



Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute (NRLI)

Practicum Presentation





Basin Management Action Plan

What can other regions learn from the
Lower St. Johns River Basin?



NRLI Practicum Team:

- **Tanya Borisova, Ph.D.**
 - Environmental Economist, IFAS, UF
- **Debra Butler**
 - Ecologist, Johnson Engineering



NRLI Practicum Team:



- **Diana Ferguson, Esq.**
 - Represents Florida Association of Counties before the Florida Legislature concerning the environment, agriculture, energy and utilities
- **Kevin Hennessy, Esq.**
 - Founding Shareholder of Lewis, Longman & Walker, P.A. and Managing Attorney for the Bradenton, Florida office



NRLI Practicum Team:



- **Jennison Kipp**

- Resource Economist, University of Florida Program for Resource Efficient Communities (PREC)

- **Supervisor: Prof. Laila Racevskis, Ph.D.**

- Assistant Professor, Land Economics and Policy, IFAS, University of Florida, and Director of the Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute



Practicum Background:

- The St. Johns River winds its way through several counties in NW Florida.
- Focus is Lower St. Johns in Flagler, Putnam and St. Johns' Counties.
- Counties have experienced dramatic urban development.



Practicum Background:

- Transition from agriculture to residential development although substantial farming remains;
- Transition from food crops to sod and ornamentals;



Practicum Background:

- Algae blooms in River spurred increased concern over urban and agricultural runoff;



Practicum Background:

- **Environmental Agencies tasked with legislative mandate to impose TMDL's and BMAP for River;**
- **Creation of TMDL Executive Committee, stakeholder groups and public meetings all pursued by agency outreach program; and**
- **Unclear whether all stakeholders are involved, invested or informed to TMDL and BMAP progress.**

Practicum Objectives:

- To learn stakeholders' opinions regarding management of the water quality in the St. Johns river;
- To understand the level and quality of information reaching the stakeholder community;



Practicum Objectives:

- To understand the manner in which such information is being communicated; and
- To share what we learn within NRLI and other stakeholders throughout the state regarding total maximum daily load (TMDL) and Basin management action plan (BMAP) process.

What Do We Hope to Accomplish?

- Provide additional venue for the stakeholders to voice opinions about water quality mitigation measures proposed in BMAP development for the Lower St. John's River Basin;
- Provide additional feedback to the regulatory authorities charged with TMDL and BMAP development for the Lower St. John's River Basin;



What Do We Hope to Accomplish?

- **Contribute to broader coordination among stakeholder groups working on TMDL and BMAP's across watershed lines; and**
- **Provide a basis for additional research and outreach projects focused on TMDL and BMAP implementation in Florida.**

Focus Group Approach

Chosen By Team:

- **A focus group is a form of qualitative research**
- **NRLI Team will ask stakeholder groups questions about their attitudes toward the TMDL and BMAP process**
- **Three Stakeholder groups chosen:**
 - **Farmers**
 - **Environmentalists**
 - **Urban / Local Government**

Focus Group Design:

- **Initial Steps**

- Attended meetings of TMDL Executive Committee and IFAS Extension Farmers Meeting to learn about Lower St. Johns BMAP issues
- Developed project outline
- Coordinated project outline with TMDL Executive Committee UF Extension Faculty and Farm Bureau Personnel
- Regular team meetings and conference calls held to update and assign tasks

Focus Group Design:

- **Initial Steps**

- Focus group script developed
- Focus group participant letters developed
- Facilitators selected



Focus Group Design:



- **For Each Stakeholder Group**
 - Ten to fifteen group members identified and invited to the focus group discussion (goal of confirming 6 to 8 attendees)
 - Recruitment process conducted by the NRLI Practicum Team with the help of UF Extension Service and UF Program for Resource Efficient Communities

Focus Group Design:



- **For Each Stakeholder Group**
 - Participants will be sought from all three counties
 - Venue selected based on proximity to group members
 - Refreshments provided
 - Duration of each Focus Group Discussion – 2 hours

Focus Group Implementation:

- **For Each Stakeholder Group**

- Each Focus Group is Facilitated by one NRLI Practicum Team Member; other Members are charged with note-taking
- Facilitator will follow prepared script
- Facilitator will present questions to group and encourage responses from all participants



Timeline:



- **Agricultural Focus Group**
 - October 28, 2008, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
(UF Downtown Extension Center in Hastings)
- **Environmental Groups**
 - November 2008
- **Local Governments**
 - January 2009



Information Sharing:

- **NRLI Practicum Presentation and Report**
- **Practicum Team to Collaborate with the TMDL Committee in Lee County, which is within the Caloosahatchee River Basin**

Information Sharing:

- **Final Discussion Summary Shared with Lower St. Johns TMDL Executive Committee and UF IFAS Extension faculty**
- **Results of focus group discussions and Final Report will be shared with all participants**
- **Farmers, environmentalists and government participants will each receive summaries of other group's comments**

Lessons Learned:

- **Approach to Communication with Stakeholders May Differ**
 - i.e., a letter drafted to agricultural interests might read differently than a letter drafted to environmental groups
- **Structure of Focus Groups**
 - Length of meeting, number of questions to ask, use of refreshments (lunch) to facilitate discussion among group members

Lessons Learned:

- **Recruitment process**
 - **Importance of local leaders' involvement; need to be transparent about the objectives and final results**

Anticipated Outcomes:

- **Team expectations**

- Focus Group participants' priorities regarding river may differ from regulatory agencies.
- Focus Group process will provide an avenue for education of participants regarding TMDL and BMAP process
- Final Report will be enlightening to regulatory agencies concerning level of knowledge in community and opportunities to improve communication

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THANK YOU