

SESSION 7

PALATKA

Aquifer Drawdown for Urban and Agricultural Uses

Welcome to Palatka and Lakes of Northeast Florida

Palatka lies along the banks of the St. Johns River and there appears to be an abundance of water. Travelling west, one encounters a series of lakes that run along a higher elevation spine known as the Trail Ridge. On the eastern portion of the ridge are a series of lakes that are part of the Etonia Chain which include Lake Brooklyn and Lake Geneva. A short distance farther west lies Lake Santa Fe. The contrast between the “state of water” for Brooklyn and Geneva Lakes is stark in comparison to Lake Santa Fe. The reasons for this contrast and the potential solutions to the associated water issues are both complex and far reaching.

This issue

Understanding Conflict P.2

Context Speaker P.3

Drama By the River P. 3

Weedon Island Day 2 P.4

Reading Discussion P.5

Stakeholder Panel P. 6

Understanding Conflict Pt. 2 P.7

Day 3 P. 8

Debrief and Feedback P. 9



Aquifer Drawdown for Urban and Agricultural Uses

The “conflict management” curriculum focus for this session held in and around Palatka was “intervening in disputes” and allowed us to explore mediation and third party interventions as well as strategies for working with elected officials. The session objectives were to:

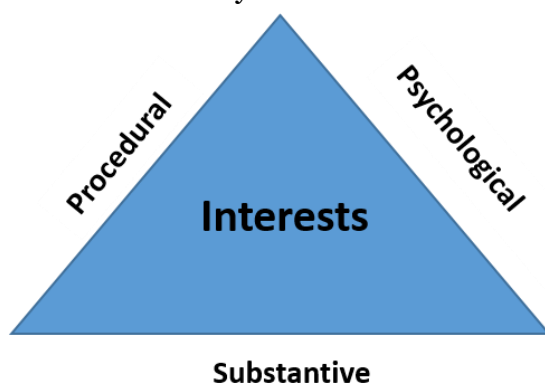
- Practice planning for and engaging in a mediation conference;
- Explore strategies for effectively interacting with elected officials;
- Visit several lakes in Keystone Heights and hold discussion with associated stakeholders and;
- Reflect on personal leadership goals for the next 5 years.

Day 1: Framework for Understanding Conflict

Negotiation Planning

Paul Monaghan, Joy Hazell, and Jon Dain of the NRLI Project Team walked the NRLI class through a “preparation approach” to negotiation and highlighted the value of analysis and planning. After reflection on key concepts and principles from earlier sessions including the Triangle of Satisfaction, the Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA) and Worst Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement (WATNA), Fellows were encouraged to consider other party’s BATNAs and WATNAs before entering into a negotiation.

To apply these planning principles, the class undertook a role-play titled: “Unhappy Trails – Advocacy Strategic Choice Exercise”. The storyline centered on how to approach negotiation over the contentious issue of a proposed a rail-to-trail parkway. The primary stakeholders in the case were private property owners along the rail-to-trail route, the rail trust company, and park staff from the county where the land is located. The class was divided into groups tasked with readying for and entering into a process whereby a negotiated agreement would be sought. Each group had defined interests and needed to work through a series of questions under these four categories: Political Strategy; Legal Strategy; Negotiation Strategy; and Strategic Choice. The exercise was highly thought-provoking and played into the personal values and interests of the class. One could almost hear the park staff sing the Beatles tune “Come Together” in their desire to connect their bookend parks, while the adjacent property owners were shouting out “Not in My Backyard!”, and the rail trust staff were likely humming in wishful reflection Johnny Cash’s “Folsom Prison Blues” and its lyric - I hear that train a comin’...



The Triangle of Satisfaction – There are three types of Interests (Moore 2014)

Context Speaker:

John Herbert, Senior Hydrologist, On-Point Associates, LLC

Mr. Herbert gave the class a lesson in Florida water history and hydrology including background on how much of Florida was once wetlands, population trends, water use and reuse, stakeholders and data, the expanse of the Floridan and Biscayne Aquifers and those that take into that subsurface water supply from multiple states. Several points caught the class’s attention including: The greatest process/loss of water is through evapotranspiration, followed by river discharge, and then water withdrawals of all types; 58.7% of residential water consumption is for outdoor use; overall Florida water use in 2005 broke down as 14% freshwater from surface water, 23% freshwater from aquifers, and 63% salt water (primarily for utility company use). Mr. Herbert went on to provide details about the Floridan aquifer and the interfaces between the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) and the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD). He also reviewed the direct connectivity of the aquifer with a number of lakes in the Keystone Heights area and their water depth woes, and described various attempts to better manage the water resource for the long-term. In particular, he noted the contentious issue of establishing minimum flows and levels (MFLs) as a set of criteria that will determine how to measure whether a water body remains healthy. Mr. Herbert indeed set the stage for our better appreciation of what we would see and for understanding the varying interests that would be expressed by stakeholders during our Friday field trip.

