

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.



Picayune Strand: Everglades Restoration in Progress

Director's Corner Jonathan Dain

A critical mass?

There is something I would like to highlight regarding this year's NRLI sessions. It is not apparent without close examination, but it is exciting to consider. True, we hired a talented new project team member, Wendy-Lin Bartels, after the irreplaceable Bruce Delaney retired and, yes, we updated the curriculum a bit, but I refer to something else.

As NRLI has grown, so has its ability to tap into the experiences of its alumni. Recent classes in particular have increasingly benefitted from alumni knowledge, connections, and support. If you are a Class XVI Fellow, you may notice that this year EVERY session involves NRLI alumni—yes, every one. The session on expansion of Port Everglades was made possible by alumni. Airboats on Rodman Reservoir—only because alumni arranged it. A custom tour of a Florida panhandle dairy—it would not have happened without dedicated and connected alumni. And the November session's 3-hour visit (including an unforgettable swamp-buggy tour) to Picayune Strand, a restricted access Everglades restoration site—yes, again, alumni made it possible. Each month, NRLI Fellows get in depth personalized tours and the inside stories behind places and issues. People speak to our group because they know and trust our alumni. And our alumni help out because they want to share a behind the scenes view of their important work.

Help from talented NRLI grads in organizing compelling sessions is not a new phenomenon, but perhaps we have arrived at a tipping point. To a certain extent, NRLI is starting to reach a critical mass; regardless of the issue, it seems an alumna/alumnus is either directly or tangentially involved. In January, we will be in Key West; in February, Crystal River; and in March, St. Augustine. We'll be looking at marine protected areas, the Florida manatee, and sea level rise, respectively, and all three sessions will involve alumni with intimate knowledge of the issues, places, and stakeholders. The Class XVII (2017-18) sessions will also be supported by alumni at every turn (see complete schedule at http://nrli.ifas.ufl.edu/apply.shtml). There are currently 276 NRLI graduates around the State of Florida, and when class XVI graduates in April 2017, there will be close to 300. Over the next three years, one of our top priorities is to better engage with alumni and to strengthen the network as encouraged by the NRLI Alumni Association.

As the new year approaches, we want to sincerely thank all the alumni and supporters of NRLI. Thank you to those at the University of Florida who provide administrative support to our program. Thank you to those who help with sessions, who contribute to our vitally important endowments, who help with recruiting and work hard to manage and care for Florida's citizens, institutions, and natural resources. It is such important work. NRLI needs your continued generosity and dedication.

"The Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute seeks to impact decision making in Florida by creating a network of professionals with members in every county and across all natural resource sectors who can effectively address natural resource issues through collaborative leadership and conflict management."

We are not yet there, but we are making progress; YOU are making progress. Please keep in touch and let us know what you are up to.

Happy holiday season to all!



Photos from the Session 4 field trip: a swamp buggy tour of the Picayune Strand Restoration Site. Photos by Wendy-Lin Bartels.

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Natural Resources Focus: Everglades Restoration in Progress

Fellows and Project Team members traveled to Naples, Florida for the fourth session of NRLI Class XVI, which focused on Everglades Restoration in Progress. We were in the area to learn about the Picayune Strand Restoration Project, a 55,000 acre Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan effort, and the collaborations and perspectives surrounding the project.

Tamela Kinsey, Environmental Engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District was the guest speaker for the session. A NRLI alumna of Class XIV, Tamela has been with the USACE since 2002 and has worked on a range of projects, most notably, projects in the Coastal Renourishment Program and the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program (CERP). She worked on the Picayune Strand Project for 10 years, and her intimate knowledge of the site and its restoration allowed her to provide a detailed and insightful overview of the project.

The following morning, the group toured Picayune Strand thanks to the generosity of the local Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Law Enforcement unit which provided swamp buggies and expert guides for the three-hour excursion. Fellows split into 5 groups and as a convoy viewed a large portion of the restoration area, from newly-completed pump-stations to areas once drained for housing development and now restored to vibrant wetland. The scale and complexity of the project were on display throughout the tour which at times felt like a National Geographic Channel documentary with majestic flocks of Wood Storks and Roseate Spoonbills rising from the waters and flying overhead.

