

## PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION FOR EXOTIC PLANT REMOVAL IN AN ENDANGERED ECOSYSTEM Miami, Florida



### DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

This project involved formulating a plan to remove invasive plants from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration property (10 acres) in southern Miami-Dade County, while preserving its endangered ecosystem and improving aesthetics. The site is a National Weather Service (NWS) Doppler radar facility, and is a fragment of one of the most imperiled habitats in the world: the pine rocklands.

Specialized knowledge of the pine rockland habitat, as well as a highly educated plant eradication crew, were key to developing an effective vegetation removal plan. While the plan improved the appearance of the site to the public, it more importantly served to restore the pineland ecosystem. And, it portrayed the federal government as a responsible environmental land steward.

Pine rocklands are home to a number of plants found nowhere else in the world. Many species are listed as state and/or federally endangered and threatened. When invasive plants overrun pinelands, the small, sun-loving, native species are shaded out. They can, however, make an extraordinary comeback with the

help of restoration experts.

Scheda biologists tackled the project by compiling a list of plants they identified on the project site, including the federally endangered Deltoid spurge (*Chamaesyce deltoidea* ssp. *deltoidea*). The next step was to involve a professional herbicide application crew that knew exactly how to treat the exotics, while leaving desirable plants untouched. Scheda biologists were frequently on site to identify and document the regeneration and recruitment of pineland plants.

Project coordination included communication with the Miami-Dade County Department of Environmental Resources Management, the county's Natural Areas Management, The Nature Conservancy, and researchers from local universities and Fairchild Tropical Gardens.

