



Pinellas Chapter Florida Native Plant Society
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November 17, 2025

Board of County Commissioners, Pinellas County
315 Court Street
Clearwater, FL 33756

Re: Nov. 18th agenda item 25-1698A

Hello, my name is Jan Allyn, 9629 105th Avenue, Largo, 33773, and I am representing the Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society. Our chapter is the largest in the State of Florida, with nearly 600 members, some of whom are here now to show their support for continuing the MOU. The FNPS mission is to champion the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

UF/IFAS Extension is a vital partner to FNPS, as it is to many environmental nonprofits in the County, including some that are speaking here today. It leverages its association with other counties' Extension offices, the University of Florida, and other universities to magnify its impact, providing educational speakers, outreach materials and conservation messages, both in-person and in multiple venues including social media, online videos, podcasts, and other media. It is an important collaborator with the County's Public Works Department, providing stormwater management education. The majority of the County's surface waters are impaired by nutrient pollution and sustainable landscape management practices like the Florida-Friendly Landscaping techniques promoted by Extension have a positive influence on water quality. Extension educates homeowners about the negative effect of invasive species, eradication of which costs the County hundreds of thousands of dollars every year. For example, a single invasive removal project in Lealman cost the County nearly \$75,000; Extension also provides biological controls like air potato beetles and Brazilian pepper thrips that combat invasive plants. In addition, in 2024-25, Extension trained and certified 725 County residents in the application of pesticides, education that helps to protect our water resources.

Extension has excellent programs in place to reach and recruit volunteers. In 2024-25, Extension volunteers contributed 11,692 hours of work, valued at \$369,584. Creating a new volunteer recruitment system would cost the County a significant amount of money and potentially could be much less effective. Also in 2024-25, Extension reached nearly 24,000 people with 833 in-person educational programs. For the County to implement these programs would be a substantial effort.

In summary, Pinellas FNPS considers County Extension to be a reliable and important partner in its efforts to promote sustainable landscape practices among County residents. Failing to approve the Extension MOU would be a financially unsound decision with negative environmental consequences. Before taking such an action, the Board of County Commissioners should, at a minimum, perform a full cost-benefit analysis to determine whether the return on investment exceeds the relatively modest cost to the County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jan Allyn".

Jan Allyn, Treasurer
Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jan Allyn". Below the signature, the words "Agenda Item" are written, followed by the number "38".