Field trips are generally followed by an opportunity to hear from a variety of stakeholders. As part of each monthly session, we invite individuals who represent a range of viewpoints and have first-hand knowledge of the topic to take part in a stakeholder discussion. Joining us for a lively conversation about the Picayune Strand Restoration Project were

- ◆ Paul Julian, Environmental Consultant Everglades Technical Lead, Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- ◆ Tim Breen, Supervisory Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Everglades Restoration, North Region, South Florida Ecological Services Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- ◆ Janet Starnes, Principle Project Manager, South Florida Water Management District
- ◆ Jean Kungle, Real Estate Broker, Port of Islands Realty
- ◆ Nancy Payton, Southwest Florida Field Representative, Florida Wildlife Federation
- ◆ Michael Weston, Center Manager, Calooshatchee Forestry Center, Florida Forest Service
- ◆ Gene Duncan, Water Resources Director, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida
- ◆ Kevin Donaldson, Real Estate Services Director, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida
- ◆ Gintautas Zavadzkas, Fish and Wildlife Director, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida

For more detail on the fourth session, please read the Fellows' article written by Class XVI Fellows Katie Hallas & Courtney Davis (page 5).



Picayune Strand Restoration Site. Photos by Erika Zambello.



Curriculum Focus: Designing Effective Meetings and Group Decision-making Processes

Objectives

By the end of the session Fellows:

1. Learned about and practiced applying the concepts of effective meeting design.
2. Learned about and applied interviewing skills via a focus group exercise.
3. Practiced the timeline tool as a method for understanding conflict history and facilitating dialogue.
4. Reviewed NRLI concepts, skills, tools, and strategies from the first four sessions.
5. Explored the issue: Everglades restoration in progress; heard from Picayune Strand stakeholders.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are a qualitative data collection technique that originated in the marketing/business world. The focus group is commonly used to collect information on opinions, attitudes, and perceptions. Focus groups can be used to uncover social marketing concepts, assess community or organizational needs, foster participation in a program, or test survey questions or educational and marketing materials. The focus group technique uses a group interview process to gather information on diverse stakeholder perspectives and is led by a moderator. During the process, questions and group interactions stimulate discussion which often provides information different from that which can be obtained from individual interviews or surveys. Typically, focus groups have 6-8 participants who are either randomly chosen or who are selectively chosen because of a shared experience or opinion of interest to the researcher.

To introduce Class XVI Fellows to focus groups and tips for designing effective interview questions, Paul Monaghan provided an overview of the technique before sharing a detailed example involving a bass-fishing initiative. He subsequently led a mock-focus group composed of program participants who work for non-profits. The objective was to gather information about ways in which NRLI could attract more Fellows from the non-profit sector. During the activity, Paul modeled effective interviewing techniques including asking an icebreaker/introductory question to put people at ease followed by carefully considered open-ended and probing questions designed to elicit opinions, ideas, and perspectives. The results of even the abbreviated experience illustrated the kind of unexpected and useful insights that can result from focus groups.



Paul Monaghan facilitates a mock focus group with Class XVI Fellows. Photo by Wendy-Lin Bartels.

The Timeline Tool

Human beings mark time through events. Celebrations of births, marriages, graduations, and first jobs are but a few of the ways we track the passing of time during our lives. One effective tool for better understanding natural resource conflicts is the group-constructed timeline. Timelines can help people gather, share, organize, and analyze information. When used in a participatory fashion, timelines can engage stakeholders in relatively non-threatening discussions and help bridge differing perceptions of a given situation.

By constructing a timeline and considering questions like “When did this situation start?” “What moments were key in escalating or diminishing tensions?” and “How might events have impacted relationships among parties?”, those directly and indirectly involved in a conflict or collaborative process can gain important perspectives. In its simplest form, a long piece of butcher paper is placed on tables and participants create a handwritten timeline of an event or issue. Dots or other markers can be used to note especially important instances or actions as the basis for discussion and dialogue.

To demonstrate the tool, Jon Dain led Fellows in the creation of a timeline focused on Fellows’ experiences to date in NRLI. Butcher paper was rolled out on the tables and Fellows began by registering the moment they first learned of the program. They then recorded moments of key learning and other NRLI milestones (e.g., the moment a practicum idea was selected, the moment the group became a cohort, etc.). Jon got Fellows talking about their answers and perceptions and then asked how they might use the timeline tool in their own work. The session wrapped up with examples of discussion questions that can be used to debrief: what have you learned about the conflict or collaborative process from the timeline; what have been the most significant events in escalating this conflict and why; how have events affected relationships among the parties; why do you think the parties acted the way they did; what outside forces were at play; and does this analysis suggest possible solutions or avenues for de-escalation? (FAO 2002).



