



**CHESTNUT CHAT SERIES:**  
**CHAT 30: RESTORATION OF PINE SAVANNAH ECOSYSTEMS**  
**DATE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2021**

ORIGINATOR	QUESTION / COMMENT
Ronald Meeusen	Hello. My first time here. Ron Meeusen, botanist and venture capital manager for food and agtech fund.
Tom Saielli	Good morning everyone!!
Marian Keegan	Good morning y'all. I'll be listening to know whether American chestnut grew on the sandy soils of "pocosins" otherwise known as "swamps on a hill".
Tom Saielli	Marian, chestnuts need loamy, well-drained soils typical of upland sites. Avoid wet, poorly drained soils.
Will Boyd	Congrats Walt and Lisa!
Sara Fern Fitzsimmons	Hi Ron - Pleasure to meet you and thanks for joining us!
Allysa Campbell	Good morning! Plant Path grad student here!
Sara Fern Fitzsimmons	Hi Allysa - thanks for joining us!
Lisa Thomson	DWP=Disney Wilderness Preserve, 12,000 acres south of Orlando, FL
Will Boyd	Good morning from North Idaho. I am a biology and ecology high school teacher. Grew up in VA and did some grad school in bird ecology at NC State -
Will Boyd	Will
Zachary Prusak	The Nature Conservancy owns and manages DWP, it is open to the public with about 9,000 visitors yearly
Sara Fern Fitzsimmons	Hi Will - Welcome! Have you seen the big chestnut trees in Coeur d'Alene? (hope I didn't butcher the spelling of the town too much!)
Zachary Prusak	Erich von D��rniken is a Swiss author of several books which make claims about extraterrestrial influences on early human culture, including the best-selling Chariots of the Gods?, published in 1968.
Zachary Prusak	The overall message of the DWP project is that many ecologists were skeptical of the ambitious goals; their projections and models seemed impractical, but there were other ecologists who knew that if the processes were restored (fire and water), then the plants and animals would be restored as well. The end result is a large-scale healthy habitat!
Kendra Collins	Have to hop off for another meeting but enjoyed the first half and hope the rest of the "Chat" goes well. Thanks all!
Tom Saielli	That's cool Zach. Makes sense now, but we know more now.
Tom Saielli	Bye KC
Zachary Prusak	When Walt and I first starting working for the Florida Park Service over 35 years ago, the ecological goals were based on reaching pre-European conditions for the habitats. At the time, that seemed doable, but many failures later, the reality of restoring landscapes in a state with over 20 million people and present-day alterations to the water table forced a "re-look" at the "perfect goals." Today, the Florida Park Service has incredible habitats that are filled with a wide diversity of species.....not "perfect" in the sense of early goals, but yet still fully functioning.



