

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.



Clewiston: Agriculture South of Lake Okeechobee

Director's Corner Jonathan Dain

Clewiston lies on the southern edge of Florida's Lake Okeechobee. It owes its survival to a dike built around the lake that holds back the water. The area is home to some of the best freshwater fishing in the world. It is also home to highly productive agricultural enterprises that support the local economy and provide fresh vegetables and other agricultural commodities year-round. It is part of the Everglades system, a natural wonder whose existence depends on timely flows of fresh water and whose beauty has enchanted the world for decades. The water needs of the Everglades and the interests of multiple human stakeholders collide in and around Lake Okeechobee. It is a seemingly intractable conflict that has persisted for decades and flares up on a regular basis, each crisis hardening the positions and statements of the stakeholders it affects. Manage the "Lake O" system one way and the berm and all it protects are threatened; manage it another way and estuaries on east and west coasts are threatened as occurred recently. Trust among stakeholders seems minimal, and the Everglades system as a whole continues to show signs of collapse. There is no resolution in sight.

A short time after returning from Clewiston, I attended a talk by the Reverend Gary Mason of East Belfast, Ireland, a key figure in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement that established a lasting peace between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. Belfast is certainly not the Everglades, but I hoped to gain some insight into intractable conflicts from someone who had lived one. At the end of the talk, a student asked him about lessons learned that could be applied to other situations. He paused for a moment and said, "words are powerful things; be careful how you disagree with each other." He then talked about healthy disagreement and how they differ from name calling and the framing of issues in inflammatory ways. He concluded by saying "As a first step, criticize the ills of your own community and suggest better alternatives; it builds trust". I thought about this as I walked home. The Everglades is a problem born of human engineering and management that has forced interest groups into conflict with one another. I have no idea how to resolve it. Perhaps Reverend Mason's suggestion could be a start.



Lake Okeechobee. Photo by Jessica Ireland.



Photos from the Session 7 field trip: a tour of agricultural operations in the Clewiston area: US Sugar, Jackman wagu beef ranch, and C&B Farms. Photos by Jessica Ireland.

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Note: A heartfelt thank you to the alumni who have helped with recruiting this year; we have a full cohort for 2016-2017, and it promises to be a great class!

Natural Resources Focus: Agriculture South of Lake Okeechobee

Class XV convened in Clewiston March 10-12 for session 7. We visited Clewiston to learn about agricultural operations in the area, as well as the challenges of managing water south of Lake Okeechobee.

On Thursday, Jeff Sumner, Office Chief, State and Agricultural Policy, Office of Everglades Policy and Coordination, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), gave a presentation to the group on “Managing Water in South Florida: Past, Present, and Future Challenges.” Jeff provided an overview of Everglades history (pre-1950), the Central and Southern Florida Project, and the SFWMD Regulatory Programs. The overview served as context for what we would see and hear over the next two days.



Chuck Obern, C&B Farms, talks to Fellows about tailwater recovery systems on his farm. Photo by Jessica Ireland.

On Friday morning, Gene McAvoy, Hendry County Extension Director and NRLI alumnus, Class XIV, led the Fellows on a tour of agricultural operations, including US Sugar, Jackman Florida Natural Wagyu Beef Ranch, and C&B Farms. Producers explained the regulatory framework behind agricultural operations in the area and methods they use to meet targets.

Fellows spent the afternoon with stakeholders who joined us for a discussion regarding agriculture in the region.

Panel members included:

- ◆ Paul Gray, Okeechobee Science Coordinator, Audubon Society of Florida
- ◆ Mary Ann Martin, Roland Martin’s Marina & Resort
- ◆ Irene Kennedy Quincey, Pavese Law Firm
- ◆ Karson Turner, District 5 County Commissioner, Hendry County
- ◆ Chuck Obern, C&B Farms
- ◆ Ardis Hammock, Frierson Farms

For more detail on the session, please read the Fellows’ articles (pages 6-7) written by Class XV Fellows Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch and Ivan Vicente.



Sugarcane harvesting and replanting. Photo by Jessica Ireland.