Fellows participate in the timeline activity. Photos by Wendy-Lin Bartels.

Curriculum Focus cont'd

Designing Effective Meetings

No matter the type of job you have, it is likely that you spend a significant amount of time planning and participating in meetings. Whether it be staff meetings, planning meetings, or decision making meetings, all can benefit from effective preparation. Two key concepts to keep in mind when planning meetings are content (what is discussed) and process (how it is discussed). Oftentimes, we put the majority of time and energy into thinking about content and less effort into thinking about an appropriate process for addressing the content. In fact, many of the “factors that lead to bad meetings” can often be traced to lack of process planning (i.e., the methods and procedures, the activities, the rules or norms, the group dynamics, and the tone of the meeting).

To introduce Fellows to the process agenda, Jon Dain led a brainstorming session in which Fellows thought about bad experiences in meetings. The reflection generated a list of characteristics which was used to illustrate the difference between process and content. Fellows then participated in a small group activity in which they developed a process agenda for a realistic but imagined meeting to plan a county park. When finished, groups presented their agendas, discussed what was difficult about the exercise, and reviewed key concepts. These included defining overall meeting goals, objectives for each goal, and activities designed to help the group achieve those objectives in an appropriate way. In addition, to ensure a good meeting, it is important to think about three segments: beginnings (welcome and setting the context), middles (key activities/issues to be discussed), and ends (closure activities).

NRLI Mid-program Review

Session 4 marks the midway point of NRLI Class XVI—a time to reflect on experiences and track skills and tools in an effort to consolidate learning. Wendy-Lin Bartels and Paul Monaghan led Fellows in a review activity that began with a focus on individual learning goals. Wendy-Lin encouraged Fellows to work in pairs and evaluate how far they had advanced, what remained to work on, and how they were sharing progress within their organizations. Subsequently, Fellows were divided into small groups to brainstorm and document everything they could remember doing or learning in terms of NRLI concepts, skills, readings/videos, techniques/tools, relationships, classroom activities, field trips, stakeholders, and speakers and guides. Fellows numbered off and rotated among tables equipped with flipchart paper and markers which were used to record their responses. The groups rotated a total of four times and continued to add to the charts at each station. Upon finishing the group rotations, Paul debriefed the activity by reviewing key lessons and asking Fellows to select three aspects that had been particularly useful to them in their professional lives.



Fellows brainstorm what they have learned and done in NRLI during the mid-program review activity.

Photos by Wendy-Lin Bartels.

Alumni Engagement

We'd like to recognize the contributions and involvement of NRLI alumni in the Picayune Strand session. Tamela Kinsey, Class XIV, was instrumental in the planning of the session, from helping us organize the field trip, to identifying and contacting stakeholders, to figuring out meeting space for sessions. Thank you, Tamela, for all of your assistance! In addition, Jessica Mendes, Class XIV joined the group for the field trip, stakeholder panel, and dinner on Thursday.

We would also like to thank current Fellow Patrick Walsh for working with FWC Law Enforcement to arrange swamp buggies and guides for the Picayune Strand field trip.



Thank you to FWC Law Enforcement for providing swamp buggies and tour guides for the field trip! Photo by Wendy-Lin Bartels.

Session 4 Fellows' Article

Katie Hallas & Courtney Davis (Class XVI Fellows)

Each month, we ask Fellows to reflect on the session in their own words. This article describes the key takeaways from the point of view of Fellows Katie Hallas & Courtney Davis.

"Time passes so slowly if you are unaware of it and so quickly if you are aware of it."

—Marc Bolan

We can hardly believe it, but Class XVI reached the mid-way point in our curriculum! Our fourth session took place November 16th-18th in Naples, Florida, and it focused on Everglades restoration in the Picayune Strand project. We were all very curious about the meaning of

Picayune Strand, the word Picayune means "petty, worthless" and strand means "the land bordering a body of water."

During the first day of the session, we learned new tools for stakeholder engagement, specifically the use of focus groups and the timeline tool. Focus groups are an important listening tool to discover interests and values of stakeholders. This lesson re-emphasized the importance of listening and asking open-ended questions to gain as much of a stakeholder's perspective as possible. We learned that the timeline tool can be used to increase stakeholder interaction and also to help frame the background for specific situations that incorporates the perspectives of the various stakeholders.