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Zachary Prusak	A participant asked if we mind sharing emails, here's mine, if you have any questions: zprusak@talltimbers.org
Will Boyd	That's really important point, Zach. I left undergrad thinking that people were the problem and that preservation and "perfect restoration" to pre-colonial standards were the only acceptable approaches. It is encouraging seeing this incremental and adaptable restoration improving native ecology on such a large scale.
Zachary Prusak	Chris brings up a great point: meet with people that might be outside your own field of study and experience, you can learn from people and experiences where you might least expect it.
Zachary Prusak	Thanks for that comment Will, I had the same experience when I left UCF as a Biology major! Reality is often different than what is in the ecology textbooks.
Will Boyd	Wish I could stay! Off to teach marine biology. I will be in touch Zach. Thanks for this informative and inspirational case study look at what is possible in the restoration world. I am hoping to build our school's biology/ecology internship program in coming years. Best, Will - will@homeschoolscience.org
Zachary Prusak	Thanks Will!
Zachary Prusak	Chris' point regarding "scaling up" is important, as you might have very large-scale goals in mind, but you need to test and trial methods at small scales to see what works. Before you know it, you will be working successfully at larger scales.
Zachary Prusak	Chris is quite correct: patience is key! And also, to borrow from the Improv classes I have taken, embrace failure, do not fear it!
Zachary Prusak	We as a species do not like change, and habitat restoration is often "change-heavy," with large trees being removed. One method of education is to show long-term photo points of other restored areas that do show the eventual beauty of the land that does occur over time.
Laurel Kays	Was just talking to some fire folks in Western NC a few weeks ago in prime chestnut country. One thing they frequently say is people really just want to know you have a plan, and if they know that they care less about long explanations and give much less pushback than many of us expect
Zachary Prusak	Totally agree Laurel, I learned the hard way in my early days of fire outreach that the goal of "changing the public's mind" through education often was frustrating. When the folks I talked to realized that there was a plan, it was based on the best science and management methods we had, and that we were working with other people as a team, they were satisfied.....maybe not totally changing their mind, but happy there was a plan!
Dan Lefever	sorry for hand raised, didn't know I hit it, carrying phone while working
Sara Fern Fitzsimmons	Ha! No problem - thanks for letting me know :)
Zachary Prusak	I highly recommend for folks to visit ABRP, it is one of the most beautiful Preserves in Florida, entirely due to the long-term habitat restoration process that has been taking place over many decades. This also speaks to the idea that long-term restoration will span many decades and also lots of staff, who will turn over through the years. Often the staff who started the process may not see the end of it.
Zachary Prusak	The same for DWP, and the Wekiwa Springs State Park, where Chris works as well. Beautiful sites, through many staff members over decades.



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Tom Saielli	I would love to check it out. I think I can count it as a work trip..."professional enrichment".
Chris Matson	Apalachicola had huge windrows. They were soil mixed with timber litter and slash and roots. It was terrible. TNC took great care of removing and re-grading those and seed them. Kudos to all that worked there!
Lisa Thomson	I agree with Zach, those are all amazing, well-managed sites that took years of innovation and hard work.
Zachary Prusak	For sure Tom, that sounds like a work field trip for the Chestnut staff!
Chris Matson	First Grasslander test I saw was Greg Seamon at Apalachicola BRP in February 2003. It was windy and he was exasperated. Wayne Taylor and I modified the one we got to have less wind problems, using mud flaps from trucks on the side and some other alterations.
Chris Matson	The wind was blowing seed away from the pressing wheels on the Grasslander, reducing efficacy.
Zachary Prusak	Chaz brings up a great point: it is very helpful to enter into an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with partners that supports collaborative work across agency boundaries, with no \$\$ changing hands. I have several examples, if you would like to see one.
Zachary Prusak	Great point on innovation Chris; constantly adapting to change as you go.
Chris Matson	I have some pretty restoration timelines I can share that span the first ten years.
Sara Fern Fitzsimmons	hi Chris - that would be fantastic! would love to see the timelines you all were working on.
Zachary Prusak	This is an example of where once the groundcover is restored, then that carries the process of fire, further nurturing the groundcover to support more fire!
Zachary Prusak	A great example of where large-scale restoration will of course cross boundaries, so another reason to reach out and connect with partners early in the process.
Zachary Prusak	Chris, Walt and Chaz have all said the same thing, and so we cannot say it enough: we must connect private landowners and their landscapes to agencies' lands for large-scale habitat restoration.
Chris Matson	i dropped some figures in the sharepoint for distribution.
Sara Fern Fitzsimmons	Thanks, Chris!
Zachary Prusak	Any other questions please reach out to me, and I'll connect you to the appropriate person. This has been great connecting to people in the Chestnut world!
Lisa Thomson	Thanks, Zach, for organizing all these amazing conservationists and restoration practitioners! Great to take a tour of projects I remember fondly during my TNC days!
Zachary Prusak	My pleasure!
Zachary Prusak	For these grassy-dominated habitats, you have to keep burning to keep the ecosystem healthy, which is a long-term job.....basically never stop burning!
Lisa Thomson	Thanks, Chris, Chaz, Walt, and Zach! Words of wisdom!!
Zachary Prusak	You're welcome, and anytime!



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Hill	Great job!
Cherin	What a great great chat !!!!! Thank you all.

