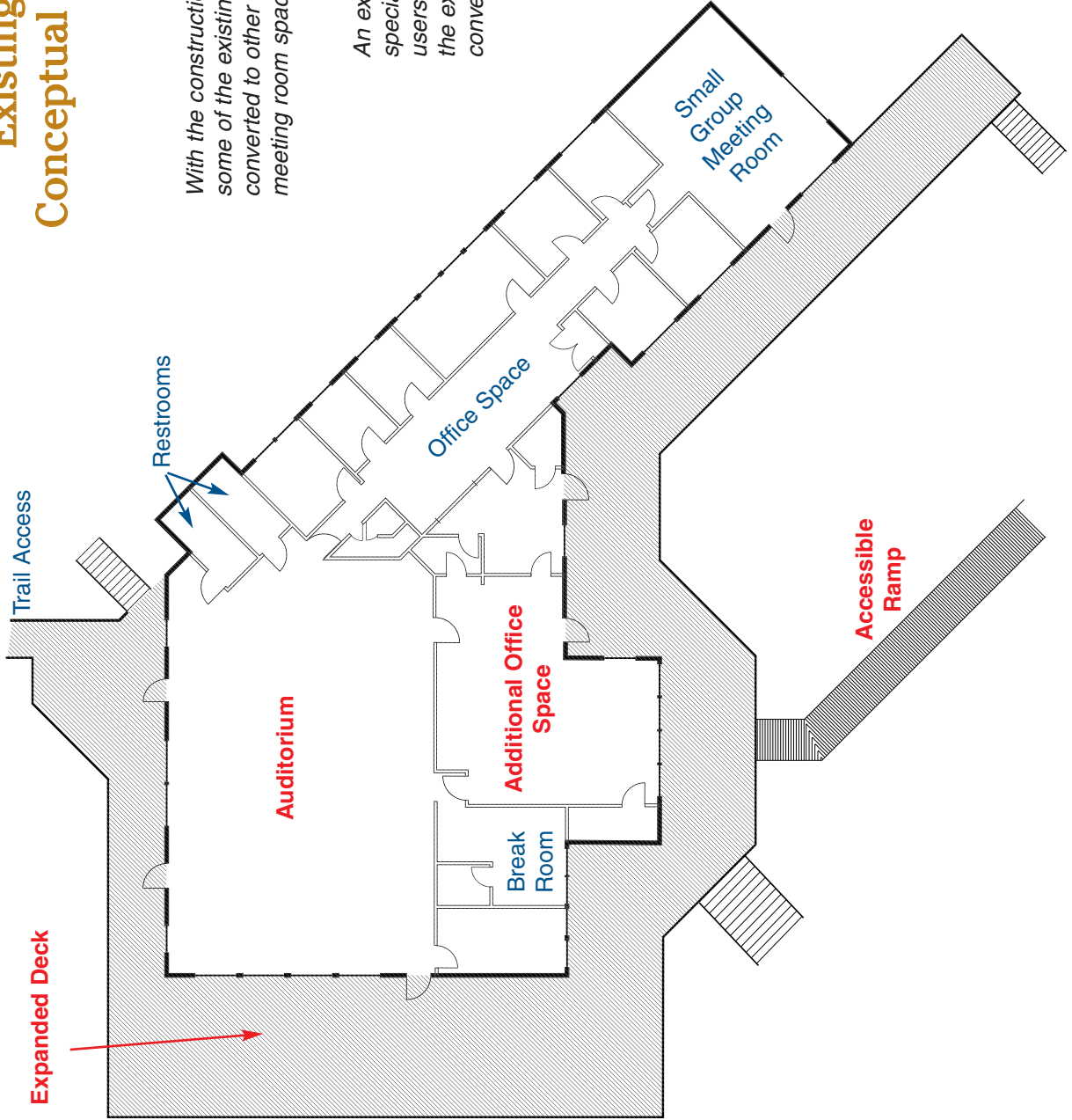
Glass doors on the auditorium will provide dramatic views to the swale and create a seamless connection between the porch and auditorium. This indoor-outdoor space would be highly desirable for special events, open house, and member functions.

Existing SCCF Building Floor Plan



The existing SCCF building plan has inadequate office and large group meeting space.

Existing SCCF Building Conceptual Redeveloped Floor Plan



With the construction of a separate interpretive facility, some of the existing spaces in the SCCF building can be converted to other uses (listed in red). More office and meeting room space will be available.

An expanded deck provides room for special events and access by auditorium users. An accessible ramp to the middle of the existing deck is more visible and convenient than the current side ramp.



Visitors enjoyed the tranquility of SCCF trails, but were discouraged by wet and muddy conditions.



Development of a central loop trail would provide access to a diversity of visitors (Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve).

Trail Systems

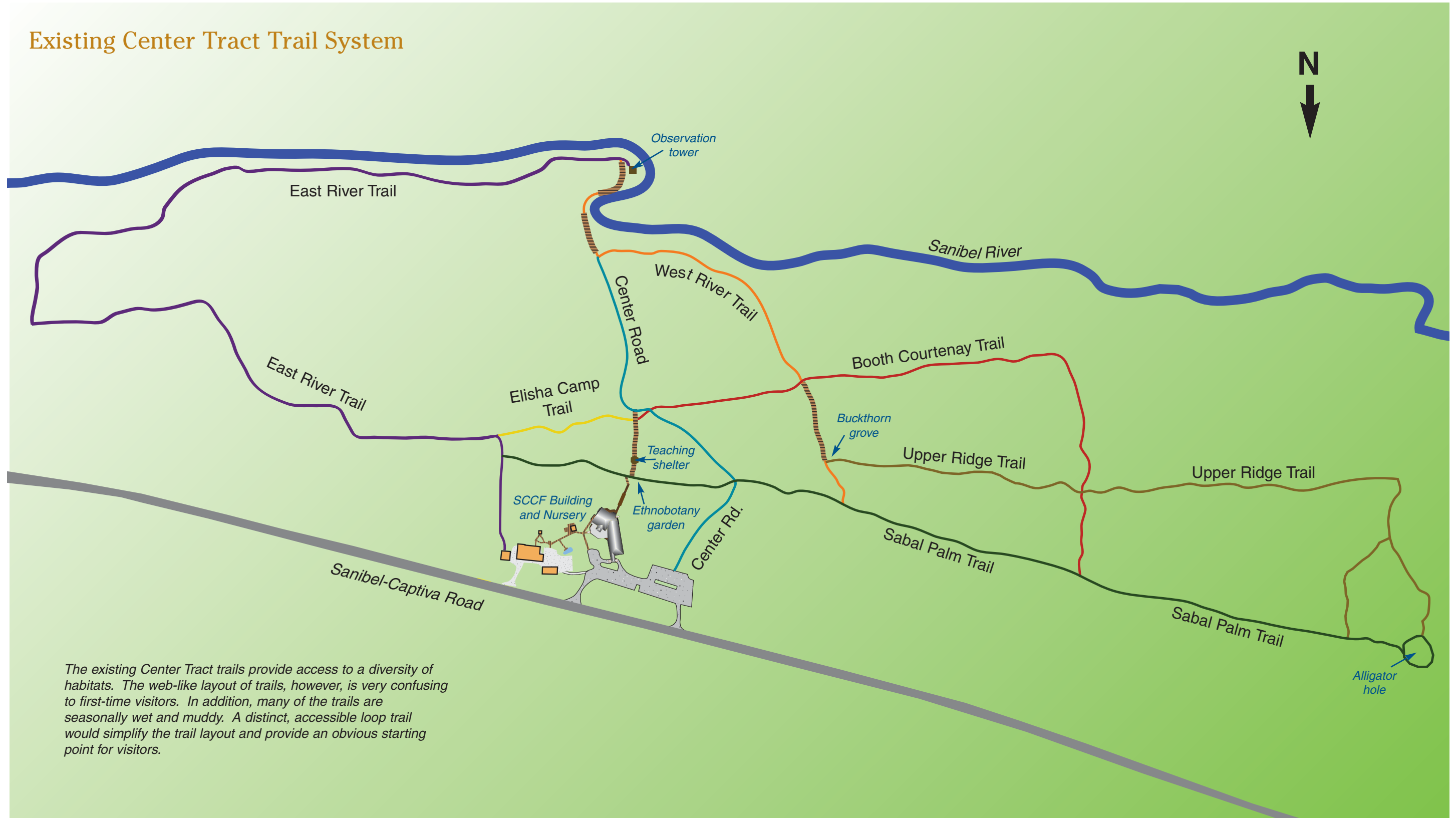
Through interviews and focus groups, most trail users generally agree on two aspects of the existing trails.

1. The trails are peaceful and uncrowded.
2. The trails are often wet, muddy, and even impassible.

Future trail development and renovation must preserve the peaceful qualities that current users enjoy, which makes the SCCF site unique from other crowded attractions on the island, like Ding Darling NWR. To address the poor trail condition concerns of users, current trails need to be improved with boardwalks or additional fill.

To preserve the tranquil and relaxed qualities of the site while keeping users out of the mud, we recommend the development of a unified central loop trail that would be developed with boardwalks, raised shell surfaces, overlooks, and teaching stations. This would provide access to visitors, families, members, and school groups of all abilities even during the most extreme conditions. The central loop would carry the majority of traffic at the site. For nature enthusiasts looking for quieter experiences, rustic secondary trails leading them elsewhere on the site would originate from the central loop. These unimproved trails would provide some visitors with the peaceful and less crowded experiences they value.

Existing Center Tract Trail System



The existing Center Tract trails provide access to a diversity of habitats. The web-like layout of trails, however, is very confusing to first-time visitors. In addition, many of the trails are seasonally wet and muddy. A distinct, accessible loop trail would simplify the trail layout and provide an obvious starting point for visitors.

Proposed Redevelopment of Center Tract Trail System



Sanctuary Islands Discovery Trail Loop

The Sanctuary Islands Discovery Trail will link segments of the current Sabal Palm, West River, and Center Road Trails. Most of these trail segments are dry during the year, but the addition of a few boardwalk linkages and an upgrading of shell surfaced trails will ensure universal accessibility. The upgraded loop will provide access to the Center Tract site for all visitors, including those who currently would have difficulty seeing much of the site, including young children, parents pushing strollers, people who are mobility impaired, and visitors who are less physically fit or unprepared to hike muddy trails.

Interpretive Media

Since more people will be able to walk the Discovery Trail Loop, a unified and thematic interpretive signage plan should be developed to cohesively tell the conservation story of the SCCF and specifically what makes the Center Tract unique. It should showcase the values and principles that the Foundation has championed on the islands.

Trail Design

The Discovery Trail Loop should involve the visitor, presenting opportunities for pleasant and memorable experiences. It should be a sensory experience, and at the best times, an emotional immersion in the site. The trail should be designed to enhance the aspects of mystery, variety, and beauty. A curving trail entices visitors to look around the next bend. Views cut into thick vegetation on the side of the trail provide vistas onto the rich wetland swales. An elevated boardwalk or overlook platform provides a different and unique perspective on an area. The observation tower on the Sanibel River is an important part of the Discovery Trail, giving visitors a birds-eye-view of the site. The proposed route of the Discovery Trail leads through a diversity of habitats and unique features of the Center Tract site, including sabal palms, freshwater wetlands, the buckthorn grove, grassy swales, and the Sanibel River.



Curving trails, like the Shell Mound Trail at Ding Darling NWR, enhance the visitor's trail experience.

The trail design must also consider the pragmatic aspects of maintenance. Boardwalks must be located in areas where they are protected from extensive controlled fires. Vehicle access is essential for efficient monitoring and upkeep of signage and trail surfaces. Maintenance access should be unobtrusive and out-of-sight of trail users. An access route from the old garage south from the nursery is a possible route for improvement as it is proximal to the proposed main trail loop.

Wayfinding

The Discovery Trail will serve wayfinding at the site by providing a recognizable base loop for visitors. Unified directional signs should be developed that convey the conservation ethic of the Foundation and the sense of peacefulness on the site. Current direction signs are rustic, but convey an expedient and temporary look. A more formal typeface with lower-case lettering would improve the signs.



Current direction signs are rustic to fit the quality of the site. However, the use of different materials (wood and recycled plastic) for posts and signs, and all-capital stenciled letters conveys a temporary look.



Improved signs would use the same material throughout, be designed to convey endurance and permanence, and be inscribed with a more defined typeface.

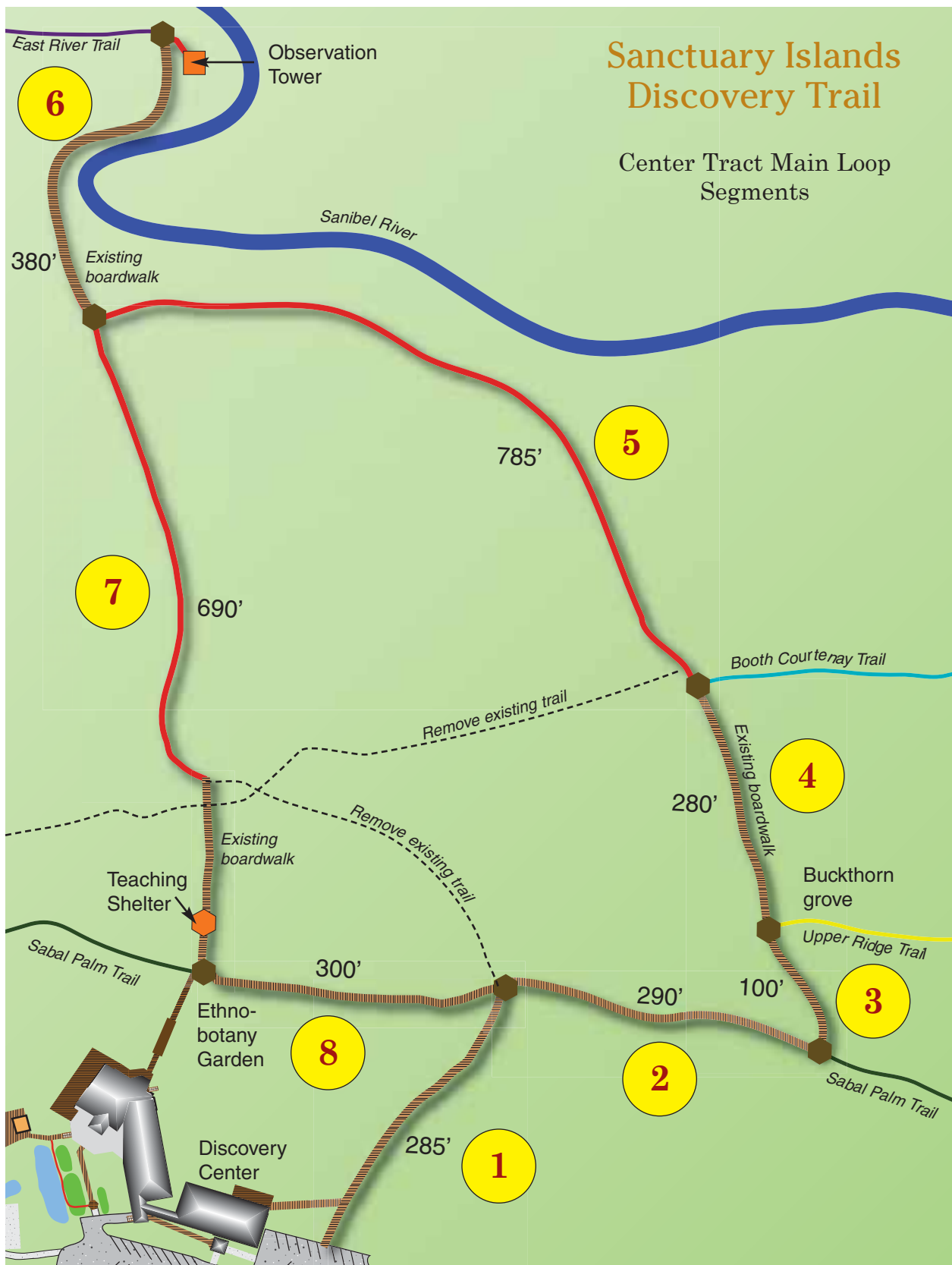
To avoid confusing intersections and to make the Discovery Trail Loop a more discrete entity, trails that currently run inside of the loop should be removed. Many of these trails are seasonally wet and difficult to maintain. Trails that run outside of the loop should be maintained as rustic walking paths.

The Discovery Trail Loop should be available even when the building is closed. A roofed trailhead kiosk near the parking lot should provide orientation, a warm welcome, and a positive introduction to the mission and activities of the SCCF. The entrance to the trail should be obvious and welcoming.

Smaller trailheads on the Discovery Trail will introduce visitors to rustic trails on the site, like the current East River Trail, Upper Ridge Trail, and Sabal Palm Trail. These trailheads will include interpretive panels and maps that introduce the various themed trails and illustrate the experiences and destinations associated with each trail (for example, a photograph of the Alligator Hole on the Sabal Palm Trail).



Secondary trails inside of the Discovery Trail Loop should be removed to reduce confusion for first-time visitors.



1 Center Road: Parking Lot to Sabal Palm (285')

The north section of the Center Road is currently a shell-based path subject to seasonal floods in the swale. This trail segment would be ideal for return visitors who would like to access the trail system without entering the Discovery Center. To be accessible, a boardwalk should be built to cross the swale. The boardwalk would rise slightly from the parking lot, providing sweeping views of wading birds in the swale and the SCCF office/meeting building. A ramp from the back deck of the Discovery Center would meet the boardwalk from the parking lot. At the intersection of the Sabal Palm Trail, visitors have the option of turning left to access the teaching shelter, ethnobotany garden, office/meeting complex, and “Gardening for Wildlife” trail, or turning right to experience the entire loop.