Fellows observed a sugarcane burn while touring US Sugar properties. Photo by Jessica Ireland.

Curriculum Focus: Applying Mediation Strategies to Intervene in Disputes

Fellows participated in experiential training designed to accomplish the objectives of the Clewiston session which were to:

1. Explore the concept of mediation; practice planning for and engaging in a mediation conference.
2. Reflect on personal leadership goals for the next five years.
3. Explore the issue: agriculture south of Lake Okeechobee; meet with Clewiston stakeholders.

Introduction to Mediation

Mediation is an ideal focus for the final content session, as it ties together many of the NRLI skills, tools, and techniques that Fellows learned over the course of the year. Mediation is a process in which an impartial third party (a mediator) facilitates a discussion between two or more parties involved in a dispute. Mediation is an informal process with the objective of assisting the parties in reaching a mutually acceptable, voluntary agreement. A key aspect of mediation is that the mediator does not develop the agreement, but rather provides structure to the conversation and helps to identify areas of agreement and/or concern. In mediation, the parties are in control of all decision-making throughout the process, also known as party empowerment or self-determination. The steps in a mediation are:

1. Opening statement;
2. Uninterrupted time (parties' statements);
3. Exchange;
4. Separate meetings;
5. Exchange continued and agenda development;
6. Agreement building; and
7. Closure.

Mediation Role Play

On Saturday, Fellows participated in a mediation role play titled Clam Disaster in Cedar Key. In this scenario, a family of clam farmers in Cedar Key suffer a serious setback when an El Niño event dumps excessive amounts of fresh water into their clam leases in Cedar Key, resulting in a loss of their clam crop. The family had signed up for the USDA Non-insured Assistance Program (NAP) and has requested a mediation with the USDA in order to dispute the amount awarded to them through the NAP program; they believe they are owed more than they received.

To aid in preparing for the mediation, Fellows were encouraged to think about their party's interests, "Best Alternative to Negotiated Agreement" (BATNA), and "Worst Alternative to Negotiated Agreement" (WATNA), as well as the interests and BATNAs/WATNAs of the other parties in the mediation.

Four role plays were conducted concurrently, and following the mediations, Fellows reflected on the process, including what went well, what was challenging, what the outcome was, and lessons learned that Fellows can apply in their workplaces.

Leadership Goals: The Next 5 Years

Class XV will graduate from NRLI and become alumni of the program on April 8. Upon graduation, Fellows are equipped with the skills to facilitate collaborative dialogue and better manage contentious situations while addressing natural resources issues in Florida.

To engage Fellows in thinking about how they will carry their NRLI experience forward and apply what they've learned in their work, Paul Monaghan and Joy Hazell led a group activity focused on leadership goals. Fellows reflected on questions including:

- ◆ Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- ◆ What impact do you want to have?
- ◆ What skills or resources do you still need?
- ◆ What will have to happen in your organization?



Fellows discuss their leadership goals for the next 5 years. Photo by Jessica Ireland.



Fellows participate in a mock mediation during the Cook Clam Farm mediation role play. Photos by Jessica Ireland.

Session 7 Fellows' Articles

Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch (Class XV Fellow)

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 Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch & Ivan Vicente.

No matter what direction one came from, the dike was clearly visible when driving to Clewiston. The historic dike had been built to protect life and property. In the process, it had cut off waters flowing south to the "Everglades." Today, the state and federal government do all possible to fully control Lake Okeechobee. There are few compromises.

It was here, in this setting, that NRLI Class XV studied the topic "agriculture south of Lake Okeechobee," set personal five-year goals, and focused on practicing the tradeoffs of mediation.

What is mediation anyway, and how could it apply to a Fellows' future?

"Mediation," "negotiation," and "facilitation." All are terms studied and discussed over the past eight months. In simple terms, "facilitation" is defined as helping, improving, or making a process easier; "negotiation" is a bargaining process between two or more parties seeking to reach an agreement; and "mediation" is third-party intervention in a dispute in order to resolve it.

