



## Pensacola Beach: Adaptation and Resilience in Coastal Communities

*NRLI seeks to impact decision making in Florida by creating a network of professionals prepared to effectively address natural resource issues through collaborative leadership and conflict management.*

### Session Overview

The NRLI project team and Class XIV fellows gathered in Pensacola Beach, Florida September 11-13, 2014 (session 2) to focus on beaches, hurricanes, and sea level rise. Fellows learned about and reflected on ways in which small communities must think about, prepare for, and react to an onslaught of simultaneous and contentious issues including coastal development, erosion and beach re-nourishment; sea level rise and storm surges; the oil spill; and threatened and endangered species. The group stayed at the Holiday Inn Resort on Pensacola Beach, which enabled Fellows to experience, first-hand, the beach environment.

Dr. Klaus Meyer-Arendt, Professor of coastal geology in the Department of Environmental Studies at the University of West Florida, gave a context presentation to the class, explaining the geomorphology of the area as well as the history of development, growth management, and impacts of hurricanes. Dr. Meyer-Arendt also took us on a van tour of the island, stopping at locations that illustrated first-hand some of the natural resource issues facing the community. We then entered the Fort Pickens area of the Gulf Islands National Seashore where Dan Brown, Superintendent of the national seashore, showed us around and shared his perspectives on some of the many challenges that coastal communities face in trying to both protect and preserve natural resources while also providing infrastructure to allow for public use and enjoyment of the seashore.

In addition to the context speaker and field tour guides, guests at this session included a group of Pensacola Beach stakeholders who joined the NRLI Fellows to share their insight and perspectives on the many issues facing the community. The stakeholders who visited with us are as follows:

- ◆ Christian Wagley, Principal, Sustainable Town Concepts
- ◆ Rick O'Connor, Extension Agent II, UF/IFAS Extension, Escambia County
- ◆ Paolo Ghio, Director of Developmental Services, Santa Rosa Island Authority
- ◆ Kimberly Blair, Beach/environment reporter, Pensacola News Journal
- ◆ Beverly McCay, General Manager, Holiday Inn Express Pensacola Beach
- ◆ Terry Wells, Special Projects & Enforcement Branch, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- ◆ Clif Payne, Pensacola Permitting Section, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Fellows divided into small groups and interviewed individual stakeholders which allowed them to gain in-depth insight into each guest's perspective. After the interviews, fellows got back together as a large group to share what they had learned during their interviews.



Dr. Klaus Meyer-Arendt, Professor at UWF, led Class XIV fellows on a tour of the island.  
Photo by Jessica Ireland.



Dan Brown, Superintendent of Gulf Islands National Seashore, led NRLI Class XIV Fellows on a tour of the Fort Pickens area of the national seashore. Photo by Jessica Ireland.

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# Curriculum Focus:

## Analyzing natural resource conflicts and collaboration

During Session 2, Fellows were exposed to skills, techniques, and tools for analyzing natural resource conflicts and collaboration. Specifically, the objectives of the session were to:

- ◆ Discuss and practice the concept of empathic listening.
- ◆ Explore the changing beach environment and speak with Pensacola waterfront stakeholders.
- ◆ Identify and practice the basic types of framing and discuss implications for negotiation, leadership, and managing conflict.
- ◆ Explore the concept of stakeholder engagement; distinguish between issues, positions, and interests.
- ◆ Practice using the situation assessment tool and identify its role in the practicum planning process.

### ***Empathic listening***

The skill of listening is a central part of the NRLI curriculum. Empathic listening is a way of listening and responding to another person to improve mutual understanding. The goal is to effectively understand and accurately interpret another person's meanings, to "seek to understand before seeking to be understood".

Empathic listening has several benefits: It forces us to listen attentively to others; it helps avoid misunderstandings, and it tends to open people up, to get them to say more. Empathic listening helps build trust and safety.

During this session, fellows learned about the key qualities of empathic listening and then participated in a group role play, where one Fellow played the role of the listener, one Fellow the role of the speaker, and another Fellow the role of the observer. The small groups rotated roles so that everyone had a chance to experience each role, then the group as a whole spent time processing the experience: Was it easy or difficult to be the listener? For the speakers, did you feel listened to; what did listeners do to indicate they were listening? Observers: what empathic listening skills did the listener employ?