Segment 1 offers beautiful views of the swale and SCCF building. A boardwalk would offer a different perspective.



Well-designed boardwalks, like this one at Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve, provide access for everyone.

2 Sabal Palm: Center Road to West River Trail (290')

This segment of the Sabal Palm trail meanders beneath tall palms and opens into a park-like open area of sea grape at about 70'. The “Dawn to Dusk” interpretive panel is located here. An interesting “island” is located at 150', where the trail wraps around both sides of a stand of trees. A boardwalk in this segment would help protect the trail from eroding and provide variety for visitors. The boardwalk should be designed to enhance the mystery and uniqueness of the trail by planning curves and wrapping the walk around trees and tree stands. A trail hub introduces visitors to the rustic “Sabal Palm Trail” and “Alligator Hole” to the west.



An open area of sea grape and an “island” of trees enhance variety on segment 2.



Curving trails and a large gumbo limbo tree are highlights of segment 3.

3

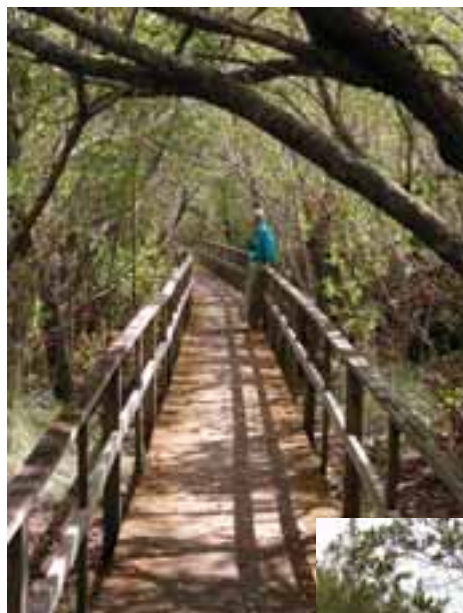
West River Trail: Sabal Palm to Upper Ridge Trail/Buckthorn Grove (100')

The trail here is unique and varied, curving beneath large palms and edged with ferns. A conspicuous gumbo limbo tree stands next to the trail. A boardwalk would help protect the trail from traffic.

An easy 50' spur leads to the scenic Buckthorn Grove, the rough bark providing a niche for stunning epiphytes and orchids. A trail hub introduces visitors to the Buckthorn Grove and rustic "Upper Ridge Trail" to the west.



The Buckthorn Grove offers a unique look at epiphytes.



An existing boardwalk lifts visitors above the wet ground in segment 4.

4

West River Trail: Upper Ridge Trail to Booth Courtenay Trail (280')

A boardwalk, called Sandy's Walk, already exists in this segment of the trail. The boardwalk is adequate for universal accessibility. When the boardwalk is replaced in the future, variety should be designed into the trail. Meanders entice visitors to "see what's around the next bend." Changes in the height of the boardwalk provide different perspectives. Views should be cut from both sides to highlight the unique swales, especially around 100'.

A trail hub introduces visitors to the rustic "Booth Courtenay Trail" to the west. The Booth Courtenay Trail to the east should be removed to reduce trail intersections and visitor confusion.



Cutting brush and small trees would open up views to dynamic swale habitat.

5

West River Trail: Booth Courtenay to Center Road (785’)

This trail is currently surfaced with shell and provides beautiful vistas of the swale and Sanibel River. Due to limited flooding on this segment, a shell-surfaced trail will be adequate for accessibility. However, the current trail should be resurfaced and smoothed. The trail should also be raised slightly through the swale to prevent muddy conditions.

At about 320’ from the Booth Courtenay Trail, a bench provides a relaxing view of the Sanibel River. This viewing point should be made accessible by replacing the rotting bench, cutting brush to enhance the view, and sloping and surfacing the site.

At 406’, an electrical device and pipe seem out-of-place in the natural area. An interpretive panel or I.D. sign should explain their purpose.

At 609’, there is potential for another scenic overlook of the river. Views of the river should be enhanced wherever possible. Visitors are intrinsically drawn to the movement and wildlife of the river corridor.



Segment 5 should be resurfaced with shell to provide better access.



The bench and viewing area should be made accessible.



Views of the river should be enhanced along the trail by cutting dense vegetation and designing viewing areas.



Man-made devices should be labeled and/or interpreted for visitors.



Most of segment 6 is already an accessible boardwalk, providing glimpses of the river and unique flora.



The amphitheater looks temporary and is not accessible when the ground is wet. A wider section of boardwalk with seating built-in could improve the site.



The Observation Tower is a natural draw for visitors. Interpretive panels at the base should show the view from the top for those unable to climb the tower.

6

West River Trail: Center Road to East River Trail/Observation Tower (380')

The majority of this trail spur is already boardwalk and adequate for accessibility. It follows the scenic Sanibel River south to the Observation Tower. The tower is a natural destination and draw for visitors, who are intrigued by the possibility of getting a birds-eye view of the island.

At 128', the boardwalk gives way to a clearing with access to the river. Two interpretive panels, "What's in the River?" and "Sanibel River," are located here.

An accessible observation platform is off to one side; branches and brush should be cut to provide a better view of the river.

A few moveable benches are used for educational programs. A wide boardwalk with built-in seating would provide accessibility and would better define and protect the site.

The tower is an extra 15' west from the intersection with the East River Trail. A trail hub introduces visitors to the observation tower, the rustic "East River Trail" and associated features. Interpretive panels should show the view from the top of the tower for people unable to experience it firsthand. Panels at the top should interpret the landscape.



Vegetation should be cut from the viewing platform to enhance the view.

7

Center Road: West River Trail to Booth Courtenay (461')
Teaching Shelter Trail: Booth Courtenay to Sabal Palm Trail (184')

The south part of this trail segment is surfaced with shell and provides broad views of the swale and Shell Museum. Due to limited flooding, a shell-surfaced trail in this section will be adequate for accessibility. However, the current trail should be resurfaced and smoothed. A “Pepper Control” interpretive panel is located at 240’, which provides a visual contrast of the before and after-states of invasive species management on the specific site.

A “Marsh Management” interpretive panel is found at 460’, detailing water and fire management on the island. Just north of the panel, a series of confusing intersections currently exist. The Center Road segment that splits to the northwest should be removed, as should the Booth Courtenay Trail that runs east and the Elisha Camp Trail that runs west.

A straight boardwalk/bridge runs from these intersections north through the Teaching Shelter (158’) to the Sabal Palm Trail. The boardwalk is adequate for accessibility, although it has a slight slope at the south end. The Teaching Shelter should have doors that someone in a wheelchair can open easily.

A trail hub introduces visitors to the Ethnobotany Garden, the “Gardening for Wildlife Trail”, and the rustic Sabal Palm Trail to the east.



The south part of segment 7 should be resurfaced with shell to provide better access.



Confusing intersections should be eliminated by removing certain trails.



The boardwalk on the north part of segment 7 is accessible. The teaching shelter provides an introduction to ethnobotany.



Segment 8 curves beneath large palm trees. A boardwalk would lift visitors out of the mud and enhance their trail experience.



A viewing deck would add variety to the segment and give visitors the chance to see wildlife in the swale.

8

Sabal Palm Trail: Teaching Shelter Trail to Center Road (300')

This trail is currently not surfaced and is often subject to seasonal flooding. It curves beneath large palms and visitors are intrigued with feelings of mystery and exploration. A boardwalk would protect the trail surface from erosion and provide an enhanced experience for visitors. The boardwalk should meander around trees, some rising up through the treadway that give visitors a “close encounter.” At about 170’, a spur north from the boardwalk would open onto a deck with views of the swale and SCCF buildings. The boardwalk meets with the parking lot spur and completes the Discovery Trail loop.



Boardwalks should be designed to enhance the mystery, variety, and beauty of a site. A tree rising through the boardwalk encourages closer inspection. Numerous curves entice visitors to “see what’s around the next bend.” Views cut out to swales or other open areas reduce the monotony of dense vegetation. (Calusa Nature Center, February, 2004)

Rustic Trail System

Trails outside of the Discovery Trail loop should be maintained for a more rustic visitor experience. These trails are adventures off of the beaten path—ideal places to have close encounters with wildlife and quietly observe the unique habitats of the Center Tract.

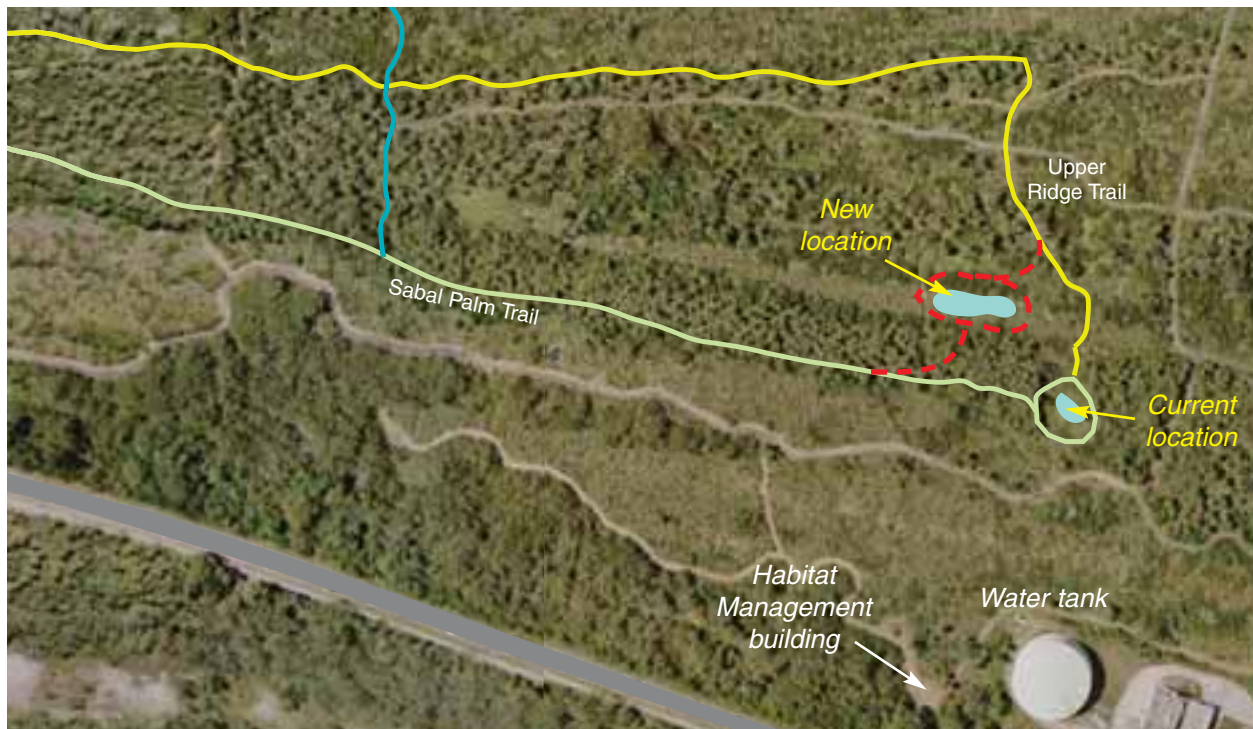
Alligator Hole

The “Alligator Hole” is a feature that lures people to almost certain disappointment. The view of a water tank and the new SCCF habitat management building detracts from the “rustic” experience, the alligators have long-since departed for better habitat, and the wooden structures are badly deteriorated. The open freshwater does harbor mosquito fish, dragonflies, and wading birds, which would interest nature enthusiasts.



The current view from the Alligator Hole.

An alternative would be to construct a new, improved “gator hole” in the swale to the south-east. Ridge vegetation would shield the Sanibel-Captiva Road structures from view, and a larger water feature would attract diverse aquatic wildlife.



Maintenance Access

The current main access for maintenance is from the parking lot at Center Road. The redevelopment plan is to make this a universally accessible boardwalk to the main loop trail. Maintenance would no longer be able to access the trail system via this route.

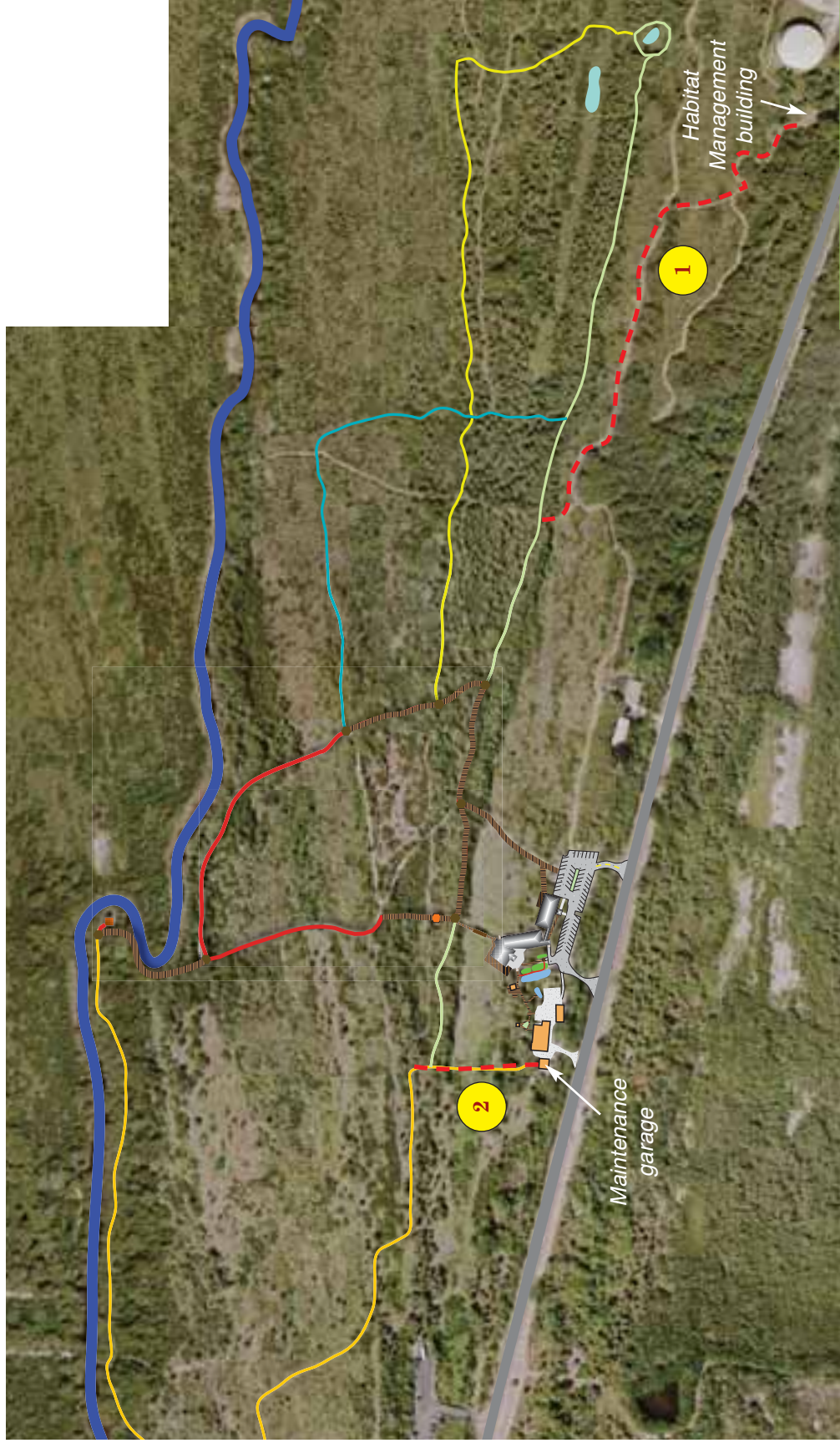
To quickly access both the east and west segments of the Center Tract trail system, two maintenance access routes are recommended.

- 1 Existing pathways leading south from the new habitat management complex provides access to the west half of the trail system.
- 2 Existing trail spur from the old maintenance garage near the nursery south to the east half of the trail system.



The Center Road from the parking lot has been the main access point to the site for maintenance vehicles. Alternative access will be needed if this trail is redeveloped into an accessible boardwalk.

Proposed maintenance access to redeveloped trail system





"Bucket Buddies" is a third grade program conducted at the Pick Preserve.

Pick Preserve Nature Trail Boardwalk

The SCCF Pick Preserve, located across Sanibel-Captiva Road from The Sanibel School, is a primary educational resource for the school. A boardwalk is necessary to provide a safe and accessible study environment for the school children. The proposed boardwalk would extend to the bird blind, the teaching shelter, the pond loop, and the upland island. The boardwalk would measure approximately 700 feet. The Ridge Loop Trail is usually dry and would not require a boardwalk. The entire trail system including the boardwalk, Ridge Loop Trail, and maintenance road that connects the two areas is about 2,868 feet (just over a half mile).

Proposed boardwalk and trail system for the Pick Preserve.





Third grade students observe and record macro-invertebrates at the Pick Preserve.



Richard Finkel teaches "Island Food Webs" at the teaching shelter (2nd grade).



Seventh grade students learned Miccosukee thatching methods and constructed this bird blind.



Chapter 6

Interpretive Media



Everglades National Park

Interpretive media are non-personal forms of communication that connect the meanings of the resource to the interests of the visitor. These include exhibits, publications, interpretive panels, and websites.

Introduction



Unlike Ding Darling NWR, SCCF interpretive media should not attract more visitors to the island, but be targeted to those visitors already on the island.

