



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER GRADUATION AND PRACTICUM PRESENTATIONS



Graduation of the Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute, Class XI was held in Gainesville on April 12-14, 2012. Fellows presented results of their practica at the Reitz Union and graduation ceremonies were held at the Straughn Extension Professional Development Center in Gainesville. Graduation was well

attended by leaders from UF IFAS, the IFAS Food and Resources Economics Department, NRLI program staff, and NRLI Alumni representing all previous NRLI classes. The alumni were pleased to have the opportunity to visit with Dr. Roy Carriker previous NRLI director. The current Director, Dr. Laila Racevskis, presented the 6th Annual Burl Long Award to this year's recipient. Bryan Fluech, current NRLI Alumni Association President, presented the Alumni of the Year and the Robert Teitz Natural Resources Leadership Awards. The attendees took a few minutes to remember Burl Long, the past director. Congratulations to all sixteen NRLI Class XI graduates and to the award recipients!



Dr. Burl Long, Director Emeritus, was remembered at graduation. Dr. Long passed away in December of 2011 after a long battle with cancer. *Staff photo.*

The graduates of Class XI are now part of a network of 202 natural resource professionals in local government, state, and federal agencies, agriculture, private industry, and academia throughout the State of Florida who maintain contact through the NRLI Alumni Association.

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PRACTICUM PRESENTATIONS



Citlalli Lopez, Eddie Ellis and Pati Negreros present their practicum, “Program for Conflict Resolution in the Use and Management of Forest Landscapes.”, on Friday morning.



Lindsey Cross presents her practicum, “Integrating Nitrogen Management with Planning, during the Thursday session.



Camille Soverel, and Gregg Eason (not pictured) presents their practicum.



Hugh Thomas talks with the group about the challenges he faced while working on his practicum, “Water Supply and Water Quality Issues in Suwannee River Basin

A significant element of each NRLI Class Graduation session is the presentation of the Fellows’ Practica. The Fellows assume certain responsibilities when they are accepted into NRLI. Along with committing to participate in each of the seven working sessions, each Fellow agrees to work on a Practicum during his or her time in NRLI. Their Practicum can be a collaborative effort with other Fellows or they can work on it alone. The Practicum should be related to a natural resource issue and have a real-world outcome. Below is a list of practica presented by this year’s Fellows. More about each presentation can be found at

“Assessing the Efficacy of Extension Clientele Response Strategies”, by Holly Abeels, UF IFAS Extension, Brevard County and Shannon McGee, UF IFAS Extension, Polk County

“Public Issues Education Online Training Modules”, by Carolyn Cox, UF Florida Climate Institute and Becky Raulerson, UF/IFAS Agricultural Education and Communication Department

“Integrating Nitrogen Management with Planning”, by Lindsay Cross, Tampa Bay Estuary Program

“Electronic Reporting Process for Commercial Saltwater Landings”, by Gregg Eason, Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and Camille Soverel, Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission

“Program for Conflict Resolution in the Use and Management of Forest Landscapes”, by Edward Ellis, Citlalli Lopez-Binnquist, and Patricia Negreros-Castillo, *Universidad Veracruzana, Veracruz Mexico*

“Needs and Barriers of Agricultural Producers in Reference to Water”, Brad Etheridge, Thomas Cattle Buying Services, Inc. and Curt Williams, Florida Farm Bureau Federation

“Ecology and management of cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*) in Picayune Strand State Forest, FL”, by Kelly Keefe, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers

“Communicating and Defining Drought in a Way That Matters: Case study in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin”, by Christopher Martinez, UF IFAS Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering

“Stakeholders in Post-Disaster Redevelopment: A Project Inspired by NRLI”, by Thomas Ruppert, Florida Sea Grant

“Water Supply and Water Quality Issues in Suwannee River Basin and Awareness within the Ag Community”, Hugh Thomas, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

THE GRADUATES

Dr. Jack Payne, UF Senior Vice President for Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and Millie Ferrer-Chancy, UF IFAS Interim Dean for Extension presented the graduates with their certificates.



Holly Abeels, UF IFAS Extension



Carolyn Cox, UF Florida Climate Institute



Lindsay Cross, Tampa Bay Estuary Program



Gregg Eason, Florida Fish and Wildlife Program



Edward Ellis, Universidad Veracruzana



Brad Etheridge, Thomas Cattle Buying Services, Inc.