During the session, a few of the NRLI members showed interest in becoming professional mediators as Fellows have learned so many valuable tools that fall under mediation's umbrella.

We have learned a framework for understanding conflict; concepts such as the Roots of Conflict (relationships/values/structural/data issues) and the Triangle of Satisfaction (procedural/psychological/substantive interests and needs). We have also learned empathic listening, situation assessments, framing, and the pillars of negotiation, especially "separate the people from the problem!"

After study, Fellows were assigned the role-play, not of "sending water south from the lake to the Everglades," but "Clam Disaster in Cedar Key," and Fellows learned that NRLI tools are easier to learn sometimes than to apply!

Students role played mediator, Cooks' clam farm family, and USDA. We role-played a mediation for a claim for loss of clam crop due to the destructive waters of El Nino. It was a great hands on experience. An agenda was followed; ground rules were set; opening statements were made; caucuses were held; agreements were built; and closure was made--the structure of mediation was learned. All involved quickly learned that even with a pocket full of sharp NRLI tools, people don't always show their cards, and mediation is not always easy.

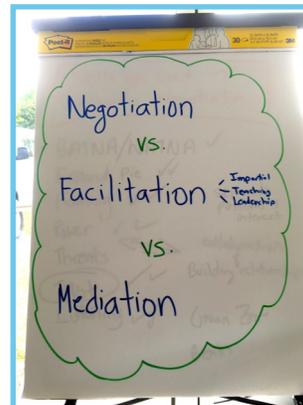
What was easy was to appreciate the history and complexity of Clewiston. Guest speaker Jeff Sumner, from the SFWMD, gave an excellent PowerPoint presentation of the history and politics of

draining Florida, the Swamp Act, Hamilton Disston, the great hurricanes, the Central and South Florida Project, and today's slow moving Central Everglades Restoration Plan.

Thursday evening, Fellows participated in a discussion entitled "The broader context of Lake O." Here, students discussed the complexities of protecting the Everglades Agricultural Area, or EAA, as this protection causes periodic destruction to the northern estuaries. Conversation centered on the conflicting interests of coastal communities and those south of the lake.

The following morning, Mr. Gene McAvoy of UF/IFAS and Mr. Les Baucum of U.S. Sugar Corporation led a remarkably rare and educational tour into the sugarcane fields of the Everglades Agricultural Area. Fellows drove in a bus through the sugarcane fields along the Miami Canal, witnessed a sugarcane burn, discussed soil science, and questioned water quality requirements. After visiting U.S. Sugar's muck land, Fellows also spent time at Jackman Ranch, a producer of wagu beef, and thereafter stopped in to see a partially organic vegetable farm not located in the EAA. Innovative and outspoken, Chuck Obern, owner of C&B Farms, gave great insight into the difficulties and expenses of compliance and what it takes to clean water on one's property.

Dusty Fellows returned to Roland Martin's Marina to a varied stakeholder panel consisting of Dr. Paul Grey, Mary Ann Martin, Irene Kennedy, Karson Turner, Chuck Obern, and Ardis Hammock. For the most part, the mood was one of solidarity. Many Fellows felt the NRLI experience at Clewiston with all of its complexities and layers of agriculture history was the highlight of the entire eight months. Perhaps some of us will be mediating there in the future?



Photos by Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch.

Session 7 Fellows' Articles

Ivan Vicente (Class XV Fellow)

The Sparrow that has stranded Noah's Ark

For 30 years, I've been following the progress of many endangered species recovery stories. During the past two decades, I have become heavily biased when supporting any given species recovery success. My biased position (in favoring whatever is best for the species) has been for the most part shaped by the instilled wildlife conservation values that I adopted in my early adolescent years. Even stories of an endangered fly would grasp my attention as I would cheer for its recovery success. But for the first time, my approach on an endangered species recovery has taken a surprising turn when I came across the case of the Cape Sable seaside sparrow.