### ***Framing***

Another key concept covered during the Pensacola session was Issue framing. Issue framing is a way to create mental shortcuts to help us make sense of a complex world—"frames" tell us where to file the information in our brains. Framing can contribute to destructive conflict because frames can be used to diminish others or their point of view; can be based on incomplete or selective knowledge or on stereotypes; can be accepted as truth; and can affect the choices one makes. Accordingly, framing is a powerful tool in natural resource disputes.

During this session, fellows participated in a framing activity in which they divided into groups and developed a "frame" for a case study provided to them by the Project Team. The frames were then presented to the group with the goal of convincing the audience to agree with their perspective. After the activity, fellows discussed the ways in which issue framing can be used in conflict management including: recognizing that we all do it and that frames are a powerful technique; focusing on the interests behind the positions that appear in the frame; learning how to re-frame the issue to focus on the problem; and learning how to re-frame issues to highlight common ground.



Class XIV Fellows (from left to right) Stacie Auvenshine, Scott Calleson, Carrie Stevenson, and Kimberly Sykes give their framing presentation to the group. Photo by Jessica Ireland.

## Curriculum Focus cont'd

### **Stakeholders, Positions, and Interests**

Although the term stakeholder is widely used, it is not always clearly defined. This session began with some brainstorming and open discussion regarding “what is a stakeholder?”.

The NRLI definition of stakeholder is someone who: has the power to make decisions; has the power to block decisions or galvanize people; is affected by decisions; and/or has relevant information or expertise. We discussed the difference between issues (the questions being asked—the problem or challenge); positions (the parties’ preferred answers—what they want); and interests (why those answers are important to them—why they want it (RESOLVE, 2007)).

Fellows were also introduced to the “Triangle of Satisfaction” which theorizes that people have three interdependent types of needs and interests that should be carefully considered when holding difficult conversations or planning activities to address contentious issues (CDR Associates, 2007 – based on C. Moore, 1986). The three types of interests are: procedural (how people want to be involved—process matters); psychological (how people want to be treated—relationships matter); and substantive (what people care about—

substance matters). Conflicts can arise when people feel that one or more of their needs and interests have been *unnecessarily* sacrificed in pursuit of someone else’s objectives.

Finally, fellows were introduced to and practiced using a tool called the Situation Assessment. This matrix can be used to help one define the issue being examined, including the stakeholders involved and their respective positions and interests; the power stakeholders have to influence the situation; strategies for engaging stakeholders; the history of the issue; and relationships between stakeholders.

### **NRLI Practicum**

For the practicum project, fellows develop a project that allows them to apply skills and concepts learned in NRLI to actual conflict, decision making, or leadership situations in their organizations or communities. Fellows came to session 2 with ideas for their practicum project and a technique called the Margolis Wheel was used to engage them in sharing ideas and providing feedback on the ideas of others. Sharing ideas also allows for identification of opportunities for partnering on a project. Fellows will come to the next session with a draft practicum proposal and situation assessment.



NRLI Project Team members Jon Dain and Joy Hazell discuss stakeholders, positions, and interests with Class XIV Fellows. Photo by Jessica Ireland.

## NRLI Alumni Spotlight

Brooke Saari, NRLI Class X

Marine Science Extension Agent,  
UF/IFAS Extension & Florida Sea  
Grant, Okaloosa & Walton  
Counties



Brooke Saari is the Marine Science Extension Agent for University of Florida IFAS Extension & Florida Sea Grant in Okaloosa & Walton Counties. Brooke is a NRLI alumna, Class X.

In her role as Marine Science Extension Agent, Brooke provides science based information on marine and natural resources to youth and adult audiences within Okaloosa and Walton Counties. Brooke’s areas of focus are ecosystem awareness & restoration, sustainable community best management practices, and sustainable marine fisheries. In addition, Brooke serves in leadership roles on multiple regional, state, and multi-state projects. Brooke has a



Brooke Saari talks to Class XIV during the field trip in Pensacola Beach. Photo by Jessica Ireland.