Interpretive media are methods to connect the meanings of the resource to the interests of the visitor. The delivery matrix that follows is a comprehensive overview of what media should be used at SCCF to make visitor-resource connections. It is important that every person who comes to the islands, whether visitor or resident, has multiple opportunities to receive the messages that communicate the theme and sub-themes elaborated in Chapter 4. These opportunities are reciprocal: the lives of visitors and residents are enriched and the SCCF is aided in achieving its mission.

However, it must be recognized that the majority of visitors to the islands are coming for recreational pursuits and have little interest in learning about the island's ecology and conservation. Therefore, a limited selection of interpretive media will be targeted to this group.

It is also the desire of the various stakeholders that the interpretive media not attract more people to the islands and that the education complex maintain a "family atmosphere". It should serve a smaller number of people than other nature attractions like Ding Darling. The majority of the media at the education complex will be targeted to the niche audiences attracted to SCCF: those island visitors with a special interest in nature and conservation. This media is also targeted to all the residents of Sanibel and Captiva because they have a stake in the efforts of SCCF in preserving and maintaining the unique natural character of the islands.

Unified Design Standards

It is essential that all interpretive media be graphically and visually unified. At present, SCCF media are eclectic pieces developed over the years for a specific need without regard for unification. In this chapter, graphics standards and recommendations will be developed to unify exhibits, wayside and trail panels, publications and the website. This unification will enhance public recognition of SCCF and its programs.





Colors

A standard set of colors helps to unify media and evoke feelings about the organization. Fast-food restaurants, for example, often use bright yellow and red to catch a person's attention and signify fast-paced excitement. Colors chosen to represent the SCCF, on the other hand, should demonstrate the preservation, research, and education qualities that the organization has fostered. Muted natural colors are recommended that complement each other, but contrast enough to provide emphasis and attract attention.

The recommended colors are listed as Pantone numbers, a standard color system used by most printers.



Colors, like those found on the existing entrance sign, are attractive and convey the mission of SCCF. These colors should be used on all signs, exhibits, publications, websites, and other media to enhance SCCF identity and unify programs.

 <p>Process 2955 CMYK=100, 45, 0, 37 PMS coated 2955 PMS uncoated 294</p>	 <p>Process 22-9 CMYK=0, 3, 5, 0</p>
 <p>Process 7475 CMYK=50, 0, 25, 30 PMS coated 7475 PMS uncoated 562</p>	 <p>Black CMYK=0, 0, 0, 100</p>



Typography

Typeface

Each typeface has its own unique personality. Font styles used for SCCF media should be friendly, readable, and versatile.

For headlines and sub-headings, a serif font (letters with bars on the ends) adds character and evokes a sense of leisure and quiet. Georgia-Italics is recommended for SCCF media. This font is currently used on the SCCF website. The curved letters are graceful, easy to read, and friendly. The font evokes a sense of elegance and importance without being too serious or technical.

Although a serif font works well for short headings, it does take more time and energy to read. If used for all of the text, a piece of media might look like too much work and be ignored by visitors. Sans-serif fonts (letters without bars on the ends) are cool and can be read with little effort. The main text and captions should be a sans-serif font, especially on interpretive panels. Helvetica is a clean and neat sans-serif font that provides maximum readability and is widely available.

Size

A hierarchy of text sizes emphasizes the importance of different sections of text. Headlines are the largest, followed by main text headings, main text, sub-text headings, sub-text, captions, and photo credits. Some visitors will only spend a few seconds looking at a piece of media. They should be able to grasp the main interpretive message just by looking at the headings and graphics.

Media should be developed according to the 3-30-3 rule. Visitors can receive a message in three seconds, thirty seconds, or three minutes.

The typeface and size proportions (individual sizes will be based on the type of media) should be unified for all interpretive media.

Headlines and sub-headings:

Georgia-Italics

Main text and captions:

Helvetica

Headlines

Main text heading

Main text

Sub-text heading

Sub-text

Captions

Photo credits

A hierarchy of font sizes evokes differing sense of importance for parts of the text.

Unifying Elements

Certain graphic elements can be replicated on all media. The SCCF logo, for example, should be clearly visible on interpretive panels, exhibits, publications, websites, and other types of media.

Other elements might be replicated on specific types of media. A dark blue headline bar and blue-green side bar combination work well to standardize SCCF interpretive panels throughout the islands. These elements could also be incorporated into publications and websites, but would need to be adjusted based on the suitability for each medium. Each SCCF site/tract would have a general panel that includes a standardized map of the island with SCCF tracts indicated.

Grid systems can also be designed for each type of media to unify text, graphic, and object placement. By using templates, new media can be quickly and easily developed, and old media updated.



The SCCF logo is a standard element that should be highly visible on all media.

Design Standards for Wayside Exhibits

The principles of unified design should be applied to all SCCF media. Wayside exhibit panels are used in this plan as an example to demonstrate how color, typography, and other elements can be unified to enhance the identity of SCCF.

Wayside exhibits are one of the most effective forms of interpretive media. They are highly visible and available to visitors 24 hours a day. Because they are located near the resources that they interpret, wayside exhibits can quickly answer questions that visitors have about a site. They can be dispersed throughout the island for maximum visibility. They are direct, low-tech, user-friendly communication tools that are easily accessed by the visitor. People who are reluctant to enter a nature center, participate in an education program, or attend a film presentation will often stop to enjoy a wayside exhibit.



Effective wayside exhibits engage visitors and connect them with tangible resources. (Rocky Mountain National Park, CO)



The best interpretive panels communicate visually with as few words as possible (Logan Canyon National Scenic Byway, UT)

Effective Wayside Exhibits

The ideal wayside exhibit will catch the attention of visitors, engage them, and connect them with the tangible resources of a site. The following recommendations should be followed when developing wayside exhibits.

Seven Ways to an Effective Interpretive Panel

1. Communicate visually. Use photos and drawings to help tell the story.
2. Graphics should do more than duplicate what can be seen at the site. They should reveal hidden meanings and ideas.
3. Use a message pyramid: develop a descending order of message importance. This can be expressed as the 3-30-3 rule. Visitors can receive a message in 3 seconds, 30 seconds, or 3 minutes.
4. Keep the message short. Use short sentences and paragraphs.
5. Create imagery with concrete nouns and active verbs. Avoid adjectives and adverbs.
6. Relate to the visitor's experience. Use personal pronouns, personal language, and familiar terms. Illustrate with metaphors, analogies, quotes, questions, and real examples.
7. Provide for multi-sensory involvement. Use digital audio repeaters and participatory devices. This may include tactiles, models, and relief maps.

Existing SCCF Wayside Exhibit Critique



Frannie's Preserve interpretive panels.



Panel on the Center Tract trail.

Design strengths

- Important information that identifies the work of the SCCF and specific information about sites.
- Well-written messages that engage the visitor with personal language, familiar terms, concrete nouns, and active verbs.
- Illustrations that visually tell a story and do more than duplicate what can already be seen on site.

Design problems

- Large, continuous blocks of text that are the same size. No message hierarchy (3-30-3 rule).
- Long lines of text that run the entire width of the panel.
- Text crowds the panel margins and appears overwhelming.
- No unified design elements that uniquely identify the SCCF.

It is recommended that future panels follow the design standards described in this plan. Existing panels can be phased out when they begin to deteriorate.

Wayside Exhibit Design

To address the design problems of existing wayside exhibits, design templates should be developed that follow

the guidelines of effective interpretive panels and unified design standards. The following two panels would be installed at the Walker Preserve.

Preserving the Islands

Walker Preserve

This 14-acre preserve was a gift to the SCCF in 1997 by Dr. Walter and Elaine Walker. While much conservation land exists on the island, only about 5% is in this rare upland category.

Habitats in the Walker Preserve

The upland portion of this preserve is coastal scrub and West Indian hardwood hammock. Principle vegetation includes cabbage palms, gumbo limbo, seagrape, and Joe wood. It provides habitat for gopher tortoises, bobcats, resident and migrating songbirds, reptiles, and amphibians.

The preserve also has 3,000 feet of red mangrove fringe adjacent to the Pine Island Sound Aquatic Preserve. This is an important nursery for commercial and sport fish and many invertebrates.

You are here

Discovery Center

Visit the SCCF Discovery Center and experience the wildlife and habitats of the Sanctuary Islands. Climb into a gopher tortoise hole, feel marine creatures in the touch tank, and climb the viewing tower for a birds-eye-view.

What is the SCCF?

The Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving natural resources on and around the barrier islands.

To maintain these islands, the SCCF acquires land, manages habitat, examines environmental conditions, and educates residents and the public.

For more information, stop by the SCCF Discovery Center, or contact us at:

(813) 472-2329
<http://www.sccf.org>

“Preserving the Islands: Walker Tract” (above)

Each SCCF preserve should have a general panel like this to introduce the unique features of the site, orient visitors, describe the SCCF mission, and invite visitors to the Discovery Center and other sites. Aerial photos, like those found on existing panels, reveal a unique perspective. This panel uses a faded image from the site in the background.

“A Tortoise Apartment” (below)

Accompanying panels interpret unique animals, plants, habitats, or other natural/cultural history topics in more detail. Large focal point graphics attract attention. Although the panel interprets the life history of gopher tortoises, SCCF activities are included on the side bar. This panel uses a solid light beige color for the background.



The panel features a blue header with the title "A Tortoise Apartment" in white serif font. Below the header is a large photograph of a gopher tortoise. The panel is divided into several sections: a top left section with a faded background image of a tortoise and a "Did you know?" text box; a top right section with a "Gopher Tortoise Facts" text box; a middle section with a "Put on your hard hat!" text box and a "What to Look For..." image of a burrow; a bottom left section with a "Life in a Tortoise Hole" text box and a diagram of a burrow system with various animals; and a bottom right section with a "What can you do?" text box and a list of actions. The background of the panel is a solid light beige color.

Did you know?
Gopher tortoises are a "species of special concern" in Florida. The SCCF protects island tortoises by conducting annual counts and encouraging "gopher friendly" landscapes.

Gopher Tortoise Facts
These slow, gentle creatures grow to about 10 inches long and weigh about 10 pounds. They can live up to 60 years in the wild, and begin laying eggs at their burrow entrance when they are 10-20 years old. They eat grass, wildflowers, fruits, and sometimes carrion.

What can you do?

- Keep an open sunny area in grass and wildflowers for burrowing and food.
- Do not apply water, pesticides, or herbicides where they live.
- Keep dogs, cats, and raccoons away from their eggs and babies.

Put on your hard hat! Gopher tortoises are hard at work excavating burrows. With strong front legs and shovel-like claws, they dig holes up to 30 feet long and 8 feet deep! Many animals depend on the tortoise's burrow for survival.

What to Look For...
Watch for moon-shaped holes in the ground. These burrows are a telltale sign that gopher tortoises are in the area.

Life in a Tortoise Hole
A gopher tortoise burrow is teeming with life. How many animals can you find?

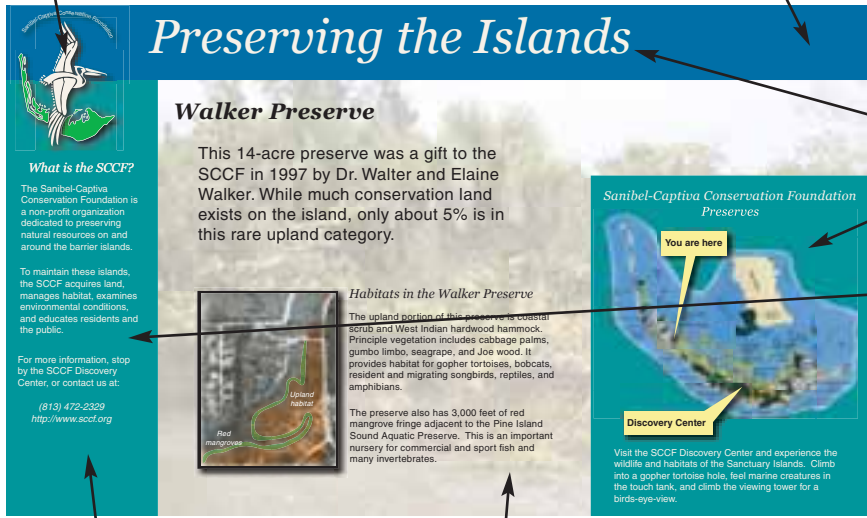
Gopher frog
Indigo snake
Florida mouse
Gopher tortoise

The design templates for SCCF wayside exhibits include several unifying elements that tie the panels together and enhance identity.

Unifying elements on all panels:

SCCF logo and name

Dark blue title bar



On introduction panels:

"Preserving the Islands" title

Map of SCCF preserves with current location indicated.

Side bar with general SCCF information.

Green-blue side bar

Faded photograph background

Faded green-blue text boxes to provide design structure.

Typography:

Headlines:
Georgia-Italic, 120 pts
Light beige

Main Text Heading:
Georgia-Italic, 56 pts
Black

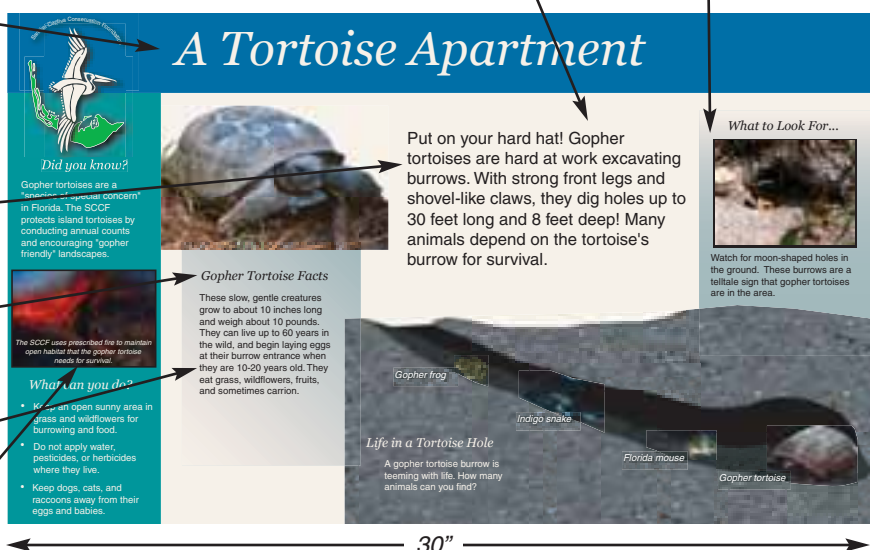
Main Text:
Helvetica-Med, 42 pts
Black

Sub-text Heading:
Georgia-Italic, 32 pts
Black or light beige

Sub-text:
Helvetica-Med, 24 pts
Black or light beige

Captions:
Helvetica-Oblique, 18 pts
Black or light beige

Light beige background



18"

30"

Format for Media Concepts

In addition to design unity, media should also have theme and message unity. All media and programs should be developed based on the SCCF mission, goals, themes and messages as identified in this document. This provides a clear focus for the interpretive and educational program and concentrates each interpretive medium on the core ideas that are to be communicated.

The media plans provided in this chapter are conceptual. The purpose is to achieve consensus on the media needed to achieve the educational goals of the SCCF and then use this to seek funding for implementation. These concepts are a starting point for future design and fabrication.

Each individual media concept includes:

- **Purpose:** A description of the goals for this media component.
- **Messages:** Message codes from Chapter 4 for those themes and messages that this medium addresses.
- **Objectives:** Measurable objectives stated in three domains, cognitive (what the visitor will learn), behavioral (what the visitor will do), and affective (what the visitor will feel).
- **Description:** A narrative describing the media concept with accompanying illustrations.

Delivery Matrix for SCCF Interpretive Media

<u>Interpretive Media</u>	<u>Messages</u> (refer to Chapter 4)	<u>Audiences</u> (refer to Chapter 3)
Discovery Center Exhibits:		
The Sanctuary Islands	1.8, 2.11	IA, IB, IIA, IIC
Beach & Dune Module	1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5	IA, IB, IIA, IIC
Wetland & Woodland Module	1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.11	IA, IB, IIA, IIC
Estuary & Marine Module	1.7, 1.8, 2.11	IA, IB, IIA, IIC
Interpretive Trails:		
“The Sanctuary Islands” Theater Program	Main theme plus all sub-theme 1, sub-theme 2 messages	IA, IB, IIA, IIC
Kiosks:		
Discovery Center Parking Lot	1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 2.11	IA, IB, IIA, IIC
Marine Lab Parking Lot	1.7, 1.8, 2.11	IA, IB, IIA, IIB, IIC
C of C Parking Lot	Main theme plus all sub-theme 1 messages	All audiences
Historical Village site	Main theme plus all sub-theme 2 messages	All audiences

<u>Interpretive Media</u>	<u>Messages</u> (refer to Chapter 4)	<u>Audiences</u> (refer to Chapter 3)
Wayside Exhibits:		
Walker Tract	1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 2.11	IA, IB, IIA, IIC
San-Cap Road Bike Path	1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 2.11	IA, IB, IIA, IIC
Selected preserves on public pathways	1.8, 1.4, 1.5, 1.8, 2.11	All audiences
Publications:		
General Brochure	Main theme and all sub-themes in broad generalities	All audiences
C of C “Vacation Guide” and “Sunny Day Guide”	Main theme and all sub-themes in broad generalities	All audiences
Share the Beach with Sea Turtles	1.1, 1.2, all sub-theme 3 messages	All audiences
Gopher Tortoises	1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 2.11	IA, IB, IC
Marine Lab	1.7, 1.8, 2.11	IA, IB, IIA, IIB, IIC
Website		
SCCF Main Site	Main theme and all sub-themes in broad generalities	All audiences

Discovery Center Exhibits

In the visioning process, SCCF stakeholders established four criteria for exhibit development:

1. Exhibits should be engaging, interactive and child-friendly. Text narrative should be kept to a minimum.
2. Exhibits should focus on the work and values of SCCF.
3. Exhibits should be modest in scale and cost.
4. There should be opportunities for temporary exhibits.