Several NRLI sessions have covered endangered species conflicts, including the snail darter case, which ended in the Supreme Court, and the ongoing Florida manatee issues in Florida and Crystal River. After returning from Clewiston during the last session, I realized how the NRLI approach to some bio-political endangered species debates has affected my perception. With the Cape Sable seaside sparrow nesting season approaching in a few weeks, this debate's heat has been recently re-fueled by the clashing interests among several Everglades stakeholders, thus triggering my selection of this topic for my part on this month's NRLI newsletter.

After grasping as many facts as I possibly could find about the Cape Sable seaside sparrow, the case started to cause me a headache, provoked by perspectives I had not experienced in my past with other endangered species recovery projects—well, at least not before my NRLI experience began. The more I read, the more I focused on the burden this bird's specific requirements pose to the big picture of the Everglades restoration cause. Since the 14th of March, I've found myself scatterbrained at times in my attempts to avoid confusion triggered by the clash of what's best for the sparrow versus what's best for the overall Everglades ecosystem. But the pressure in my head was just an unfamiliar brain neuron party worth jamming to. I've realized that, this once, I have actually focused on interests instead of positions on my own views and the views of the stakeholders that are directly impacted by the sparrow's governing laws. In contrast, I had not done that so well in the manatee world in the past, but have also recently begun to explore new perspective and dimensions in Crystal River and the rest of Florida. Realizing that I've been separating personal passions from the problem, I've said to myself: "Apparently this NRLI brainwash has gotten to me and in a good way" – which is the reason why I signed up for NRLI in the first place. But because of all my devoted years working with endangered species recovery projects, I was still contending internally with what was more important to me: saving an endangered species or allowing the ideal allocation of water for an improved Everglades restoration?

To provide you with a glimpse of how difficult it's been to sympathize with a side (I've only managed to formulate an opinion so far), let's go over a few more details of how controversial this sparrow issue is. The root of the contention stems from the sparrow's specific water level requirements for successful nesting within parts of Everglades National Park, which coincide with the same areas where massive

amounts of water could be released to prevent discharging water into other controversial areas including the St. Lucie River and the Caloosahatchee River. These sparrows nest on the ground; actually, dry ground. One of the most important sparrow's nesting habitats is located at the southernmost part of the Everglades where it flows into Florida Bay. But only a few thousand of these sparrows remain at the southern portion of the Everglades—the second known population, in addition to the population located within Big Cypress swamp. Let's not forget that this sparrow is the only bird restricted entirely to the Everglades system.

But the challenges that these birds face do not end with just specific water levels. Other factors such as farming and fires affect the population as well. Nesting success rate is relatively low. The bird is short-lived with a lifespan of only 2-3 years. And some of the sparrow's Everglades subpopulations have decreased by 90% since Hurricane Andrew. There have already been controversial lawsuits over the sparrow's protection that show how powerful and limiting the Endangered Species Act (ESA) can be. One of the lawsuits reiterates how powerful some non-governmental organizations who keep the ESA under their watch truly are. Not to mention how much power their "watch" has over government agencies' decisions, somewhat putting government agencies against a wall when trying to structure a "best alternative to a negotiated agreement" (BATNA) with very limited room to play around the ESA.

In this case, we have yet to see what options could be invented for mutual gain. But, the reality so far shows that any decision to favor one side is at the sake of the other. There's one specific paragraph from a previously assigned NRLI reading that comes to mind with this case: "However well you understand the interests of the other side, however ingeniously you invent ways of reconciling interests, however highly you value an ongoing relationship, you will almost always face the harsh reality of interests that conflict. And no talk of 'win-win' strategies can conceal that fact" (Fisher & Ury, *Getting to Yes*, 2011).

Marta Reczko

Technical Assistance Specialist, Office of Environmental Resource Management, United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.



Marta Reczko was born and raised in Poland. In 2004, she received an MS Degree in Engineering Geology from Warsaw University. Right after the graduation, she immigrated to United States, and 2 years later, she received AA in Business Management from Long Island Business Institute in New York. She started her formal career as an Expeditor for construction and environmental permits for the New York Engineering Association (NYEA). After fast-paced working conditions in New York City, she decided to alter her career path and focus on environmental issues. She always had an interest and passion for environmental challenges that required global integration. Environmental issues and concerns have an effect on all of us, from what we do and how, to what we don't do.