# Tools of a Different Nature

James Erskine & Beth Dieveney (Class XIV Fellows)

Each month, we ask a pair of Fellows to reflect on the session in their own words. This article describes the key takeaways from the point of view of Fellows James Erskine and Beth Dieveney.

As a scientist and policy analyst, the tools of our craft are analytical in nature. Descriptive statistics, quantitative ecological models, qualitative assessments, case studies, and interpretation neatly summarize data and information from the world around us and provide the backbone of natural resource management decisions. However, these tools by themselves may be inadequate for managing natural resource conflicts. Additional tools are needed to develop balanced, sustainable, and collaborative solutions. The Natural Resources Leadership Institute (NRLI) presents unique and robust communication tools to compliment the readily used analytical tools.

In our personal training, we have never specifically studied communication – the simple yet powerful use of language and listening to promote deeper reflection and thought. The concept of communication as a tool is new to some, but as with all tools, proper training, guidance, and practice helps perfect use. The communication tools we explored in the NRLI Pensacola session focused on building a foundation to effectively understand and accurately interpret another person's message. As Stephen Covey points out in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1990), listening is one of the four basic forms of communication for which very few people have had training. Empathic listening is to listen with the ears, eyes, and heart with the intent to “seek to understand before being understood.” Empathic listening builds trust and allows for deeper understanding and a greater potential for conflict resolution. Throughout the session, Fellows practiced empathic listening in stakeholder interviews, buzz groups (groups of 2 or 3), and with peers at the nightly cooler sessions.

Another communication tool introduced was issue framing. Framing, through the use of particular words and language, provides context and a way to describe a problem or concept such that the target audience better understands your perspective and, in turn, their perspectives may be influenced. Role playing exercises were used to demonstrate how powerful issue framing can be in providing deeper, personal meaning to an issue and in facilitating acceptance or resolution. To help Fellows frame the issues and provide historical background on the islands long history of development and natural disasters, context speaker Dr. Klaus Meyer-Arendt from the Department of Environmental Studies at the University of West Florida provided an informative and entertaining presentation then later acted as a field guide.

Through the presentation and the field trip, Dr. Klaus Meyer-Arendt helped us frame the issues and challenges of hurricanes, beach nourishment, and sustainable development on the island of Santa Rosa, in terms of resiliency, fortification, and adaptability. Unfortunately for the islands residents, the field excursion highlighted impacts to the natural and built systems due to poor design, beach dune encroachment and unsustainable practices. Visiting the natural and developed areas provided context and prepared the NRLI Fellows to better understand stakeholders' positions and their frame of reference.

Stakeholder engagement was conducted through interviews and situational assessments. The intimate setting of an interview, rather than a stakeholder panel, provided an excellent opportunity to practice empathic listening and facilitated a deeper understanding of the stakeholder's perspective. As with any diverse group of stakeholders, there were many challenges, issues, and perspectives (frames) shared. However, there were shared concerns over the impacts to tourism, the economy, and the natural environment associated with poor water quality in the estuaries and bays. The stakeholder input also uncovered a shared hope for funding provided through the Restore Act's Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund. The hope of a financial windfall, expressed repeatedly throughout the stakeholder engagement process, can be analyzed using another tool we explored in Pensacola – the satisfaction triangle. The hope of a financial windfall factors heavily into the level of stakeholder engagement because it bridges all sides of the satisfaction triangle - psychological, procedural, and substantive. In this example, the hopes to fund meaningful restoration projects are psychological; the process of grant applications, review, and selection are procedural; and the funded capital projects are substantive. The stakeholder's anticipation of grant awards and the belief that these funds will contribute to solutions illustrates the satisfaction triangle, and one break could cause distrust, anger, and withdrawal. To fully understand the aspects of an individual's satisfaction triangle, we need to apply empathic listening and “seek to understand”.

Through exploring and practicing the application of these communication tools, it became apparent that while they are simple and powerful, they are not easy. It is important that in our day-to-day work, we should all continue to test the hypothesis that utilizing the NRLI communications tools will make us better communicators and provide the skills needed to create collaborative sustainable solutions.