The following exhibit concepts have been developed based on these criteria.



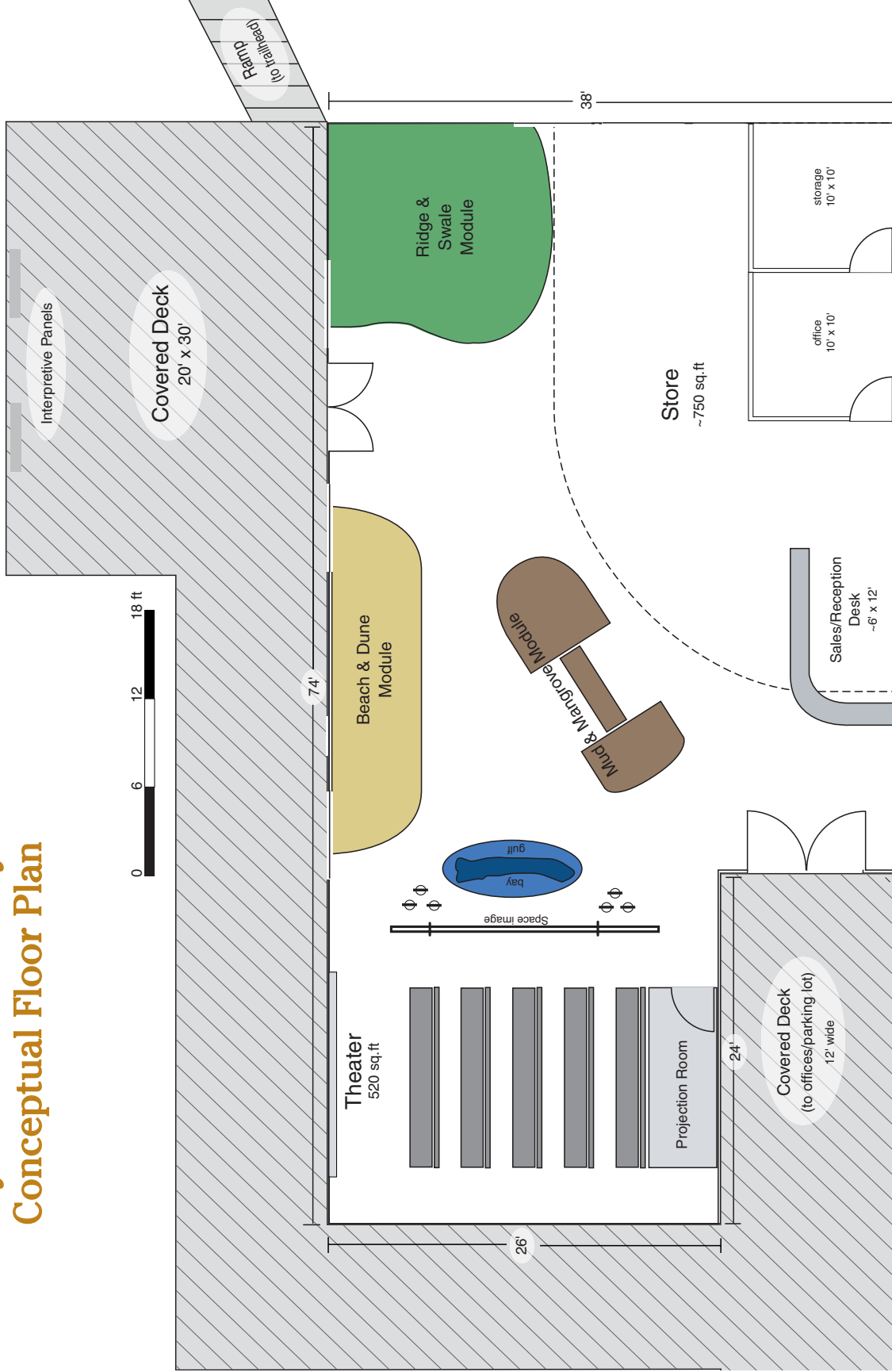
Current nature center exhibits are professional, but lack visitor interaction and do little to connect to the “real story” outside.



Some components of the existing exhibits, like the stuffed manatee and loggerhead turtle model, will be incorporated into new exhibits.



Sanctuary Islands Discovery Center Conceptual Floor Plan



Module 1: The Sanctuary Islands

Purpose:

To introduce the mission of the SCCF in “fostering a community dedicated to the conservation and preservation of natural resources and wildlife habitat.” This is also the primary theme of all interpretive media. This exhibit will visually introduce visitors to the islands using a large satellite photo of the islands and adjacent waters and a tactile/interactive habitat map. This exhibit will also feature full-size cutout images of key island conservationists and quotes that communicate their philosophies. This will serve as a lead into the theatre production also titled “The Sanctuary Islands.”

Messages: 1.8, 2.11

Objectives:

People will learn:

- About visionary leaders that have been instrumental in protecting The Sanctuary Islands of Sanibel and Captiva.
- That the island is composed of diverse habitats from the gulf-front beach and dune community to the interior wood ridges and wetlands to the bay-side mangrove and sea grass communities.

People will do:

- Interact with the habitats map to see and touch common species found in each.

- Examine the satellite photo to gain a geographic perspective.

People will feel:

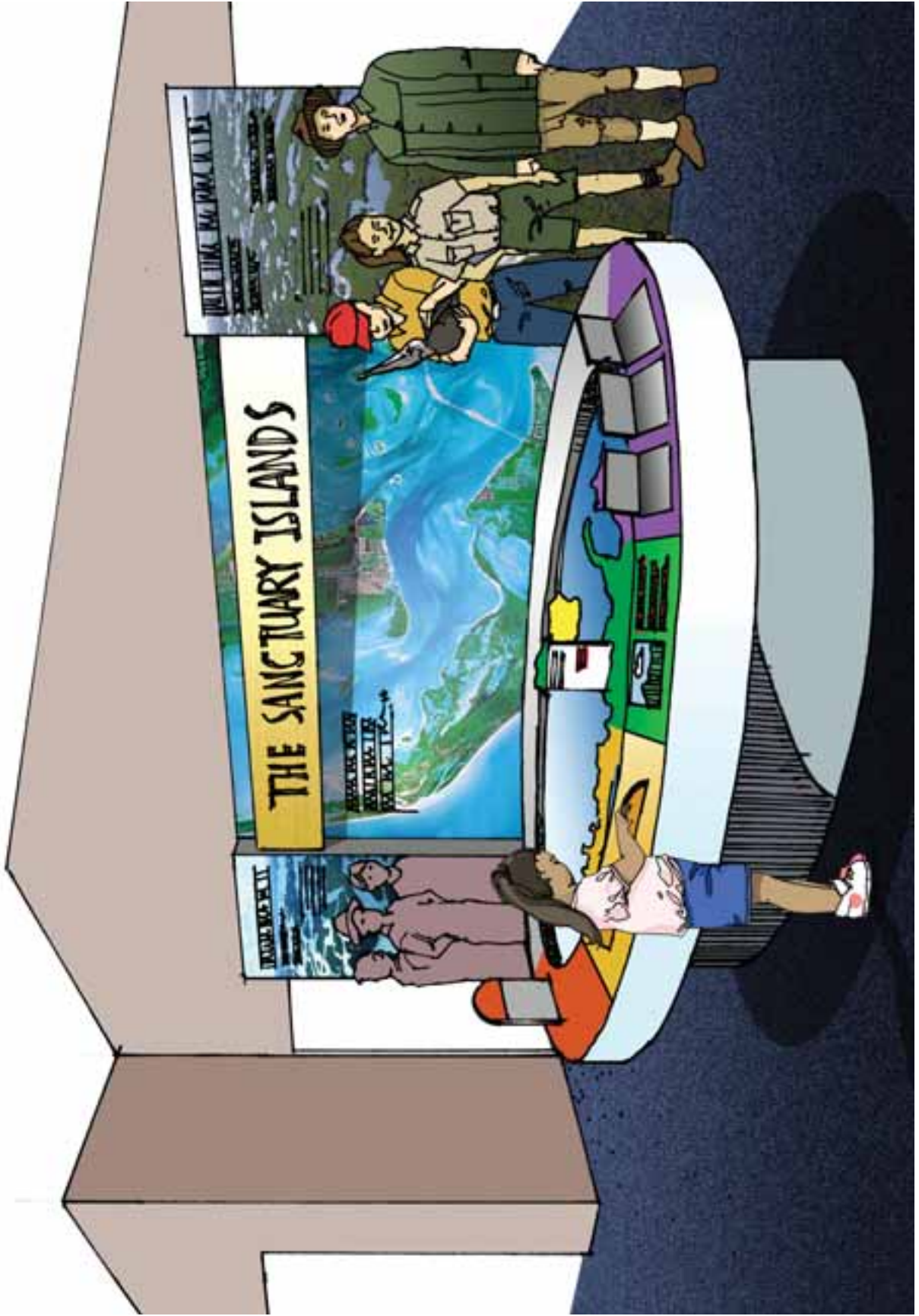
- Motivated to view the theatre production telling the story of “The Sanctuary Islands.”
- Motivated to learn more about and perhaps participate in activities that support conservation of the islands.

Description:

This theme-setting exhibit is located on the outside wall of the theatre between the two entrances to the theatre. A 10-foot wide by 6-foot high satellite photo mural of the islands is the centerpiece on the wall with the words “The Sanctuary Islands” overprinted across the top.

To the left and right of the mural, full-size cutouts of historic island conservationists stand at varying distances from the wall creating a unique three-dimensional look. Selected quotes are printed in 5-foot by 8-foot wall panels behind the figures.

About 4 feet in front of the wall is an interactive map of the islands placed on a pedestal at a level that children and people in wheelchairs, as well as adults can access. Each of the habitat zones plus the Sanibel River will be illustrated in colors representative of each zone. Pull-up handles and flip-up doors will reveal embedded tactile objects and photographs of plants and animals commonly found in each zone.



Module 2: Beach and Dune

Purpose:

To give visitors an overview of the gulf-front beaches of Sanibel and Captiva and introduce people to the wildlife found there. The SCCF sea turtle and snowy plover/least tern programs will be interpreted as well as ways beach-users can help protect wildlife.

Messages: 1.1, 1.2, 1.8, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5

Objectives:

People will learn:

- How the 16-mile long Sanibel-Captiva gulf-front beach and dune community is habitat to a rich diversity of plants and animals.
- SCCF staff members and volunteers work to promote the successful feeding, nesting and resting cycles of loggerhead and green sea turtles and nesting snowy plovers and least terns.
- How they can help protect wildlife on the beach—avoiding marked nest sites, not chasing birds, keeping dogs on a leash, not picking oats or walking through vegetated dunes, keeping beaches dark and free from clutter.

People will do:

- Touch and handle seashells and turtle shells.
- Interact with tactile “beach rules.”
- Be guided by a volunteer in exploring a touch-tank.
- Sit in a patrol jeep and listen to an audio message.

People will feel:

- That they want to help protect plants and animals on the beach and dune area.
- Grateful that the SCCF staff and volunteers are working to protect wildlife on the beaches.
- Motivated to explore the beaches and see some of the plants and animals they learned about in the exhibit.

Description:

The permanent parts of this module will include a photo mural back-drop with a simulated dune flowing from the mural. The photo mural will depict the interaction of people and nature, perhaps a beach walker surrounded by birds.

Incorporated into the “dune” will be a fiberglass module of a loggerhead turtle and a green turtle adjacent to a simulated turtle nest and a cross-section cut away (one half) of a beach patrol jeep. A visitor will be able to sit in the driver’s seat and hear radio communications between turtle patrol volunteers. The simulated turtle nest will have a handle which allows the visitor to pull up and count the eggs. One of the eggs will have a hatchling protruding.

A salt-water touch tank and touch table will be adjacent to the sea turtle exhibit. Docents will share living creatures from the gulf-beach community and other found items. A picture book binder will provide this information when docents are not available.

Also adjacent to the sea turtle exhibit will be simulated nesting area for snowy plovers and least terns with the

warning signs SCCF places there. Photos of these birds will be on the sign posts along with a description of the program.

Beach rules will interpreted with a series of flip boards. A question will be posed on the top of the flip device. Inside

will be a photo and one sentence explanation of this rule.

A temporary exhibit component will provide up-to-date images and information of beach events and SCCF activities. Docents and staff will update this on a regular basis.



Module 3: Estuary/Marine “mud and mangroves”

Purpose:

To introduce visitors to life in the mangrove fringe and the shallow bay waters of Pine Island Sound and San Carlos Bay. The work of the Marine Lab will be featured.

Messages: 1.7, 1.8, 2.11

Objectives:

People will learn:

- That the Marine Lab is engaged in research aimed at protecting the health of the marine environments that surround the islands.
- That the sea grass beds and mangroves are essential as a nursery and feeding area for the manatees and game fish.
- The life history of dolphins and manatees in these waters.
- About threats to the marine environments in this area (including the impacts from the Caloosahatchee watershed) and what must be done to protect them.
- About current activities of the Marine Lab.

People will do:

- Children will climb on the giant manatee and dolphin and parents will photograph them.
- Play the interactive video quiz and explore fun facts about marine mammals of the islands.
- Handle and manipulate research equipment used by

the Marine Lab.

- Touch tactile “Animals of the Estuary” mounted on a rail in front of the aquarium.
- Be motivated to take a boat tour of the marine environment.

People will feel:

- That healthy marine environments are important and that they want to help in their protection.
- Excitement about going out into the surrounding waters.
- Gratification for the work of the SCCF and Marine Lab in protecting the marine environment.

Description:

The three permanent features of this exhibit are the salt water aquarium, marine mammals, and the research boat. These include the following elements:

Aquarium:

This 250-gallon salt water aquarium will contain fish and other animals common to the marine estuary surrounding the islands. Tactile representations of these animals will be mounted on a rail in front of the length of the aquarium on either side. Also, on this rail will be a map of the mangroves, sea grasses and other habitats, where certain species are most common. Featured species such as redfish and spotted seatrout will include a photo essay in a binder showing the work of the Marine Lab in their conservation.

Marine Mammals of the Islands:

A giant stuffed manatee (from the current exhibit) and a similar stuffed bottlenose dolphin (to be fabricated) will compare the two marine mammals that frequent Pine Island Sound and San Carlos Bay. A video screen interactive will be mounted on the backboard which continually plays video footage of these animals taken from the Captiva Cruises boat tour and the Tarpon Bay Explorers boat tour. Brochures of these tours will be available on the board.

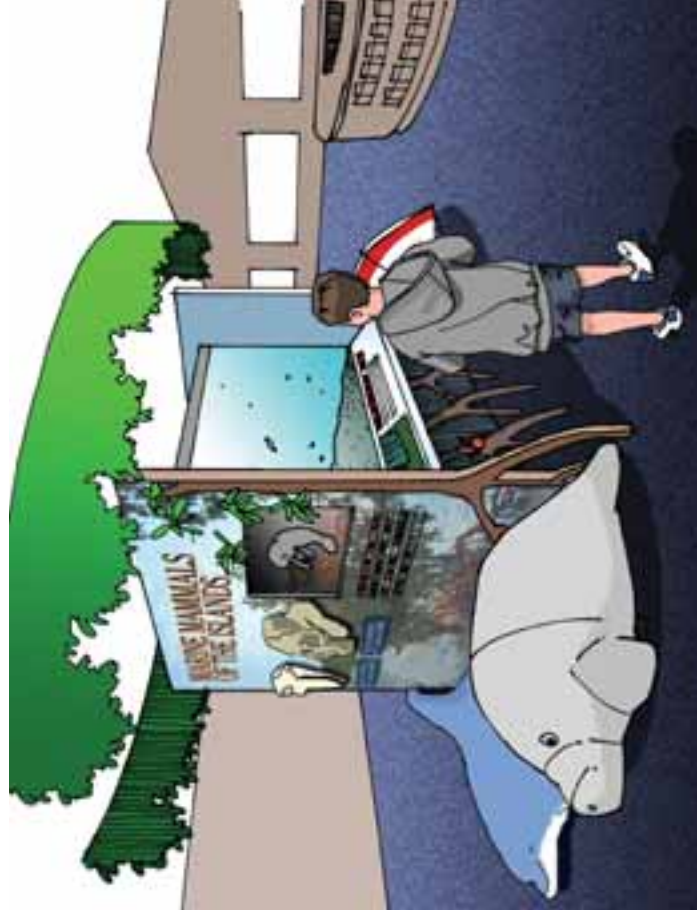
Touching the screen will display a menu that allows visitors to learn fun facts about these animals in a quiz format. For example, the question, “How do manatees and dolphins breathe?” will provide visual choices. The correct choice, “Manatees have nostrils and dolphins have blow-holes,” will lead to a video showing them breathing. “How do manatees and dolphins communicate?” will play vocalizations and clicks. Echolocation in dolphins will be illustrated.

A skull of each mammal will be mounted adjacent to the screen. Under each will be a door with the question, “What does a [manatee/dolphin] eat? (Hint: Look at their teeth).” Opening the door reveals fish and squid replicas for the dolphin and marine vegetation for the manatee.

Research Boat:

A small fiberglass boat with the Marine Laboratory logo will be placed at the end of the aquarium. In the boat will be typical research equipment that can be picked up and examined.

A temporary exhibit component will provide up-to-date images and activities of the Marine Lab.