Tamela Kinsey (NRLI Class XIV Alumni) with the United States Army Corps of Engineers was our guest speaker. She has been involved with the Picayune Strand project for over a decade. We learned about the Everglades restoration effort known as the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), which is the world's largest restoration effort. The CERP process and its various projects incorporate a wide range of stakeholders from state and federal agencies as well as agriculture, private citizens, environmental groups, and the Miccosukee and Seminole Tribes. Many of us were surprised by the long history surrounding the Picayune Strand project and its land. This land was one of the original "swampland in Florida" scams. The land was only shown to potential buyers during the winter dry periods and little to no homes were ever built. From 1965-1985, the land was a residential subdivision known as Golden Gate Estates, and the state of Florida began purchasing the land in 1985, and in 2004, an Environmental Assessment was completed on the project. The 2007 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) authorized the Picayune Strand project.

On Thursday, we toured the Picayune Strand project via swamp buggies courtesy of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. Several of our Fellows are bird enthusiasts, so they were thrilled with the number of birds we saw. We were impressed with the sheer magnitude of the project. It includes 55,000 acres of restoration, 227 miles of road removal, 83 canal plugs, 3 flood control pump stations, 15 miles of tieback levee, and 195 miles of tram removal.

After our site visit, we hosted our stakeholder panel, which included representatives from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Florida Forest Service, South Florida Water Management District,

Miccosukee Tribe, Port Islands Realty, Florida Wildlife Foundation, and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). Prior to the panel, we were under the impression that little conflict surrounded the Picayune Strand project, and we were surprised at how well all of the stakeholders were working together. However, we learned that the Tribe did not feel that their concerns were being heard surrounding the project. Apparently, FDEP took an 800-acre tract of land from the Miccosukee Tribe, and the FDEP was court ordered to conduct a comparable land swap in 2005 with the Tribe. This land swap has not occurred, and the Tribe was given money by the FDEP for the land; however, it is against tribal practices to accept money for the land, and the Tribe would like their land returned.

Several of the Fellows noted after the panel that it was clear that the CERP process engages numerous stakeholders but that stakeholder involvement is not a one-size-fits-all. In this case, the Tribe's customs have not been taken into account and to move forward, the FDEP and others must understand the individual needs of this stakeholder. While the Fellows recognize we do not have the whole picture, it is imperative to take the time to assess each stakeholder's needs and how they can be addressed to achieve successful relationships.

On Friday, we focused on how to plan an effective meeting and conducted a mid-term review. We enjoyed reviewing what we have learned during our time in NRLI and discussing how we are applying what we have learned in our professional and personal lives. At our mid-point, we recognize that we will leave this program with lifelong friendships and new skills to tackle Florida's natural resource challenges.



Photos by Erika Zambello.

Matt Wegener

Fisheries Biologist, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission



Matt was born in the small town of Kinmundy Illinois. He was fortunate enough to be exposed to the natural resources world very early on, as his father was the head park ranger (superintendent) of a Stephen A. Forbes State Park, in Southern Illinois. Being the only residents on a 2,000

acre wilderness wonderland meant that there was lots of exploring to do after school and during summer vacations. The adventures started at the age of 5 with catching crawfish in the creek behind his house and expanded to winning bass tournaments on the local lake.

When Matt turned 17, he volunteered during summer vacation at a fisheries research lab located on the state park. Working the entire summer for free made him realize he could do this as a career. He hasn't worked outside of the fisheries field since. After high school, Matt started his post high school education at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale Illinois. He continued to work in fisheries, assisting graduate students with their research projects. His senior year, he was awarded an assistantship and piloted his first research project. That year he won 3rd place at the undergraduate symposium, where he presented his research on Asian Carp.

After graduating with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Zoology, Matt worked for the US Fish & Wildlife Service for 10 months before accepting a graduate position at Mississippi State University, under the direction of Hal Schramm. While spending every waking hour working on his Largemouth Bass project or other students' research on the Mississippi River, he managed to meet the woman of his dreams who was working towards her Degree of Veterinary Medicine.

After earning his Masters of Science degree in Fisheries Management, Matt received a fisheries biologist position in the research branch (FWRI) of the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Soon after, Matt and Sabrina were married and moved into a house together in Pensacola FL, where they both pursue their passions of veterinary medicine and fisheries biology. Matt has worked for the FWC for more than 6 years now and spends his free time fly fishing the shallow waters of Pensacola Bay or in a duck blind waiting for another flock of redheads to land in his decoys. He also volunteers as the education director for the Fly Fishers of Northwest Florida and serves as the tournament director for the Pensacola Speckled Trout Club.