In 2009, she started working for the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians in Florida as a Water Resources Manager. She had the pleasure and opportunity to be a part of the environmental team that is dedicated to protecting natural resources on Tribal Lands. She oversaw the work performance of water quality technicians, hydrologists, tribal contractors, and tribal consultants. She managed Tribal environmental programs and Tribal outreach programs. She was very proud of and grateful for the opportunity to work in the heart of the Florida Everglades, where she admired the alligators and learned how to drive an airboat. While at Warsaw University, she learned about the Everglades as the most unique and diverse among the world's large wetlands.

Her personal interest is to understand and learn about Native Americans' perspectives on natural resources and to restore and promote the healthy human-nature relationships. These healthy human-nature relationships are represented by Native Americans for centuries. Native Americans have relied on natural resources to sustain their families, communities, traditional ways of life, and cultural identities. Native American life is different today than it was centuries ago, but there is still a great degree of respectful and holistic relationships with land, water, air, wildlife, and plants. Working with the Miccosukee Tribe gave her exposure to environmental management and conservation as well as Native American custom and culture. Inspired by Native Americans' love of nature, she decided to continue her involvement with the environmental challenges that people are facing around the world, from water pollution to climate change. She is determined to continue her work for the people that belong to the environment and have a strong, healthy relationship with it.

Currently, she is a Technical Assistant Specialist for the Office of Environmental Resources Management at United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET). Established in 1969, USET is an intertribal organization that collectively represents 27 Tribal Nations at the regional and national level. Marta is dedicated to promoting Indian leadership, improving the quality of life for American Indians, and protecting Indian rights and resources on Tribal lands. Her position allows her to travel around 27 federally recognized Tribes that are located within 11 states in the southeast region of the U.S. She always enjoys travelling and exploring the world which gives her a sense of adventure and freedom and provides an opportunity to meet the people, taste the food, and make the memories.

Samantha Danchuk

Assistant Director, Broward County Environmental Planning and Community Resilience Division



Dr. Samantha Danchuk is a senior coastal engineer turned local government climate crusader. Since joining Broward County in 2014, she has overseen the update of the County's Climate Action Plan, coordinated the development of the Unified Sea Level Rise Projection for the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact, and served as chair of NOAA's Climate and Marine Resources Task Force. Dr. Danchuk earned a doctorate from Louisiana State University, a Masters from UC Berkeley, and a B.S. from Florida State University in the fields of environmental engineering and coastal modeling. She also coined the term "hurricane of resilience," in regards to the impressive multi-level, multi-directional, opportunistic approach to climate and community resilience Broward County has led over the past 10 years. As a senior coastal engineer, she has designed and managed the construction of multiple erosion control projects, developed comprehensive planning documents for coastal management, coordinated large scale emergency response efforts during the Deepwater Horizon spill, and conducted environmental and infrastructure risk assessments, as well as led a variety of complex coastal modeling studies. Her academic research has focused on interdisciplinary high performance computing applications in computational fluid dynamics, the fate and transport of petroleum hydrocarbons in the Lower Mississippi River Delta, shoreline transport algorithms, and modeling of oil- mineral aggregates.

NRLI Alumni Spotlight

Gene McAvoy

County Extension Director, Regional Vegetable Agent IV, UF/IFAS Hendry County Extension



Gene McAvoy was born in 1952 and raised in New Jersey – the Garden State. He worked on local farms picking vegetables while in high school to earn money to attend college. This was before worker protection standards (WPS) and many other labor laws and he has had first-hand experience with pesticide exposure and some agricultural labor issues.

Upon graduation from high school, he attended Rutgers University where he earned a BS in Agronomy. While attending university, Gene held a variety of on farm jobs working with both vegetables and agronomic crops and livestock as well as landscaping.