Module 4: Swales and Ridges

Purpose:

To introduce visitors to the 7,930-acre midsection of the island where people and wildlife co-exist. SCCF programs and activities are featured including the management of 1,800 acres of preserves and working with homeowners to encourage landscaping for wildlife. Visitors will be encouraged to visit the demonstration gardens, ethnobotany exhibit, and butterfly house to learn more about plants and animals and their conservation. Featured animals of this exhibit will be the zebra longwing butterfly and the gopher tortoise. Brazilian pepper will be featured as an invasive alien that requires removal. The ridge and swale system will be interpreted as well as the importance of freshwater to plants, animals, and people.



Messages: 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.11

Objectives:

People will learn:

- That the SCCF has preserved and now manages more than 1,800 acres of interior uplands and wetlands.
- The SCCF works with homeowners to establish native plant landscapes and remove alien species such as Brazilian pepper.
- About the life histories of key species such as the gopher tortoise and zebra longwing butterfly.
- How the ridge and swale system was created in the geologic past.
- The importance of the swale wetlands as reservoirs for plants, animals, and people.
- Specific things they can do to establish wildlife-friendly backyard habitats.

People will do:

- Children will crawl into a “gopher tortoise hole” to see some of the creatures that live there and get a special view of the wetland swale.
- Put together a “build a backyard habitat” puzzle.
- “Pull-up” a Brazilian pepper and see before and after images.
- View living zebra longwing butterflies and their life cycle illustrations.
- Lift wetland animal flip panels to learn about key species of the wetlands.

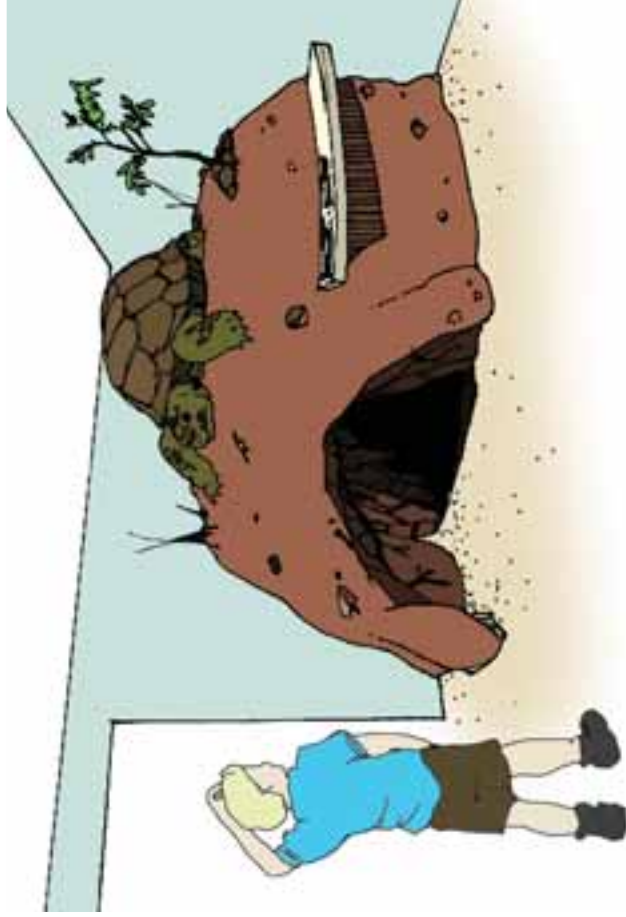
- Walk onto the porch to view panels interpreting the swale.

People will feel:

- Motivated to go to the demonstration gardens, the butterfly house, the ethnobotany site, and the Center Tract trails to see and learn about native plants and animals.
- Gratiified at the efforts of the SCCF in establishing healthy habitats on the islands.

Description:

The major components of this module are the simulated gopher tortoise hole, the zebra longwing butterfly box, the “Brazilian pepper-pull” interactive, the “Swale Magic” component, and the “build a backyard habitat” puzzle.



Gopher tortoise hole:

A model (or preserved) gopher tortoise rests on a sandy bank above an oversized den entrance. This hole leads to a large tunnel that runs under the building for about ten feet toward the swale. A viewing porthole at the end allows a view of the swale. Along the tunnel embedded in the sides are animals such as an indigo snake and Florida mouse to show some of the animals that depend on the tortoise. This will be a child-friendly environment with recycled tire padding to crawl on, but will be large enough for an adult. On the entrance to the tunnel, an interpretive panel provides illustrations of a real tunnel, life history facts, and describes efforts of the SCCF to protect tortoises. Homeowners will learn how they can create tortoise friendly yards.

Zebra longwing box:

A screened box, used in the Lee County school program, houses passion vines and zebra longwing larvae and adults. A life cycle drawing of Florida’s state butterfly accompanies the box. People are encouraged to visit the native plant demonstration gardens and butterfly house to learn more about how they can landscape for butterflies.



A zebra longwing box inside the center would encourage people to visit the native plant gardens and butterfly house.

“Swale Magic”:

The Loren Easley quote, “If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water,” will headline the swale component. An exaggerated relief tactile map of the Sanibel River and several ridges and swales will provide a tangible illustration of the almost 300 ancient beach ridges and wetland swales that parallel the Gulf-front beaches.



An exaggerated relief map, like this one at Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, dramatically illustrates swales and ridges.

“Brazilian pepper-pull”:

A three foot tall Brazilian pepper model is attached to an overhead rope and pulley. Pulling up the pepper reveals before and after photographs of restored habitat. An interpretive panel provides additional illustrations and information on the importance of removing alien species and planting natives and will show how the SCCF lands are being managed.

Adjacent to the map, illustrations or tactiles of animals common to the wetlands will be mounted on flip panels. Turning the panels will reveal bulleted facts and illustrations interpreting the animals. Key species include dragonflies, mosquito fish, alligators, and freshwater mosquitoes.

The swale and ridge system will be interpreted on panels mounted to the porch rail just outside the exhibit area. These panels will be visible from the swale and ridge exhibit. One panel will focus on the importance of these freshwater “reservoirs” on an island surrounded by saltwater. The other panel will interpret the swale immediately in front of the porch and illustrate species commonly seen here. A write-on portion of the panel will allow people to list wildlife observed in the swale.

Backyard habitat puzzle:

A large puzzle illustrating a bird’s eye view of a home and yard is completed by the addition of native plants in appropriate places. Visitors are encouraged to visit the demonstration gardens and native plant nursery to learn more.

A temporary exhibit component will provide current information on activities and events in the sanctuary lands managed by SCCF. Regular features will be included on the native plant nursery and butterfly house and people will be encouraged to visit the demonstration gardens, nursery and butterfly house.



Ridges and swales will be interpreted on the Discovery Center viewing deck where they can be directly experienced. Durable spotting scopes will give visitors a close-up view of wetland wildlife.

Temporary Exhibits



Temporary exhibits can interpret seasonal or current events, while keeping experiences “fresh” for return visitors. (Schmeckle Reserve, WI)

The vision for interpretive media development (Chapter 2) included the need to “have opportunities for temporary exhibits (perhaps as part of the more permanent exhibits) that provide current topics and events”. A temporary exhibit structure is proposed to be part of three of the permanent exhibit modules: Beach and Dune, Estuary and Marine, and Uplands and Wetlands. A structure with vertical and horizontal surfaces and perhaps drawers for people to “discover” something would be the most flexible and useful for frequent updating with graphics, text and objects. The following recommendations are proposed as essential to make this a successful component of each exhibit.

1. Staff and volunteers must make a commitment to frequently update the temporary exhibits. This should be included in the Discovery Center manager’s job description who will work with other staff and volunteers to plan and develop these exhibits on a regular, perhaps monthly, basis.
2. The temporary exhibits should look professional rather than home-made. Digital print-outs of photos, graphics and text should follow the graphics standards proposed in this chapter.
3. Handouts such as flyers and brochures that offer take-home information related to each exhibit module should be offered. These must also look professional and follow the graphics standards. Avoid photocopies; color printers can easily provide quality handouts that SCCF clients will value.



Temporary exhibit concept. Multi-leveled pedestals provide three-dimensional display space and room for participatory devices, like drawers and a touch box. The specimens, images, and text blocks can be updated periodically. This piece will be included in three of the permanent exhibit modules.

“The Sanctuary Islands” Theater Program



Audio-visual programs are the best media to tell complex stories. Delta Rivers Nature Center, AR.

Purpose:

This audio-visual production will tell a comprehensive story of the islands and the role of SCCF in their conservation. Audio-visual productions are the best method to provide a complex narrative exposition (reference: National Park Service guidelines for interpretive media development). The newly published book on the history of SCCF will be the take-home accompaniment to this theater program.

Messages: Main theme, sub-theme 1, sub-theme 2, plus all messages

Objectives:

People will learn:

- The SCCF and its partners in conservation are instrumental in fostering a community dedicated to the conservation and preservation of natural resources and wildlife habitat.
- Sanibel-Captiva is a barrier island sanctuary, where people live in harmony with island’s wildlife and natural habitats.
- Sanibel-Captiva is a small town community, whose citizens historically have valued and protected the diversity, beauty, uniqueness, and character of the islands.
- Sanibel-Captiva welcomes visitors who are attracted by and respectful of the islands’ sanctuary and community qualities.

People will do:

- Participate in SCCF programs and efforts to conserve and preserve natural resources and wildlife habitat on the islands.

People will feel:

- Committed to the notion that development for people and protection of natural resources and wildlife are compatible and necessary.
- Visitors will be motivated to take home the values

and ideals of the SCCF and apply them in their own community.

- Residents will be motivated to join the SCCF and apply its values to their lives.

Description:

This theater production will be 10 to 15 minutes in length and offered to Discovery Center visitors on a regular schedule throughout each day. The theater will have a digital projection system with high quality surround-sound. Seating on cushioned, tiered benches will accommodate approximately 30 school children or 20 adults.

The program will primarily use visuals (historical photos and recent video footage), natural sounds, testimony and interviews to carry the exposition. It will use “knowledgeable guides” who serve as the on-camera hosts.

Treatment:

In the opening sequence the islands appear from space and a quick zoom, with jet-air sound effects, takes you through a rapid fly-over of the islands. Cut to people interacting with nature in a variety of ways—collecting shells on the beach, strolling the beach with cuts to birds and dolphins; people on the bike paths and others walking the trails in the Center Tract and seeing a gopher tortoise, alligator, red-shouldered hawk and tropical plants along and near the Sanibel River; observing Bayside wildlife from a canoe and seeing leaping fish, wading birds and grazing manatees—all accompanied by sounds of nature and people expressing joy at what they see. This sequence ends with the title, “The Sanctuary Islands—A Community that Lives with Nature”

Fade to the hosts of the program, knowledgeable residents (preferably a man and a woman) of the island who have been active with the SCCF for many years. They welcome you as their guest and tell the story of the islands. You learn that this beautiful place with all the wildlife is the result of the vision, dedication and hard work of just a few people. “Can you imagine what your visit would be like if the developers had their way? It would be high rise condominiums and hotels along the entire beach and all the land between the beach and bay would be houses and



The theater program begins with an intriguing fly-over of the islands.



People interacting with nature demonstrates the unique qualities of Sanibel-Captiva.



The production guides visitors through the history of the islands.

shops.” (cut to a view of other highly developed beach-side areas). “Let us tell you how this came to be the Sanctuary Islands”.

Fade to our hosts on a Calusa shell mound. “This island has attracted people throughout history”. They tell us about these early people (illustrations of these people and how they lived appear on the screen as our hosts talk). We learn about the Spanish explorers and how they brought diseases and warfare that led to the demise of the Calusas.

Our hosts take us to the lighthouse and talk (with historic photos illustrating) about the early attempts to settle and farm the islands, but the hurricanes of 1910 and 1921 ended farming. In the 1930’s, tourism and seasonal homes brought people back to the islands. One of them was Ding Darling.

Fade to the Darling home—our hosts viewing it from a boat—on the Captiva bayside. You learn (with accompanying photos, perhaps even the recorded voice of Ding) that his love of wildlife and his fear that it would be lost to development led to the first efforts to protect the island and establish a refuge. Fade to the refuge entrance sign—our hosts tell us how the Ding Darling Memorial Committee petitioned to rename the refuge in Ding’s honor, and then, rededicate their efforts to carry on his legacy as the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation.



Visitors will learn about the early efforts of Ding Darling to protect the islands and wildlife.

Cut to view from the Center Tract tower. Our hosts look over the island and show how almost two thirds of the islands have been preserved. They talk about (and photographs illustrate) some of the pioneer leaders and their work to save the island. “Today, the SCCF works as a partner with the community to maintain the ‘good nature’ of these islands. Let’s see some of them at work.”

The next sequence is a series with our hosts interviewing volunteers and staff, all illustrated with action footage. You see sea turtles and shore birds nesting with volunteers marking and patrolling the beach. You see staff making house calls and showing off some model yards and gardens planted for wildlife. You see a gopher tortoise census with examples from resident’s back yards. You see exotic vegetation being removed and controlled burns and

the wildlife returning to the restored Sanibel Gardens Preserve. You see Marine Lab researchers working in Pine Island Sound.

In the final sequence, our hosts talk about the ideals and values that have made these the Sanctuary Islands. Visitors are encouraged to take these ideals home and help their communities live in harmony with nature. Residents (and visitors) are encouraged to join in the effort to protect the very thing that they came here for.

The credits roll over scenes of people and nature.



Volunteers and staff provide personal insights into SCCF and the islands.





The current introduction panel to the Center Tract should be incorporated into the trailhead hub.



Existing trail map panels are effective at guiding people. Cleaning should be scheduled on a regular basis. Replacement panels should be installed that reflect the new trail system and the interpretive panel design standards.



The existing panels provide valuable information about the Center Tract. As these panels are replaced, they should be graphically unified according to graphic standards. Consideration should also be given to thematic unity.

Interpretive Trails

“Sanctuary Island Discovery Trail” Center Tract Loop

Purpose:

This loop trail will be the primary trail interpreting the history, management and ecology of the Center Tract. It will also identify and label common plants of the uplands and wetlands and include the ethnobotany exhibit already in place. The trail will meet ADA accessibility standards and be elevated above the seasonal high-water level. Primitive trail spurs already in place will offer private and intimate experiences with nature for those who choose them. See pages 65-78 in Chapter 5 for trail redevelopment recommendations.

Messages: 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 2.11

Objectives:

People will learn:

- That the Center Tract was the first preserve of the SCCF—“It all began here”.
- How alien plant species were removed and native species have been re-established.
- Names and life histories of some of the common plants and animals found here.
- About the ecology of the island.
- Ethnobotany (human uses) information of selected native plants.
- How this and other preserves retain fresh water and recharge the aquifer.

People will do:

- Take a leisurely walk through the Center Tract and read the interpretive and plant label panels.
- Observe the plants and animals of Sanibel Island.
- Walk to the top of the tower and observe the lands preserved along the Sanibel River and how development has been limited.

People will feel:

- They will enjoy the peace of the Preserve and delight

in the plants and animals that live there.

- They will have the values of SCCF reinforced in their mind—“From understanding, commitment”.

Description:

The trail begins from a trailhead hub that is visible from the parking lot and from the Discovery Center. Boardwalks will connect the parking lot and rear porch of the center to this hub. A boardwalk will traverse the swale to the loop.

The **trailhead hub** is a small roofed structure architecturally unified with the building. In the hub, a trailhead panel introduces the theme of the trail with an overview of the history of this site. Historic photographs of the site and its development will accompany this text. Another section of the panel will set expectations about the plants and animals visitors might see on the trail. A map of the trail system will be included with accessibility, lengths of each trail, and time to walk the center loop. A photo of the destination, the tower on the Sanibel River, will be inset on the map.

The **main loop** will offer a variety of experiences: boardwalks that are elevated for views to swales, shell surfaces on higher ridges, curves and meanders that provide “mystery, variety, and beauty”. These experiences are enhanced with a series of interpretive panels (already in place), and plant labels (already in place). New panels should be added in selected locations.



In the visitor interviews, several nature enthusiasts reported that they valued plant labels.



The panoramic view from the tower should be interpreted identifying key landscape features and illustrating how the land on the Sanibel River is protected in preserves.

In the spirit of ADA, an “alternative experience” panel should be placed at the base of the tower. This will duplicate those at the top which show views of the island to those who cannot climb the stairs.



The lack of a defined path and scattering of labels in the garden can be confusing to first-time visitors.



Existing paths through the gardens are muddy and have poorly defined edges.



Adding a shell surface enhances the attractiveness of the gardens and better delineates the paths.

The **Ethnobotany Garden and Teaching Shelter** should be integrated into the total site experience. The garden is a prominent feature of the trail and used for many programs. Therefore, it should be developed to protect and show respect for the natural environment.

The path in this garden should be surfaced with bark or shell, and the edges defined with limestone or another natural material. Without this treatment, the area can appear muddy and overused.

An interpretive panel should provide visitors with an explanation of ethnobotany and an introduction to the gardens. The panel should relate the meanings of this site to the interests of visitors. It should tell how humans have depended on local plants for centuries.

Exhibits should be developed in the teaching shelter that interpret the ethnobotany story to casual visitors who are visiting the site for the first time. The exhibits should help to integrate the identification labels in the gardens into a context that has meaning for visitors.



Exhibits in the learning shelter should focus on ethnobotany and help place the neighboring gardens in a context. Existing exhibits have a temporary appearance.

Gardening for Wildlife Trail and Butterfly House

Purpose:

To demonstrate model gardens that residents and visitors can apply in their own landscapes. These gardens will be an educational extension of the butterfly house and native plant nursery. People will learn about plants that are available for purchase and gain information about plant-animal interactions, especially butterflies.