Courtney Davis

Florida Vegetable Sales Representative, Speedling, Inc.



Courtney was raised on North Florida, in a large farming family. As a sixth generation farming Florida, farming is truly in her blood. She graduated from the University of Florida with a Bachelor's in Agricultural Communication and a Master's in Extension Education, and in turn, is a diehard Gator. Formally an Agricultural Extension Agent for UF/IFAS, Courtney now serves as East Coast Vegetable Sales Representative for Speedling, Inc. Speedling has eight greenhouses throughout the United States where they offer the service of growing

seeds into seedling transplants. Here, she is responsible for the sales and maintaining accounts for seed transplants.

She enjoys spending time volunteering with local causes such as Okeechobee AgVentures, reading for Agricultural Literacy day, and working with local youth agricultural programs such as 4-H and Future Farmers of America. Courtney recently served on Farm Bureau's 2014-2016 Young Farmers and Ranchers Leadership Group and presently serves on the Okeechobee Farm Bureau Board of Directors.

Currently, she resides in Okeechobee with her two children, Clayte (7) and Avery (3). Courtney enjoys spending time with her children finding new adventures. Many of the adventures with involve horses, cows, saltwater, and occasionally finding and learning about sharks.

Phillip Stokes

Education Specialist, UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education



Phillip Stokes is the education coordinator for the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (PIE Center). Phillip designs and supports many of the outreach and education programs for the center. He facilitates virtual and in-person trainings, as well as develops and evaluates curriculum and outreach material. Phillip received his B.S. in Biology from the University of

Central Florida and his M.S. in Geography, Global Environmental Change from the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom. He conducted his graduate research in Indonesia, studying tropical peat swamp forests. Phillip joined the PIE Center in December of 2015. Prior to his current position, Phillip led education and research programs with Disney's Animal Programs and SeaWorld's Education Department, and worked with an orphan empowerment non-profit in Naivasha, Kenya.

Phillip and his wife of 7 years, Taylor, have a 5 month old daughter, Coraline. Phillip enjoys spending time with family, playing sports (ultimate frisbee and basketball mostly), hiking, kayaking, traveling, and cooking.

Looking Forward

Class XVI Sessions 5-8

Dates	Topic	Location
January 15-17, 2017	Protection & use of marine resources	Key West
February 15-17, 2017	Recreation & the endangered Florida manatee	Crystal River
March 15-17, 2017	Responding to sea level rise	St. Augustine
April 6-7, 2017	Graduation & practicum presentations	Gainesville



Photo by Erika Zambello.

Class XVII (2017-2018)

We are now accepting applications for NRLI Class XVII (2017-2018). For details, including a schedule and application instructions, go to <http://nrli.ifas.ufl.edu/apply.shtml>.

Class XVI Fellows

Savanna Barry, Regional Specialized Sea Grant Agent, UF/IFAS Extension Nature Coast Biological Station

Tyler Beck, Snail Kite Conservation Coordinator, Species Conservation Planning Section, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Amy Castaneda, Water Quality Technician, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida

Walter Cheatham, Wildlife Biologist, Ostego Bay Environmental, Inc.

Houston Cypress, President & Artistic Director, Otter Vision, Inc.; Co-Founder, Love the Everglades Movement

Courtney Davis, Florida Vegetable Sales Representative, Speedling, Inc.

Sarah Funck, Nonnative Fish and Wildlife Program Coordinator, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Margaret Guyette, Water Resource Data Manager, St. Johns River Water Management District

Katie Hallas, Environmental Administrator, Office of Agricultural Water Policy, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Basil Iannone, Assistant Professor, University of Florida School of Forest Resources and Conservation/Program for Resource Efficient Communities/Center for Landscape Conservation and Ecology

Scott Kihei, Law Enforcement Captain, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Audrey Kuipers, Program Manager, Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District

Jason Mathis, County Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship (CARES) Program Coordinator, Florida Farm Bureau Federation

Meredith Moreno, Archaeologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Maddie Southard, Program Manager, Florida Wildlife Corridor

Jessica Stempien, Environmental Administrator, Office of Agricultural Water Policy, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Phillip Stokes, Education Specialist, UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education

Donald Voss, Founder/Long-term Strategies, One Florida Foundation, Inc.

Patrick Walsh, Law Enforcement Academy Captain, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Matthew Wegener, Biological Scientist II, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Erika Zambello, Marine Economic and Tourism Development Resource Coordinator, Okaloosa County Tourism and Development Department

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