After graduation, Gene served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger, West Africa working with a village gardening project. After two years in Niger, he returned to New Jersey where he managed a tomato greenhouse operation in Wrightstown, New Jersey. After one year, Gene returned to Niger with USAID and worked as an agronomist with the Niger Cereals Project developing one of several regional seed farms.

On completion of a two year contract, Gene returned to Rutgers University and earned a Master's Degree in Horticulture while working as an Instructor in the Department of Horticulture where he developed, coordinated, and taught a six week intensive Vegetable Production and Marketing Short Course in addition to a developing and instructing a Seed Multiplication Course.

After earning his Master's degree, Gene accepted a contract with CARE as Project Director on the USAID Bushy Park Small Farmer Production and Marketing Project in Old Harbour, Jamaica where he spent the next seven years working with small vegetable producers.

On return to the U.S., he moved to Florida where he spent several years as an Environmental Health Specialist with the Florida Department of Health. Following this Gene accepted a contract with Chemonics International as Marketing / Farmer Organization Specialist on the CAPM - Commercial Agriculture Production and Marketing Project, in Swaziland, Southern Africa working with small vegetable growers.

After this Gene returned to Florida where he began working with the University of Florida as a Regional Specialized Vegetable/Horticulture Agent based in Hendry County. He has been in this position for the past eight years covering the five-county Southwest Florida area around Immokalee working primarily with the commercial vegetable industry. Nearly 75,000 acres of vegetables are produced in the Immokalee area, which is one of the largest vegetable production areas in Florida. He is active in a number of areas including pest and disease management publishing the biweekly South Florida Vegetable Pest and Disease Hotline, WPS compliance, worker safety training, Best Management Practices, and other areas of concern to the industry. He has earned regional and national recognition in the field and currently serves on the Florida Farm Bureau Vegetable Advisory Committee.

Looking Forward

Class XV Session 8

Session 8 will be held April 7-8 in Gainesville. During this final session, Fellows will present results of their practicum projects, receive their certificate of completion, and become NRLI alumni.

Congratulations, Class XV!

Class XVI (2016-2017)

Class XVI will commence in August 2016. To see a complete schedule, go to http://nrli.ifas.ufl.edu/NRLI_classXVI.shtml.

Class XV Fellows

Brad Austin, Co-Owner, Operator of Cindale Farms LLC

Angela Collins, Florida Sea Grant Extension Agent, UF/IFAS Extension/Sea Grant Manatee County

Samantha Danchuk, Assistant Director, Broward County Environmental Planning and Community Resilience Division

Lori Edwards, Supervisor of Elections, Polk County

Gretchen Ehlinger, Senior Technical Manager/Senior Biologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Planning & Policy Division Jacksonville District

Greg Harden, Field Representative, Florida Farm Bureau Federation

Andy Kohler, Land Management Specialist, St. Johns River Water Management District

Shelby Krantz, Coordinator, Southeast Climate Consortium, University of Florida

Jody Lee, Environmental Manager, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Agricultural Water Policy

Erin McDevitt, South Region Marine Habitat Coordinator, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation

Cheryl Millett, Biologist, The Nature Conservancy

Marta Reczko, Technical Assistance Specialist, Office of Environmental Resource Management, United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

Chad Rischar, Senior Project Manager, St. Johns River Water Management District

Fred Rondeau, FWC Captain, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Division of Law Enforcement

Angeline Scotten, Senior Wildlife Assistance Biologist, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation

Jason Spinning, Chief, Coastal Navigation Section, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Planning and Policy Division, Jacksonville District

Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch, Town Commissioner, Town of Sewell's Point

Nick Trippel, Research Associate, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Ivan Vicente, Visitor Services Specialist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Tracy Wyman, Graduate Landscape Architect, Gulf Coast Community Design Studio

NRLI Project Team

Jonathan Dain
Bruce Delaney
Jessica Ireland
Joy Hazell
Paul Monaghan

Contact us:

Jessica Ireland
NRLI Program Coordinator
P.O. Box 110240
Gainesville, FL 32611-0240
Phone: 342-294-7643
E-mail: jjtireland@ufl.edu



Collaborative solutions for natural resource challenges