Messages: 1.5, 1.6, 1.8

Objectives:

People will learn:

- Names and characteristics of common native landscaping plants.
- About plant and animal interactions for pollination and seed dispersal and how specific plants provide food and cover for wildlife.
- How to design a natural landscape for wetland and upland that supports wildlife and adds to the beauty of our homes.
- How to garden without harsh chemicals and how to conserve water.
- About City of Sanibel native plant codes and how they affect landscape decisions of homeowners and business owners.
- The life histories of common Florida butterflies.

People will do:

- Walk through the demonstration gardens, butterfly house and plant nursery and study the information provided.
- Pick up take-home information that helps people apply these lessons in their landscapes.
- Purchase native plants for their landscapes.

People will feel:

- Motivated to develop a native landscape in their backyard.
- Pleasure at viewing native plants and butterflies.



Demonstration gardens are natural extensions to the popular butterfly house.

Description:

The demonstration gardens will be developed in the area currently dedicated to handicapped parking. The small pond in the back of this parking area will be developed as a wetland garden. The side parking area (four stalls and the area in front of them) will be developed as an upland garden. Specific areas of this upland garden will demonstrate butterfly gardening and gardening for gopher tortoises. A trailhead will be placed at the intersection of a ramp to the building, the stairs to the office complex and Discovery Center, and the spur to the staff and nursery parking lot. This spur will also serve as a loading area for staff taking materials to and from the office complex.

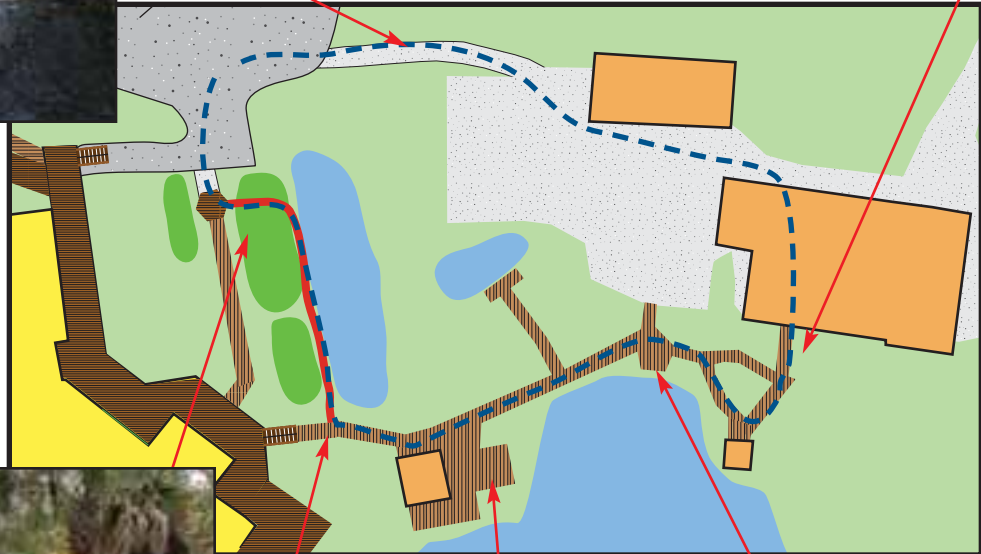
The trailhead will have a map of the demonstration garden trail loop which delineates the four gardens, the butterfly house, the habitats interpretive panels, and the plant nursery. Plant labels will provide information about each plant. High pressure laminate panels, 2' X 3' will illustrate the butterfly garden, gopher tortoise garden, and wetland garden. Interpretation at the butterfly house will be updated to incorporate the graphic standards. A panel at the entrance to the nursery will explain the work of the nursery staff and explain how they can purchase plants.



Gravel path leading from the nursery office.



Boardwalk entrance to the shade house.



Below: View to the area that will be developed for gardens. The gardens will replace a small parking area.



Butterfly house shelter.



This stairway and boardwalk to the right will be retained as part of the garden trail



Existing interpretive panels that illustrate landscaping for wildlife.

Periwinkle Bird Trail



This kiosk will serve as the trailhead and will house two panels. One will describe Periwinkle Preserve, and the other will introduce the trail.

Purpose:

This trail loop through the Periwinkle Preserve will be entered through the existing shelter kiosk from the bike path along Periwinkle. A trailhead panel will introduce people to this preserve and to the work of SCCF. It will also set the theme of the trail. The trail will interpret neo-tropical migrants that are attracted to this restored hardwood hammock. The local Audubon Society chapter and other bird watching enthusiasts will value this trail. The consulting team interviewed bird watching groups and individuals along the trails near the lighthouse. This trail will provide another opportunity for them.

This is also an opportunity to reach bikers on the Periwinkle bike path regarding the work of SCCF. Many bikers are residents or hotel/time-share tenants who may or may not have an interest in nature and conservation. Residents will have a recreational opportunity on one of the SCCF preserves, an amenity that many have been requesting as a tangible benefit for setting aside lands for preservation. The trailhead panel will encourage people to visit other SCCF areas, especially the Discovery Center.

Messages: 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 2.11

Objectives:

People will learn:

- That the Periwinkle Preserve is one of many which have been protected from development by the SCCF and is being restored by removing alien species and encouraging hardwood species.
- That fragmentation and development of tropical hardwood hammock's has led to loss of habitat for neo-tropical migrants.
- Some of the neo-tropical birds that they might expect to see in-season.
- The full migratory route for neo-tropical birds.

People will do:

- Nature enthusiasts will walk the trail and observe birds and plants of the hardwood hammock.
- Bikers will stop at the kiosk and read the

introductory interpretive panel and be informed about the work of the SCCF.

- Be motivated to go to other SCCF facilities, especially the Discovery Center and trail.

People will feel:

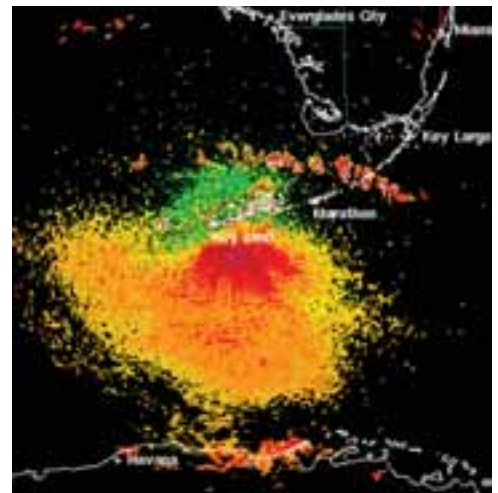
- Because this is a tangible recreational opportunity, residents will feel rewarded for setting aside land in the SCCF preserves.
- Island visitors will have a sense of the values that have made possible the quality nature-based experiences they were seeking in their visit.

Description:

Two interpretive panels will be placed in the pavilion. One will introduce them to the Periwinkle Bird Trail. It will include illustrations of some of the common bird species they might see here, and will show the migratory routes from Central and South America through Cuba. Images from the Key West Radar Study (www.badbirdz.com) will be included to show typical evening sequences from both the spring and fall migration.

The second interpretive panel will describe the purchase and management of the Periwinkle Preserve. It will include photographs of alien species removal and the restoration of the site. A map will show all of the SCCF preserves, and visitors will be invited to the Discovery Center to learn more about the island and its conservation.

The trail will have small identification labels for the common plant species. Their relationships to birds will be included wherever possible.



Images from the Key West Radar Study will illustrate bird migration. (www.badbirdz.com)

Interpretive Kiosks

Discovery Center Parking Lot

Purpose:

To introduce visitors to the SCCF and orient them to the education complex and the SCCF satellite areas. To inform visitors of current programs and events.

Messages: 1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 2.11

Objectives:

People will learn:

- About the SCCF and its work in conservation.
- About the site and what it has to offer.
- About other satellite areas and what they have to offer.
- About current programs and events that they might participate in.

People will do:

- Visit the Discovery Center theater, shop and exhibits, and walk the “Sanctuary Island Discovery Trail” and “Gardening for Wildlife Trail and Butterfly House”.
- Plan to visit other satellite areas.

People will feel:

- Secure, welcome and informed.

Description:

The kiosk will be clearly visible from the parking lot so that visitors know that this is the starting point for their visit. They will walk through the kiosk to the ramp that takes them into the Discovery Center.

A panel will welcome visitors to the Discovery Center and briefly describe the mission and work of the SCCF. A large site map will orient them to the opportunities available to them including the theater, exhibits, shop, Sanctuary Island Discovery Trail, and the Gardening for Wildlife Trail and Butterfly House.

Another panel will illustrate and describe opportunities available at the SCCF satellite areas.

A panel will have brochure dispensers and will have a bulletin section for announcing programs and events. It is essential that this be updated weekly. It is also essential that the bulletins are professional in appearance and printed out in large font size according to the media graphics standards.



The Discovery Center kiosk is clearly visible from the parking lot and welcomes visitors to the site. The entrance ramp to the building begins at the kiosk.

Marine Lab Parking Lot

Purpose:

To show the work of the Marine Lab in monitoring the Greater Charlotte Harbor estuary. It will introduce clients of Tarpon Bay Explorers to the work of the SCCF and invite them to the Discovery Center. Tarpon Bay Explorers has visitation second only to the Ding Darling Wildlife Drive and this is a terrific opportunity to reach over 200,000 people annually. The visitor surveys document that there is tremendous interest in the marine environment.

Messages: 1.7, 1.8, 2.11

Objectives:

People will learn:

- That the Marine Lab is engaged in research aimed at protecting the health of the marine environments that surround the islands.
- That the sea grass beds and mangroves are essential as a nursery and feeding area for a variety of marine life.
- About threats to the marine environments in this area and what must be done to protect them.
- About the current activities of the Marine Lab.
- About the role of the SCCF in protecting island wildlife habitats.

People will do:

- See the kiosk from the Tarpon Bay Explorers complex and walk over to read the information provided.
- Be motivated to visit the SCCF Discovery Center.

People will feel:

- That their curiosity is satisfied regarding this lab, which may limit the number of people who wander into the lab.
- That their recreational experience in Tarpon Bay is connected to the work of the SCCF.

Description:

This will be a roofless three-panel kiosk. One panel will interpret the work of the lab and its work in monitoring water quality, wildlife diversity, populations and growth, and the work in monitoring mangrove forests and sea grasses.



A three-panel kiosk should be placed in the vicinity of the Marine Laboratory sign.

Another panel will be divided. Half will interpret the work of the SCCF on the island, and invite visitors to the Discovery Center where they can experience a touch tank and saltwater aquarium. The other half will be a bulletin board to post current activities and events of the lab and SCCF and a place to dispense brochures.

It is essential that this bulletin board look professional. All bulletins should be digitally printed with photos, text and graphics that follow the media graphic standards. It is also essential that this bulletin board be updated on a regular basis. One individual should have this assigned responsibility.

The third panel will interpret keystone species of the estuary that the lab is monitoring. This will include spotted seatrout, redfish, bay scallops, among others.



Kiosks should be developed for the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center (above) and Sanibel Island Historical Village (below). These will interpret the cooperative conservation efforts on the islands.



“Protecting the Island Sanctuary”, Chamber of Commerce Parking Lot, Sanibel Historical Village Complex, and South Seas Plantation Marina

Purpose:

Kiosks placed at the Chamber of Commerce parking lot and at the Sanibel Historical Village and Museum site tell the story of “Protecting the Island Sanctuary”. Managers of these facilities have expressed support for this. The Chamber of Commerce kiosk would tell about the cooperative efforts of all the organizations involved in developing and sustaining the “Island Sanctuary”, as well as point out places to visit where they can see facilities that interpret the conservation work on the islands.

Cooperating organizations for this panel could include The Shell Museum, Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge, City of Sanibel, and SCCF. A kiosk at the South Seas Plantation Marina provides an opportunity to tell this story to visitors bypassing the Chamber of Commerce and Historical Village. Captiva Cruises “Dolphin Watch and Wildlife Adventure” departs from this marina.

The Sanibel Historical Village and South Seas Plantation Marina kiosks would focus more on the historical story of “saving the island”. They would show historic photos and especially feature the work of the SCCF.

Messages:

Chamber of Commerce parking lot—Main theme plus all messages, Sub-theme 1

Historical Village and South Seas Plantation Marina—Main theme plus all messages, Sub-theme 2

Objectives:

People will learn:

- That the SCCF and its partners in conservation have helped to establish the islands as a sanctuary where people live in harmony with wildlife and natural habitats.
- Sanibel is a small town community, whose citizens historically have valued and protected the diversity, beauty, uniqueness, and character of the island.

People will do:

- As a result of the messages on these kiosks, they will visit the SCCF Discovery Center and the facilities of the other partners in conservation.
- Pick up brochures in the Chamber Visitor Center and Sanibel Historic Village. (The SCCF and City of Sanibel brochures should emphasize visitor behaviors that protect wildlife (Sub-theme 3). More detailed information should be included in the Sanibel & Captiva Visitor’s Guide).

People will feel:

- Appreciation for the people who have worked to protect the islands habitats and wildlife that offer the nature-based recreation opportunities that they came here for.
- Respectful of the plants and animals of the islands.

Description:

These kiosks would be protected under a small roof. They would each have a large headline, “Protecting the Sanctuary Islands”.

The C of C kiosk will have a main message about the island sanctuary and how people work with nature. Below that, four sections will each be dedicated to SCCF, Ding Darling, Shell Museum and The City of Sanibel. Each will describe its visitor services (for The City of Sanibel, parks and beach access) and hours of operation.

The Historical Village kiosk will be a photo essay on the efforts to protect the island and guide development with respect for nature. This will cover the history of the island beginning in about 1935. It will include an invitation to the Discovery Center to view the film and exhibits.

The South Seas Plantation Marina kiosk will be an abbreviated version of the Historical Village kiosk.



South Seas Plantation is an ideal location for a kiosk. Each year, nearly 35,000 visitors go on the Captiva Cruises “Dolphin Watch and Wildlife Adventure” from their marina.

Wayside Exhibits

Walker Tract and San-Cap Road Bike Path



The Walker Tract is managed for gopher tortoise habitat. Being at the end of the Ding Darling Wildlife Drive, it is an ideal site for an SCCF wayside exhibit.

Purpose:

The Walker Tract's location at the end of the Ding Darling Wildlife Drive makes it an ideal site to introduce visitors to the SCCF. It is also habitat for gopher tortoises which would be of interest to wildlife lovers who would be willing to stop their cars and walk onto a short boardwalk to see and learn about tortoises.

The San-Cap Road site, across the road from the Shell Museum, is another tortoise site managed by the wildlife refuge. This is a good opportunity for bicyclists to see and learn about tortoises and to receive an invitation to the Discovery Center just down the road. This panel should be cooperatively developed with Ding Darling Wildlife Refuge.

Brad Smith indicated two concerns for these sites:

1. These habitats should be maintained for tortoises, something that is especially important at the Wildlife Refuge site which is becoming overgrown.
2. That people stay on the boardwalk and bike path to avoid collapsing the dens.

Messages: 1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 2.11

Objectives:

People will learn:

- The life history of the gopher tortoise.
- Ecological importance of the gopher tortoise.
- Conservation efforts for the gopher tortoise.
- About the Walker Tract Preserve and the work of the SCCF.

People will do:

- Stop as they exit the wildlife drive, walk the short boardwalk and read the wayside panel.
- Stay on the boardwalk to protect the dens from collapsing.
- Stop on the bike path to read the San-Cap Road tortoise panel.



Interpretive panels will describe the life history of gopher tortoises, and how people can help protect them.

People will feel:

- Rewarded by seeing gopher tortoises and their dens, and learning about them from the wayside panels.
- Motivated to stop at the Discovery Center and learn more about the SCCF and the islands.

Description:

The wayside panels will interpret gopher tortoises, their life history, ecology, and conservation. An inset panel will identify the Walker Tract as one of many SCCF preserves that are managed for wildlife. This inset will include a map of the preserves and an invitation to visit the Discovery Center.

An inset panel at the Wildlife Refuge site will indicate this as a managed wildlife refuge which provides habitat for many species including tortoises. This panel will also invite people to stop at the Ding Darling Visitor Center and SCCF Discovery Center which are just a short distance down the road to learn more about protecting wildlife habitat on the island.



The SCCF could work cooperatively with Ding Darling NWR to manage and interpret gopher tortoise habitat on San-Cap Road. The Walker Tract interpretive panel could be modified for this site to include an invitation to the Discovery Center. This would be a good opportunity to connect with people on the bike path.



New interpretive panels have been installed on the Rabbit Road bike path.

Selected Preserves on Public Pathways

Purpose:

To identify the various SCCF preserves along the Sanibel public pathways and to interpret their ecological significance. These panels will emphasize the role of SCCF in establishing Sanibel Island as the "Sanctuary Island" where people live in harmony with the island's wildlife and natural habitats. Each panel will also encourage people to visit the Discovery Center.

Messages: 1.8, 1.4, 1.5, 1.8, 2.11

Objectives:

People will learn:

- About the history and management of each specific preserve for which an interpretive panel is provided.
- About key plants and animals that inhabit each preserve.
- About the many preserves managed by SCCF.
- About the role of SCCF in establishing Sanibel Island as a "Sanctuary Island" where people live in harmony with the island's wildlife and natural habitats.

People will do:

- Be attracted to the interpretive panels and read their messages.
- Be motivated to visit the Discovery Center.

People will feel:

- Respectful of the preserves as refuges for plants and animals.
- Grateful for the efforts of the SCCF to create a place where they can experience and enjoy nature.

Publications

General Brochure

At present there is no general brochure aimed at island visitors that provides an overview of the SCCF and the properties and facilities open to the public. A general brochure would be a valuable marketing tool to supplement information on the webpage and Sanibel-Captiva Vacation Guide. This brochure could be distributed at the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center, in brochure racks on SCCF kiosks and at local hotels.