**NRLI Class XIV  
Fellow Spotlight  
Carrie Stevenson  
Coastal Sustainability Agent, Escambia  
County, UF/IFAS Extension**



Carrie Stevenson is the Coastal Sustainability Agent for the UF/IFAS Escambia County Extension Office and has been with the organization for almost 11 years.

Carrie has recently started working with ecotour and agritour providers, and she is currently planning a 2-day business development conference for this clientele group in November, complete with a farm tour and zipline ride.

She holds a Master's degree in Biology/Coastal Zone Studies from the University of West Florida in Pensacola and received her undergraduate degree in Biology from Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama.

Carrie is the newly elected President of the Florida Association of Natural Resources Extension Professionals (FANREP) and a member of the Florida Association of County Agriculture Agents (FACAA).

Away from work, she enjoys reading, biking, standup paddleboarding, leading her son's Cub Scout den, and watching her kids play baseball and soccer. She considers herself well-balanced because she's a member of two book clubs *and* two Mardi Gras krewes. She has served on the board of the Beckwith Camp and Conference Center and the Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast Environmental Committee

She serves as a resource for members of the landscape and building industry by providing continuing education programs on creating sustainable coastal structures and landscapes. In addition, she coordinates education and outreach programs to help homeowners understand the function of local ecosystems, reduce energy and water use, and eliminate stormwater pollution. She also works with Realtors, floodplain managers, and homeowners on issues related to hurricane preparedness and flood insurance.

During her career, Carrie has led classroom lessons and/or field trips for over 21,000 school-age youth and their teachers, exposing them to the natural world with the goal of instilling a lifelong respect for wildlife, water quality, and the broader ecosystem so they can make wise energy, water, and land use choices as adults.

### **Looking ahead: Class XIV Session 3**

**For session 3, we will be in Tampa Bay. The issue focus is numeric nutrient criteria: Improving water quality in an urban setting and the curriculum focus is values, perceptions, and understanding conflict.**

## Class XIV Fellows

**Alison Adams**, Assistant Professor, University of Florida School of Forest Resources and Conservation

**Carrie Stevenson**, Coastal Sustainability Agent, UF/IFAS Escambia County Extension

**Gene McAvoy**, Regional Vegetable Extension Agent/County Extension Director, UF/IFAS Hendry County Extension

**Jeremy Olson**, Land Management Specialist, St. Johns River Water Management District

**Kimberly Sykes**, Deputy Manager, Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Clay Coarsey**, Professional Engineer, Suwannee River Water Management District

**Greg Gibson**, Lt. Colonel/Deputy Director, Division of Law Enforcement, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

**Matt Arsenault**, Policy Analyst, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Office of Energy

**Stacie Auvenshine**, Biologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**Bonnie Wolff-Pelaez**, Environmental Manager, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

**Scott Calleson**, Biological Scientist IV, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

**Patty Hutfles**, Senior Project Manager, Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Inc.

**Beth Dieveney**, Deputy Superintendent for Science and Policy, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**Tamela Kinsey**, Environmental Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**Jessica Mendes**, Research Analyst, Lee County Environmental Policy Management

**James Erskine**, Acting Director, Water Resources Department, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida

**Allen Scheffer**, Assistant Director of Field Services District I, Florida Farm Bureau Federation



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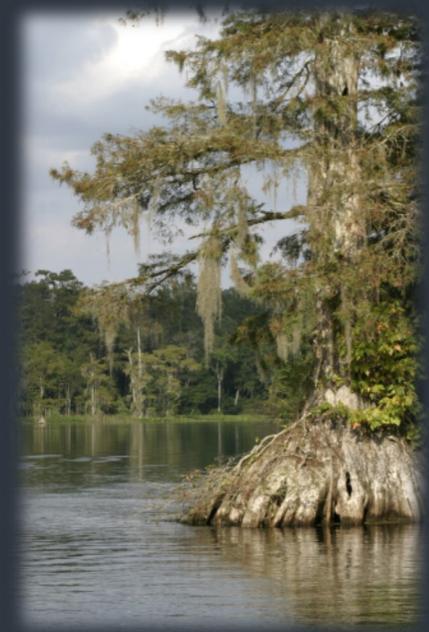
*Collaborative solutions for natural resource challenges*

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