Kelly Keefe, US Army Corp of Engineers



Citlalli Lopez, Universidad Veracruzana



Christopher Martinez University of Florida, Ag and Biological Engineering



Shannon McGee, UF IFAS Extension



Patricia Negreros, Universidad Veracruzana



Becky Raulerson, UF IFAS Agricultural Education and Communication



Thomas Ruppert, Florida Sea Grant



Camille Soverel, Florida Fish and Wildlife



Hugh Thomas, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services



Curt Williams, Florida Farm Bureau

DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS



Left. Dr. Millie Ferrer-Chauncy, Interim Dean for Extension, congratulates Class XI on behalf of Extension. . Dr. Ferrer-Chauncy stressed the importance of the program to IFAS Extension and how it has benefited not only the Agents that have participated in the program but the citizens of Florida as well.

Left. Dr. Jack Payne, Senior Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources congratulates the NRLI Fellows on their accomplishments and welcomes their family and friends to the graduation ceremonies. Dr. Payne stressed the importance of collaboration skills during these difficult times.



Left. Dr. Rod Clouser welcomes guests and Fellows to graduation and talks about the importance of NRLI and the value of keeping the program a sustainable component of IFAS for the future.



Right. Dr. Mike Spranger, welcomes the participants and speaks about Sea Grant's involvement in the program. Sea Grant has made NRLI training an integrate part of new Sea Grant agents training



Left. Dr. Charlie Vavrina welcomes everyone to graduation and talks about how the NRLI Program has been a vital training tool in his district.

NRLI was honored to have speak at the graduation ceremonies five distinguished speakers from IFAS Administration. Dr. Jack Payne, UF Senior Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources , Dr. Millie Ferrer-Chauncy, Interim Dean and Director for Extension, Dr. Michael Spranger, Associate Dean for Extension and Associate Director of the Florida Sea Grant, Dr. Rodney Clouser, Associate Chair for the Food and Resource Economics Department and Charles Vavrina, South Central District Extension Director.

AWARDS



Robert Tietz Award for Natural Resources Leadership

The Robert Tietz Award for Natural Resources Leadership was awarded to Estus Whitfield. Mr. Whitfield was honored with this award for his tireless dedication to protecting Florida's natural areas during the past several decades. Estus has played an important role in developing and managing many of Florida's land acquisition programs such as Save our Everglades, Save our Coasts, Save our Rivers, and Preservation 2000.

Alumni Award

As the newest member of the NRLI Project Team and a member of Class IX, Joy was awarded the Alumni Award for her dedication in applying her NLRI skills in her Extension and Outreach programs as a Sea Grant Agent in Lee County.



Burl Long Award

Established in 2007 by founding director, Burl Long, the Burl Long Award is given to a Fellow in the current class who the other class members believe grew the most as a result of their experience in NRLI.

Shannon McGee was selected by her classmates to receive the 6 Annual Burl Long Award.

CLASS XI SPEAKS



Above. Brad Etheridge shares his thoughts about his NRLI experience as (L-R) Carolyn Cox, Kelly Keefe, Eddie Ellis, Chris Martinez, Gregg Eason and Thomas Ruppert wait for their opportunity to speak..

Gregg Eason was chosen by the members of Class XI to serve as class speaker. Gregg elected to give each member an opportunity to speak and give an account of how NRLI has impacted their lives since taking the training. Many class members felt that as a result of NRLI that both their professional and private lives has been enhanced.



Above top: Shannon McGee talks about what she has gained from NRLI and how the experience has impacted her life during her acceptance speech for the Burl Long Award. Above. Laila Racevskis presents Shannon with the Burl Long Award.

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This report forms part of a series written by current NRLI Fellows. Reports represent and are a product of the experiential learning process that is a highlight of the NRLI program and have not been formally peer reviewed.

Alumni Field Trip and Annual Meeting

On Saturday, the NRLI Project Team and Alumni had a great fieldtrip to the farm of Brad Etheridge, Fellow and Alumni from Class XI, in Williston Florida. The theme of the field trip was "Conservation on Private Lands and Landowner Incentives", which was led by Kris Cathey, Regional Landowner Assistance Manager for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and Tom Ostertag, Alumni Class IX, and also with the Florida FWC. Brad gave the group a tour of the farm operations and discussed the importance of incorporating conservation practices on his property and in his cattle business. He also provided a wonderful meal during the annual meeting during which time the new Alumni Board was elected. The board now includes: Stan Bronson, Class II, Edward Wright, Class VI, Bryan Fluech, Class VIII, Dianne Hughes, Class VIII, Paul Monaghan, Class IX, Tom Ostertag, Class IX, Nicole Wulff, Class X, Leslie Corcelli, Class X, Katherine Diersen, Class X, Craig Diamond, Class X, Eric Bush, Class X, Camille Soverel, Class XI and Chris Martinez, Class XI.



Kris Cathey talks about conservation land and landownership assistance during the Annual Alumni Field trip. Photo by Bryan Fluech.

Scenes from the Farm