Recommendations for this brochure:

- Include a map of SCCF preserves including an inset of the Periwinkle Bird Trail as an opportunity for visitors.
- Feature the Discovery Center and the opportunities for visitors. Include photos.
- Describe the work of the SCCF in creating an "island sanctuary where people live in harmony with wildlife and natural habitats".
- Follow the graphic standards used in all media. This will help to identify this and other media as a service of SCCF, and will unify the graphics.

Messages: Main theme and all sub-themes in broad generalities



A general brochure should be developed that provides an overview of the SCCF. It should be designed with the media graphic standards. This can serve as a template for additional "topical publications."

**Sanibel & Captiva, Florida's Island Sanctuary
(Chamber of Commerce Visitor's Guide) and
Sunny Day Guide to Sanibel-Captiva
(published by Sunny Day Guides, Inc.)**

These visitor guides are published annually and are probably the major sources of information for visitors. They offer a great marketing opportunity for the SCCF. At present there is only a paragraph on the SCCF in the Chamber of Commerce Guide. The Sunny Day Guide has a page devoted to an article written by Kristie Anders entitled "Preserving our Good Nature". When the new interpretive facilities and media are developed, it would be valuable to expand the descriptions in these publications, complete with photographs of the opportunities for visitors. A version of the "Preserving our Good Nature" should also be published in the Chamber of Commerce Guide. Director Steve Greenstein has indicated he would welcome expanded coverage of the SCCF.

Messages: Main theme and all sub-themes in broad generalities



Expanded descriptions about SCCF media and facilities should be incorporated into popular visitor guides.

Topical Publications

Current publications include "Share the Beach with Sea Turtles", the membership brochure, "Protect your Tomorrow's...Today", the fundraising brochure, "To Preserve and Maintain", an upcoming brochure on gopher tortoises, and a booklet describing the work of the Marine Laboratory. It is essential that all SCCF publications follow unifying graphics standards that identify them as publications of the SCCF. Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters recommends that a unified publication design be developed by a professional graphic designer. This will greatly improve the effectiveness of current and future publications. It will be important to provide take-home information to residents and visitors on a variety of topics. This could include a "Gardening for Wildlife" publication, a brochure on the Marine Laboratory, a brochure on beach behavior, and others. These publications could be distributed as part of the exhibit modules and at the entrance kiosk.



Each of the current SCCF topical brochures is distinct. A quick glance does not reveal that they are published by the same organization. Typeface, color, logos, grid, and other graphic elements should be unified.

Website



The "Things to Do and See" page should showcase the opportunities available for visitors using images.

The World Wide Web is the most effective way to communicate SCCF's mission, values and history and offer a model of inspiration for people in other communities. The SCCF website provides island residents with information that helps them learn about plants and animals and how to live in harmony with nature. It also informs them of upcoming programs and events. The website is lastly a tool for island visitors, stimulating their interest and helping them plan and make decisions in advance of their trip.

The current website is a good starting point for effectively serving these functions. It is easy to navigate and uses a friendly font and design format. However, much could be done to improve its value to users and to better serve the mission and educational goals of the SCCF.

Suggestions for Improving the Website:

- In the "About Us" link, detail the mission, values and history of SCCF. Perhaps this could be an abbreviated version of the newly published 35 year history book, complete with photographs. Above all, it should be informative and inspirational.
- Create active links to the six "priority program areas" which include photographs and engaging text. Each of these program areas should include active links to specific activities (for example, "Wildlife Protection" could have active links to the sea turtle and snowy plover conservation efforts. These links should be updated frequently with recent photographs and statistics on nesting. They could have additional links to volunteer opportunities.).
- "Things to Do and See" is a confusing mix of "priority program" information and descriptions of opportunities for visitors. This link should be limited to opportunities for visitors. It should photographically illustrate and describe the Center Tract trails, Discovery Center opportunities, Gardening with Wildlife Trail and Butterfly House, and satellite area opportunities such as at the Periwinkle Preserve and Walker Tract. Above all, it

should stimulate interest in visiting for those who are planning to come to the island and are seeking nature-related experiences.

Connecting to Other Websites:

The Lee Island Coast Visitor and Convention Bureau website (www.leeislandcoast.com) has a link to SCCF under "What to Do—Nature Adventures". It includes a brief description and map. This description should be updated as the interpretive plan components are implemented.

The Sanibel & Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce website (www.sanibel-captiva.org) only has a one paragraph description under the title "Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Center" on the "Attractions" page. SCCF should request an active link to their website. The description should be retitled "Sanibel-Captiva Discovery Center" and have a more engaging description of the opportunities offered by SCCF.



The Sanibel & Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce website currently includes a short paragraph about the SCCF on their "Attractions" page. A more prominent description and active links to the SCCF website should be added.



Appendices



Appendix 1:

Results of Nominal Group Process with the SCCF Education Committee, October 24, 2003

Driving Question 1: The Education Plan describes the need to redevelop the Education Complex to better serve all audiences. What is your vision for this redevelopment?

Category—Wayfinding

22 votes: Avoid the feelings of elitism (that this place is not open to visitors). Welcome visitors and ensure that they do not feel uncomfortable or lost.

10 votes: Make this a very user-friendly site.

2 votes: Make this site look less like an office complex.

2 votes: Provide answers: Where is the center? Where do the trails start? (including after-hours).

2 votes: Need an overall “feeling” as you pull into the parking lot. Provide one focal point exhibit right away.

Other responses which were provided in writing:

Provide information at the nursery entrance as to its purpose and how it fits into our mission. This should be done for each portion of the complex.

Redevelop the parking lot and entrance. Have a double entry/exit. Place a kiosk in parking lot so people park in divided lot, not next to nursery. Have a ramp from the kiosk to the building.

Category—Programming

8 votes: Don't take non-educational staff away from their duties to do educational programs (with the exception of training staff and volunteers).

6 votes: Provide participants with take-home messages.

5 votes: Develop more take-home media on specific topics.

3 votes: Develop a virtual museum on the Website to act as a resource on the islands' conservation history and ecology.

2 votes: Develop an advanced resident's program.

Other responses which were provided in writing:

Speak to homeowners association about our conservation lands and how we manage them. Follow-up with “in the field” programs.

Category—Hub Concept

20 votes: The Education Complex would be a starting point to lead people out to and in from other sites.

1 vote: Have nature center exhibits that highlight “what's out there”. Make this a dramatic hub for the living laboratories.

Category—Architecture and Building Design

13 votes: The building should show-case the site. Provide visual access to the swale, perhaps with a deck or porch overview.

11 votes: Improve accessibility.

8 votes: Provide an attractive space to educate and orient visitors to other sites.

8 votes: Better accommodate group programs at the center and satellite areas (shelters, etc.)

6 votes: We don't need a lot more space, perhaps only a deck.

4 votes: Develop an information area that is separate from other functions (i.e. Sales).

4 votes: Improve lighting and electrical systems.

Other responses which were provided in writing:

More floor space is needed for a meeting room (3 responses).

The exhibit area should be a brightly lit, open area with eye-catching displays (not one-dimensional informational panels like we have).

Enlarge the gift shop.

Additional office and storage space.

Category—Interpretive Media

13 votes: Establish the tone of an environmental ethic (take-home messages, serve as a good model, actions more than words).

13 votes: Make media interactive. Keep media simple (avoid “long-winded” narrative on indoor and outdoor exhibits).

13 votes: Make this a place to celebrate SCCF accomplishments and feature significant local people.

10 votes: Establish behavioral objectives for all interpretive media.

10 votes: Provide a map and historic air photos of all properties. Emphasize the contributions that the Foundation has made to the islands.

8 votes: Make the exhibits thematic and dynamic (changeable).

7 votes: Tell the story of human impact and conservation.

6 votes: Consider a message that compliments the Shell Museum and Ding Darling.

6 votes: Create durable exhibits that require little maintenance.

5 votes: Interpret the basic purpose of the Foundation and the ecology of the island.

3 votes: Include thematic videos that include some of the key personnel and programs.

3 votes: Tell a “human” story.

2 votes: Include as little text as possible.

1 vote: Use touch-tank more effectively—orient and explain.

1 vote: Interpret the value of native vegetation and the reason for management practices. Include take-home information.

Other responses which were provided in writing:

- Have interesting thematic displays that spark interest. For example, a “turtle cart” with actual eggs from a hatched nest, plastic model of newborn, mother, 5 yr. old, etc. Make this changeable so that other topical things can be addressed.
- Incorporate short thematic videos to explain different subject areas such as loggerhead nesting, Brazilian pepper, gopher tortoises, Marine Lab doings, etc.
- Overview/introduction to each of our offsite areas which are open to the public (2 responses). Also introduce the many activities SCCF is involved in.

- Create another booklet for use on the trail without a docent. Update the old one. It was excellent!
- More docent interaction in the exhibit area (2 responses).
- A display that distinguishes between sea and land turtles.
- Support of our management activities hinges on maintaining the support of our neighbors. Interpret why, how, where, when we burn.
- Introductory seasonal displays that support/introduce programs such as sea turtles, snowy plovers, nesters and resters, kayak tours of Roosevelt Channel and Buck Key, dolphin and wildlife adventure tours, preserve tours, etc.
- Media (a take-off on the parks dept. poster?) that helps residents and visitors understand how to help preserve—how to keep from unknowingly harm wildlife and habitat.

Category—Marketing

16 votes: Increase SCCF exposure across the islands. Create an awareness of other sites. Create a “buzz” about the place.

6 votes: Use donations rather than an entrance fee.

2 votes: Communicate what SCCF is all about. What’s in the name?

Note: Due to meeting time constraints, responses to Driving Questions 2-4 were not weighted.

Driving Question 2: One identified need is to enhance the orientation and wayfinding for the Education Complex. For example, this may include providing a more public entrance from Sanibel-Captiva Road or better access to the education building. What are your parameters and guidelines for this kind of development?

Sanibel-Captiva Road Access and Identity Issues

- Use symbols or signs on the road that invite entry. For example, Tarpon Bay has a “Touch-Tank” sign to draw people in.
- Address the question, “Why should I turn in?” Everyone knows the Shell Museum and Ding Darling, but the Foundation sets no expectations for what you will do when you get here.
- Widen the drive-in/entry road. Is a turning lane possible? Tour buses can’t turn in here.
- Create a two-lane entry and exit similar to the Shell Museum. Eliminate the drive-through.
- Rethink the names and symbols on the San Cap Road signs to better communicate that this is a place worth visiting.
- Vegetation buffer hides the lot and building. But (!) the nursery uses the buffer as an example to other businesses.

Parking Lot Issues

- Some turn in but the parking lot turns them off and they leave.
- Create a “menu” as they drive in. Provide enticements and clear places to go.

- Make it clear on the nursery sign that people can buy things.

Access and Flow Issues

- The disability parking and access ramp are not visible and are often blocked. To meet ADA, parking and ramp access need to be at the front.
- The public entrance is invisible and takes you by offices and meeting rooms. It is important to move the public area to the front.
- The gift shop and reception area is small and crowded.
- Since there are no views to the swale and trail, people are not invited to go into the Center Tract.

Driving Question 3: Another identified need is to better serve (not increase) island visitors. What suggestions and concerns do you have for accomplishing this goal?

Identification Issues

- SCCF has an identity crisis for visitors. Maybe the sign on San-Cap Road should be more direct and tell visitors what they can expect by visiting the center.
- The outdoor kiosk at the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center only includes the Shell Museum. Include all island conservation partners with a unifying message.
- Need more information in the hotels, condos, cruises and other visitor attractions, especially a schedule of events.
- Write an article about SCCF for the Chamber of Commerce visitor's guide.
- Develop a brochure for visitors (but!) brochures can have take-home value or be waste.
- We miss the boat if we don't reach out to visitors. However, we don't want to be an attraction that brings more people onto the island.

What to Provide Visitors

- We must carefully think through our philosophy before it is picked up by websites, etc.
- Most visitors don't even know there is fresh water on the island.
- Members want to be proud of this place and bring visitors here to showcase what we have.
- We need to communicate that this is a totally different place to live.
- Make future homeowners aware of the development restrictions in advance.
- By improving the complex, we will not increase "destination" traffic, we will merely increase the positive experiences enjoyed upon arrival. The education complex should be the place where visitors learn what makes these islands worth visiting.

Driving Question 4: What "off-site living laboratories" should be developed with visitor services? What are some suggestions and concerns you have for interpreting these sites?

- Other like-minded conservation/preservation organizations should speak with one voice to communicate what is special about Sanibel Island (Ding Darling, Shell Museum, CROW, Sanibel Historical Village and Museum). Start with the kiosk at

the Chamber Visitor Center.

- Marine Lab—Create an outdoor kiosk that describes what the lab does. Long-term maybe include some living marine exhibits like at MOTE Marine Lab.
- Create common visuals for each site: Map of all properties, unique site info with “warm fuzzies” about wildlife, possibilities at the hub, acknowledgement of donors.
- Access to property should not fragment or devalue the sites. ID the various sites that should and should not be developed with interpretation.

Possible sites to develop:

- Sanibel Gardens Preserve (joint project with city)
- Periwinkle Preserve (neo-tropical bird trail)
- Gopher tortoise preserves, three sites—Ding Darling area along bike path across San-Cap road from Sanibel Gardens (work with DD to manage vegetation); East Gulf Drive at end of old airstrip by Butterknife subdivision; Walker Preserve at end of Wildlife Drive
- Sanibel River sites—Rabbit Road and Tarpon Bay Road
- Frannie’s Preserve near beach parking area
- Bike paths—Rabbit Road; across from SCCF parking lot; weir site combined with Sanibel Gardens restoration site; Johnston Preserve; Frannies Preserve
- Walker Preserve as a continuation of Wildlife Drive and invitation to SCCF
- At lighthouse beach
- At city of Sanibel—include information at Historical Village

Appendix 2:

Results from Focus Groups Conducted February 10-19, 2004

Volunteers Group (8 Participants)

Question: What rewards do you get from your association with SCCF? What do you value about SCCF?

- Good “feel”. Staff works well together. Pleasant place to be.
- Variety of jobs. Can change if you want.
- Lots of us live here. Mission of SCCF and city congruent.
- Conservation conscientious. What this island stands for is why we moved here.
- Appreciated here as a volunteer. Your contributions are not underestimated. Volunteers work well without supervision.
- Always send thank you notes. Erik sends notes.
- Good family. Reflects Erik’s leadership. Starts with the top!
- Everybody has a name tag.
- Foundation activities keep us here.
- Tremendous difference between U.S. Government feel and more island-sensitive feel of SCCF.

Question: What do you like most about this facility (building and site)?

- Architecture reflects “Old Florida”. (Strong feeling from group that SCCF maintain this in all future developments).
- Enjoy the use of the facilities for gatherings.

Question: What suggestions do you have for improving the building and site?

- Not enough room for education programs and gatherings.
- How about a wrap-around deck?
- Have a children-specific room. The Shell Museum has it.
- If you are too welcoming (of visitors) the checks will dry up. (Strong feeling that this not be a Ding Darling). This is not a theme park. (Fine line expressed about the conflict between elitism/openness).
- Create a better flow here, especially for first-timers. Not many people find things. It’s confusing. Entrance from road, parking lot, entrance to building, entrance to trail—all need improvement. Talk to Beth at nursery. There is a flow problem at the exit.
- Have a bulletin board at entrance (to building) from parking lot.
- Better accessibility for disabled. Difficult to get into the building. Maybe a short trail loop that is fully accessible for wheelchairs and strollers. Use small stone/brick surface or screenings. Must be chair friendly! Maybe a boardwalk trail.
- Trail turns people away (front-desk volunteer statements). Poison ivy, soft trail turns people off. People are disappointed. Many have paid but change their mind. I see this every week.

- Signage at top of tower needed. Orient them to the features of the site and island. Have a panoramic photograph with names.
- Need regular sign maintenance. Many are dirty or degraded.
- Make this place more welcoming. Foundation name is a source of confusion. Nature center may be a better name.
- Maybe some simple changes like new location for the entry to the building. Major expansion will have resistance from some members and supporters.
- Clearly differentiate offices and visitor areas.
- Should they pay to come in? Not much for the buck. \$3.00 fee discouraging people. Need to see how much revenue comes in. Would as much money be donated if fee were dropped?
- Would like to see a demonstration garden to show people how to use the nursery plants.

Question: What do you like about the programs offered by SCCF?

- Have credibility here. SCCF doesn't chase every issue. Good balance here.
- People give because they know what their money is being used for.
- Sea turtle program does a great job of getting the word out.

Question: What suggestions do you have for improving the program offerings of SCCF?

- Become more proactive in the education area. Scallops, red-tide, sea grass—need to combat misinformation through education—the mission.
- Need to reach out “across the causeway”. How far? How much can we afford?
- We are myopic about focusing on Sanibel. Need to accommodate getting off-island. Have to reach out.
- Can't pop-off about every issue on the island. People want to come in and support the organization.
- Restrictions rankle newcomers. We need to communicate that this is why this is an attractive place to live.
- Send a complimentary membership and information packet to every newcomer. Tell them about SCCF mission—educate them.
- Miss not having issue discussions (both sides of issues).
- Got to continually get new people involved.
- Could do more outreach to schools. Buses a problem because of traffic. Shell Museum outreach program a good example. Develop an education kit. Train the teachers.
- Calendar is full now. Maybe Marine Lab could expand programs in-season.

Committee Group (8 Participants)

Question: What rewards do you get from your association with SCCF? What do you value about SCCF?

- The “Sanibel Values”! Need to enlarge that through public education. Need a new focal point. Chamber used to have a newcomer program, but no longer. Needed now more than ever.

