



Water Challenges, Economics, and Nature-Based Solutions LED

Hosted by the LAI FL Suncoast Chapter



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Registration, Breakfast, Networking: 8:45 – 9:15 am



LOCATION:

Gulf Coast Community Foundation
GCCF Philanthropy Center
1549 State Street, Sarasota, FL 34236

Morning Session Presentations :

9:15 am - 11:50 am

MODERATOR

John McCarthy, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

John McCarthy is the Vice President for Regional History for Marie Selby Botanical Gardens. Mr. McCarthy is passionate about Florida ecology and history and is well known for his encyclopedic knowledge of the Sarasota region, which he shares through presentations, tours and publications.



John is a native Floridian, and worked with Sarasota County Government for 32 years as an Environmental Specialist, County Historian, and Director of Parks and Recreation. John joined the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens team in 2020. John's work in the community has been recognized in several awards including *Hero of History* (Historical Society of Sarasota County), *Partner of the Year* (Junior League of Sarasota), *Citizen of the Year* (Council of Neighborhood Associations), and *Champion of Architecture* (Gulf Coast Chapter AIA). John was nominated to join LAI in 2024.

Robert F. Bunting, Climate Adaptation Center

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Mr. Bunting is the CEO and Chairman of the Climate Adaptation Center. He is a scientist, serial entrepreneur and educator, moving easily between private enterprise, government and academic spheres, making him a true "bridge" person and uniquely qualified to lead the CAC. He is the CEO of Waterstone Strategies, a consulting firm that assists its early stage high technology clients to "plan and execute" their business and funding strategies. Waterstone has helped its clients in securing over \$300,000,000 in new capital. Clients included Pathogen Systems, Raytheon, DigitalGlobe, Intermap Technologies and many others. Waterstone uses its extensive background in business management, intellectual property development, product commercialization, international marketing and sales and organizational development to strategically help companies plan for corporate growth.



Ryan Gandy, Sarasota Bay Estuary Program

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Gandy holds a Ph.D. in Wildlife and Fisheries Science, a M.S. in Mariculture from Texas A&M University, and a B.S. in Marine Biology from the University of Charleston. Over his 15-year tenure as a Research Scientist and Research Administrator with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), he led and supported the development of scientific programs focused on research, monitoring, stakeholder engagement, citizen science, fisheries management, and the restoration of shellfish resources statewide. For the last year, he has served as the Science and Restoration Manager for SBEP, where he successfully advanced the program's library of restoration projects and ensured key initiatives are informed by current science. A fifth-generation Floridian and 21-year resident of Sarasota County, Dr. Gandy has witnessed the region's ecological challenges and transformations firsthand.



John Taylor, Ralph Taylor Nursery

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

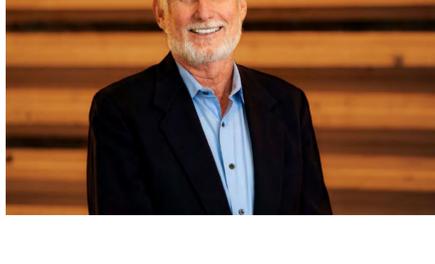
John Taylor is the Co-Owner of Ralph Taylor's Nurseries, he is a third-generation leader recognized for industry resilience and community contributions. He has worked in the horticulture industry since 2009.



Jon Thaxton, GCCF

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Jon Thaxton creates and implements Gulf Coast Community Foundation's key strategies for transforming our nonprofit community while providing leadership on emerging issues. Jon joined Gulf Coast in 2012 after serving 12 years as a Sarasota County Commissioner.



At Gulf Coast, Jon works with community partners on initiatives that will transform our region and improve public policies.

Jon has provided leadership in the creation of a system of care for the homeless, a food distribution system focusing on healthy and nutritious foods, and the improvement of affordable housing policies. Jon led a multidisciplinary team of experts who created the Water Quality Playbook and is working on other transformative projects, including extensions of the Legacy Trail and creation of the Sarasota downtown bayfront park, The Bay.

Jon is also recognized as a leader for protecting the natural environment. A fifth generation Sarasotan, he was raised on a family farm near Osprey. He began his environmental advocacy at Venice High School in 1974, and in 1996 he was featured in National Geographic for his efforts to protect endangered species.

Lunch & Brainstorming Session

11:50 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.



Caterer: Chef Kelley Hawks and Tiki Go Go

Afternoon Strategy Session

1:00 P.M. - 3:50 P.M.

Closing Remarks & Announcements:

3:50 - 4:00 pm

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