- Love the newcomer's package (I sell real estate). The more that newcomers can be involved, the better, even beyond the packet.
- Been with SCCF since 1982. It's a way to become a part of the island—a sense of place. If SCCF supported an issue, it provided value to the community. SCCF is highly respected. Also, Sanibel is part of a greater community—have a role in the region. Sanibel is not just an island.
- Lived here 18 years. Stewardship! Nobody does a better job than SCCF. How to live in harmony with nature and one another. Legacy! Appropriate conservation. Why is this place so different? The people who made a difference! We have a responsibility. But, we can't be all things to all people—must continue our core stewardship on-island.
- Been here 20 years. More and more in awe of what people have done and I want to contribute.
- Erik Lindblad a marvelous resource. Organization had tunnel vision the past 10 years—buy land! Now that vision has changed. Example—the Marine Lab. My vision is to be more like Ding Darling. It is a pleasure to go there. But, we need better facilities and a better experience.
- Conservation of the land and wildlife—everything else is secondary. Education is important only as it facilitates the core mission. The greatest reward is to see a tangle of Brazilian pepper turn into something lovely.

Question: What do you like most about this facility (building and site)?

- Place to relax, walk the trails. They are all natural—no human intrusions.
- Front porch.
- Native plant nursery very important to the mission.
- What a wonderful resource the plant nursery is, especially with the new plant ordinance.
- Tourists/guests value the gift shop.
- Pick Preserve, Sanibel Gardens. Now can we see it? Fanny's Preserve has information on what it is. Need more access to it.
- The tone is set by Erik. Family atmosphere is critical. If you expand and grow you might lose some of that feel. I would hate to see SCCF lose its character.

Question: What suggestions do you have for improving the building and site?

- Have to have a balance between “enclave” vs. “access”.
- What we have now in the exhibit room is totally inadequate! Either get in it better or get out.
- The building should be a means to an end—form follows function.
- Improve the architecture. Need better views. A light, airy, open, cheery space. Every window is an exhibit.
- All of the visitors love the butterfly house, but it is too small! There's a large walk-through one in Naples. We need one like it, with landscaping.
- From the visitor desk we need a map of the island. This is an important teaching tool for docents.
- From a land-use committee perspective, people want access, trails, but our

committee says “Stop! You’ll wreck the resource!” Maybe the bike paths could look into without entering into wildlife habitat. For example, the Periwinkle gazebo will have a short walk that has butterfly plants.

- Used to be able to go to the tower and see the effect of restoration, but now the landscape has matured. Yes, we bought the land, now we have to manage it. There is an educational component to this. How do we get people to appreciate this?
- Need to improve the quality not the quantity of the experience. The way visitors relate to the mission is critical. We need a lovely facility, not necessarily a larger one.

Question: What do you like about the programs offered by SCCF?

Question: What suggestions do you have for improving the program offerings of SCCF?

(These questions considered together).

- New resident’s program so important, but what do we need to do to keep them involved? Ongoing education—how best to keep people informed, to understand and then participate in stewardship.
- Marine Lab ahead of schedule by one year. The marine estuary will become just as important in the next decade as land conservation. This represents the view of others on the marine lab committee. Something has to be built into our thinking. This really gets us off-island.
- In recent years there has been a philosophical change in the marketing of the nursery. The landscaping for wildlife and helping the homeowner programs have a built-in education component. Need to improve the publicity about native landscaping. There is really a lot of opportunity if you highlight neighborhoods. Now it is all word of mouth. From an education perspective, there is a huge opportunity.
- I work at the visitor desk. It is extraordinary how many people don’t know about this organization. Somehow we must get this message out.
- (Concluding discussion) People are not as courteous on roads. In the past, people automatically stopped for bikers and walkers. We need to communicate that “if you are in a hurry you don’t belong on Sanibel”. There is less inclination to care for others or critters. People have less sense of responsibility. This is an opportunity to communicate the conservation/stewardship ethic. We have an implicit teaching opportunity—“We do care for others and for the island”. The “Sanibel Experience” is that sense of place. People coming here (new residents included) don’t know what they don’t know. It is becoming increasingly difficult to reach them. We have to demonstrate proper behavior. We need to clone Christy! Richard too! Interns important too—more people telling you about it!

Island Times Writers / Volunteer Coordinator at Shell Museum / Volunteer with Native Plant Nursery (3 Participants)

Question: What associations have you had with SCCF? What do you value about SCCF?

- The mission! It takes the Sanibel Plan and Code to heart!

- Part of “Environmental Alley”. Vast amount of knowledge here—resources, knowledge, programs. Children in the Pick Preserve—Sixth grade shell experts.
- Preservation of wild/natural areas—increases property values. Plant nursery. Programs are icing on the cake.
- Incredible role in keeping the islands as they are. Stewardship.
- Cooperation on things like Earth Day. Sharing of information.

Question: What do you like best about this facility and its programs? What suggestions do you have for improving these?

- I’m intrigued with the education effort—moving to the next level. I’m an adjunct instructor at FGCU in writing. There are 1,500 people moving to area every day! Education is needed. Water is the issue that connects us all.
- One problem is the mission relates to on-island residents, but Libby sends press releases to the region. There are 2,500 Lee County 4th graders that study Florida. Lee Co. kids come to the Shell Museum. There are grants to support it. Sanibel school kids ride their bikes. Dr. Al (mallacologist) gives a talk. The vast majority of off-site kids have not been on the island—no money for field trips.
- Attracting school children is OK, but attracting more tourists is a problem. A huge percentage never get out of their cars!
- Working in the plant nursery I saw many people looking for Ding Darling. Need a better way to orient visitors.
- Need better displays and information. Old, dirty signs aren’t good—better signs to give history of the Foundation. Explain on preserves signage, “Why can’t we go into this preserve”? On accessible areas give better information. Need longer hours, more things to do, 24 hour access to the trails.
- Need more media outreach. Tell the story of the Foundation preserving what Florida used to be. Expand the website—it’s out of date, doesn’t go as much into the future—it needs an electronic press-room. Scan stuff and put it in.

Service Club Representative / Volunteers (3 participants)

Note: The two volunteer participants joined in-progress. As a result, the focus group questioning sequence was eclectic.

Question: What associations have you had with SCCF? What do you value about SCCF? What do you like about the facilities and programs? What can SCCF do to improve its facilities and programs?

- Rotarian and SCCF member: I bring lots of out-of-town guests to places. SCCF is not a significant draw. Native plants and animals not a big draw to our visitors.
- Would like to see the exhibits and gift shop improved—not to the level of Ding Darling, but people love that gift shop.
- Need to develop the facilities so they have a bigger, better image.
- Need to tell the story of the community in supporting SCCF when purchasing new land on the island. I know that my donation to purchase land will increase my land

value.

- Volunteer: Need to communicate the basic values. Don'ts—live shelling, feed birds, dogs off-lease. Misunderstandings—beach seaweed, why Sanibel Gardens is closed.
- The role of education is important in compliance. Sanibel police can't do everything—not much enforcement possible.
- Need a core trail. Also need an AV program to tell the SCCF story. Interactivity in the exhibits is important.
- There is a basic lack of knowledge among residents and visitors. SCCF needs to engage in more PR—need a PR person on staff. Let people know what they are doing. Not everyone reads the newspaper. Use other media outlets. Signage is better, but not good enough. Need a display over at the Chamber of Commerce. Why is the Shell Museum the only one there? There are no articles about SCCF in the visitation book. Why not? Make a traveling exhibit to be taken to events and have volunteers staff it—art fairs, 4th of July, etc.
- Improve the logistics of the place. Now you come to offices first with the visitor areas in the back. Need to reverse this. Need to start and finish at the gift shop. Need better signage to help people find their way around.
- Since there are no more tracts of land for purchase, people might get behind a fund-raising effort for a new building project. Cheryl is a great fund-raiser for SCCF.
- Do a better job coordinating educational efforts. Everyone is doing their own thing. Get together every week—coordinate and cooperate.

School Parents Group (3 participants)

Question: How have your children participated in programs sponsored by SCCF? What did they like about them?

- Junior naturalists in 5th and 6th grade. Became guides.
- Programs in keys (Duck Key). Staff always seems to be willing to go off-island with the kids.
- Girls participated in Pick Preserve with jr. naturalists. They were enthusiastic about it. Programs offered are terrific.

Question: How could the programs and facilities aimed at school children be improved?

- It would be great if they could have a class at the school. They have two electives per semester in Middle School.
- More paths through the preserves—kids could take tours and learn as they go.
- Need more recreation-based learning. An example would be a canoe tour of Sanibel River to Rabbit Road. Kids totally love it. It would be a trip of a lifetime. This is the only canoe-able stretch for 50 miles (Peace River). Far safer than Buck Key.
- How about more weekend and after-school programs. Kids sign up for recreational style programs. Work in conjunction with South Seas and Sanibel Inn, Sanibel recreation staff—all organizations can partner for nature-oriented recreation. Tarpon Bay Explorers have the equipment.

- A major rehab is needed on the SCCF facilities. More interactivity! Take lessons from science museums—interactive relationships. Mayaka State Park has a treetop walk—kids love it. Need an indoor facility with lots of fun stuff—gopher tortoise hole that you can go into, glasses that let you see the world through the eyes of an osprey, etc. Focus on the Sanibel River. Have a freshwater aquarium. Outdoors, have a huge Tiki hut for learning—a good asset in this environment.
- This place has an elitist feel—no outreach with that mentality. Need to export what you have.
- Work with staff at CROW—cooperate. “Don’t harm wildlife” theme would engage kids.

Off-Island Group (Conservation Group Leaders—5 participants—Representatives from FGCU, Lee Co. Parks and Rec., Calusa NC, Charlotte Harbor NEP, Lee Co. EE)

Question: What associations have you had with SCCF in the past?

- Calusa—Haven’t been directly affiliated. Always have known about it. Have been on committees with Steve and staff has been on committees. Have always known that SCCF works on-island. Have lots of friends here.
- Lee Co. EE—Collaborate on large events like coastal clean-up. SCCF people are on the ground with dumpsters, snacks, etc. Also collaborate on getting students to SCCF for close schools off-island. Causeway may limit this in the future. SCCF provides field instructors. Professional networking, issue orientation, personal professional development—SCCF leader in native plant arena.
- Lee Co. Parks and Rec.—Many personal connections. Have done joint workshops with SCCF on native plants and butterfly programs. I let my staff/volunteers know about SCCF and their resources.
- Charlotte Harbor NEP—Provide funds to SCCF for education, research, training. Help with different events, SCCF reciprocates. Christy’s realtor program is great and has potential for our 7 county area. Estuary wading program also funded. SCCF has received research and restoration grants which have an educational component.
- Bill Hammond, FGCU (past director of Lee Co EE program)—Have been involved with SCCF since the early 60’s. First off-islander on board. Helped get federal EE grants. In the late 60’s to early 70’s SCCF thought they had bought all the land they would buy. Helped expand Ding Darling, the Bailey Tract, Lighthouse park. SCCF was a major player in Eco-Swift, a confederation of environmental groups. They matched state, federal and private dollars to acquire land. Used land acquisition models on a regional level. A marine education center was proposed, but SCCF had the opportunity to purchase more land instead. SCCF was the first to have a nature center. SCCF was always a partner with Lee County Schools. Helped with field area development to get students into every major ecological type. Recently created the SW Council for EE to support EE in the schools. Erik a great supporter. Avoid competition with one another for funds. The success of SCCF in advocacy, science, acquisition, education is a great model to export to the region.

- The most important work now is the water management district funding that is helping us to develop a bio-region education model. Partners in the region took a “Western Everglades” concept. There isn’t enough money to do it well. SCCF is on the list for a second round of funding—bring it to the islands. Now funds are bringing students to the islands. The most important thing is that this model brings lots of partners together in a collaborative role.

Question: How can the SCCF improve its role in outreach and education in the region?

- Share your expertise of the coastal areas, especially in the Master Naturalist Program. It started in UFL Extension to teach professionals and general public to be Master Naturalists. This is modeled after the Master Gardner’s program. SCCF could collaborate and offer their expertise in teaching workshops on coastal area topics.
- Export the model rather than the program. The marine lab a good example. Create a regional approach to research and coordination of public outreach of the findings. This is partly why SCCF has invested in getting the lab up and running again. Citizens don’t trust the data from public agencies—it’s often politically motivated. We need to establish a credible scientific base to take on the state and federal agencies. Develop expertise in certain areas like marine ecology, then use outreach and education to interpret the data and empower citizens. SCCF funded conferences in the past to deliver good science on issues such as beach erosion. The citizen experts then lay out the plan. Growing this model is an important role for SCCF.
- Our community has really focused on estuarine protection for the past 40 years. Now need to focus on estuary restoration. Need a huge shift in mind-set that the region includes the Caloosahatchee watershed to ameliorate its impacts on the estuary. This could be a huge shift for some on the SCCF board.
- Need more emphasis on citizen-science. Need to imprint on school kids the need to protect habitats. Fewer and fewer are being exposed to experiences in local habitats, including beaches. Field trip lengths are decreasing.
- Is SCCF interested in paying for trips for at least 2 grade levels to visit the beaches and mud flats. Education is essential for preserving the land in the future. Consider funding sources for the region—Rotary, grants, etc. Lee Co. Schools is the 28th largest school system in the nation. Need to diversify field trip experiences of students—get them to every natural community by grade 9. SCCF took leadership on this when it was the primary driver of EcoSwift. Every group (about 35 of them) collaborated in coordinating experiences for school children. There is a need for something like this again. Can we get a collaborative grant on this?
- Relationship building—start in early grades through adulthood. If we wait until adulthood we’ve lost. Now people spend less than 5% of their time outdoors. There is more technology influence. We have an aging population. Longer living population. More cocooning. People are looking for a way to stay engaged in their communities.
- Technological aspects—website, other pieces—to communicate that the Sanibel Plan has much to show people what is sustainable. That it is not an end but a process. This is one of the best models in the world. However, there is a growing tension of

expectation. More people want developed recreation on the islands. In the past residents wanted no developed recreation.

- SCCF cannot remain on an island—regional problems affect the island. SCCF can help support regional sustainability—work with citizens, answer questions, provide front-end money for forums. SCCF needs to be actively involved with Charlotte Harbor NEP and Everglades restoration.

Appendix 3: Sanibel Plan Vision Statement

BACKGROUND

The barrier island of Sanibel comprises a wide variety of natural and altered environments. The community of Sanibel strives to sustain ecological balance and preserve and restore natural settings for residents, visitors, and wildlife. The people of Sanibel are sustained by the beauty and health of the island's natural and restored habitats, and they rely on the coordinated vigilance of residents, government, and private enterprise to protect and enhance these habitats. Over the first two decades of the community's existence as a city, a tenuous balance has been maintained between development and preservation; and between regulatory control and the rights and privileges of individuals. Government and not-for-profit institutions have helped sustain the balance by purchasing and restoring to natural conditions substantial areas of open space and threatened habitats.

Limited new development and redevelopment will occur over the next twenty years. However, growth limits and locations are well established, as are regulations to minimize harm to the natural environment and to the community's character.

The specter of rampant development has diminished as the community has matured. Nevertheless, unwanted changes are occurring; visitation increases as new "attractions" are developed; beaches and refuge areas are becoming stressed by overuse; traffic congestion is turning to gridlock; and formerly "green" scenic corridors are becoming urbanized and commercialized. These and other conditions and trends cause residents to realize that, unless protected, their island's historic and cherished way of life is in jeopardy.

To provide a sense of direction for the future, this Vision Statement is a confirmation of the community's shared values and goals, to guide future decisions.

SANCTUARY

Sanibel is and shall remain a barrier island sanctuary, one in which a diverse population lives in harmony with the island's wildlife and natural habitats. The Sanibel community must be vigilant in the protection and enhancement of its sanctuary characteristics.

The City of Sanibel will resist pressures to accommodate increased development and redevelopment that is inconsistent with the Sanibel Plan, including this Vision Statement.

The City of Sanibel will guard against and, where advisable, oppose human activities in other jurisdictions that might harm the island's sensitive habitats, including the island's surrounding aquatic ecosystems.

COMMUNITY

Sanibel is and shall remain a small town community whose members choose to live in harmony with one another and with nature; creating a human settlement distinguished by its diversity, beauty, uniqueness, character, and stewardship.

Diversity: The City of Sanibel cherishes its cultural, social, ecological, and economic diversity, and will endeavor to maintain it.

Beauty: The City of Sanibel will foster quality, harmony and beauty in all forms of human alteration of the environment. The community aesthetic is defined as a casual style; one which is adapted to a relaxed island quality of life and respectful of local history, weather, culture and natural systems.

Uniqueness: The City of Sanibel chooses to remain unique through a development pattern which reflects the predominance of natural conditions and characteristic over human intrusions. All forms of development and redevelopment will preserve the community's unique small town identity.

Character: The City of Sanibel chooses to preserve its rural character in its setting within and county. "Auto-urban" development influences will be avoided. The commercialization of natural resources will be limited and strictly controlled.

Stewardship: In keeping with the foregoing principles, the City of Sanibel affirms a land ethic that recognizes landholding—both public and private—as a form of stewardship, involving responsibilities to the human and natural communities of the island and its surroundings, and to future generations.

ATTRACTION

The Sanibel community recognizes that its attractiveness to visitors is due to the island's quality as sanctuary and as community. The City of Sanibel will welcome visitors who are drawn by, and are respectful of, these qualities; it will resist pressures to accommodate visitor attractions and activities that compromise these qualities.

HIERARCHY OF VALUES

This three-part statement of the community's vision of its future is a hierarchy; one in which the dominant principle is Sanibel's sanctuary quality. Sanibel shall be developed as a community only to the extent to which it retains and embraces this quality of sanctuary. Sanibel will serve as attraction only to the extent to which it retains its desired qualities as sanctuary and community.