Reading Discussion

Fellow Tonya Clayton lead this sessions' reading discussion. Ms. Clayton leveraged full class-room participation and used techniques like stacking as she walked us through an insightful use of the Gradients of Agreement Scale (Kaner 2007) in reaching towards unanimity. She took use through a well-organized session that helped clarify the difference between “consensus” and “unanimity” as endpoints. The intent of the gradients of agreement scale is to guide a discussion and gauge where people are at in their level of support in a nuanced way rather than with an absolute “yes” or “no”. She led us through three quick example exercises to drive home the approach which yielded a variety of group outcomes and facilitated deeper learning.

Ms. Clayton then teed up “the anatomy of a structured mediation session”. Teams of two each took one of the eight “parts” of the anatomy of mediation, discussed it then presented it back to the class. Once again using props for creative emphasis, Tonya drove home her points in an effective way. A main take-home message was that thorough preparation stepping into mediation is a key factor for success.

To facilitate further reflection on the readings during our three days together, Tonya set up a “post-it corner” for classmates to post their thoughts on the two remaining readings: “One of the Largest Water-Use Permits Granted to JEA”, and; “Water District Mulls Options for Parched Keystone Area Lakes”.

Day 2: Field Trip and Stakeholder Panel

Field Trip Part 1:

Lake Brooklyn and Lake Geneva; Lakes in Distress

After breakfast, Fellows loaded into two vans and traveled to the town of Keystone Heights. There, they met up with Vivian Katz and Dr. Pat Welsh from the local Save Our Lakes organization. Ms. Katz and Dr. Welsh described the area’s geology and how its lakes were connected directly to the top of the Floridan Aquifer, serving as visual indicators of its level and health. The Fellows then toured the area and were shown the severely low and almost dried up Lakes Brooklyn and Geneva while witnessing first-hand the impact the low lake levels were having on the town’s economy. When asked what was causing the low water levels, Dr. Welsh explained that lake levels fluctuate with the level of aquifer and were part of the normal hydrologic cycle, but due to over-withdrawal in recent years, the lakes are not recovering.



Dr. Pat Welsh and Ms. Vivian Katz of the Save Our Lakes organization talk to Class XIII Fellows in Keystone Heights.

Field Trip Part 2: Santa Fe Lake

Next, Fellows travelled approximately 10 miles as the crow flies to the little town of Melrose to view and discuss Santa Fe Lake on the edge of Melrose Bay. In stark contrast to the lakes in Keystone Heights, they found this lake full of water and life. Here, Jill McGuire from the Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association explained that the difference between Lakes Santa Fe, Brooklyn and Geneva, is that under Lake Santa Fe there is a layer of clay separating the bottom of the lake from the underlying aquifer, preventing its water level from fluctuating. Fellows were also fortunate enough to watch several fishermen catch largemouth bass: truly a product of a healthy lake!

After enjoying a delicious picnic lunch from Blue Water Bay restaurant in the sun and on the shore, Fellows and the Project Team returned to the hotel to prepare for the Stakeholder Panel.

Stakeholder Panel

The Stakeholder Panel was moderated by Fellow Chandra Bowden and consisted of four representatives from the surrounding area:

- Webb Farber- Save Our Lakes Organization; has lived on Lake Brooklyn for more than 30 years
- Jim Gross- Technical Programs Manager for St. John's Water Management District; has a background in geology and 38 years experience in water resources, focused on long term supply
- Thomas Harper- Harper Farms; beef cattle farmer with an engineering background and member of a regional water working group
- Mary Lou Hildreth- Former Mayor of Keystone Heights, has lived on Lake Geneva for more than 10 years and served as the town's mayor for eight years

Most of the stakeholder panel discussion centered on water policies, specifically Minimum Flow Levels and the processes needed to reach suitable solutions. All the stakeholders agreed that proper facilitation was the key to the success of the Regional Working Groups and any solutions will have to fit the problem. The discussion wrapped up with more or less a general consensus of 'everyone is motivated by crisis'.

Stakeholder Panel Debrief and "Working with elected officials"

In response to the outstanding early March weather, Project Team Member Jon Dain made the call to have the stakeholder panel debrief outside by the hotel pool. Fellows recounted the key points and their observations of the discussion and discussed how they could be applicable to their practicums and careers; all while soaking up some Florida sun!

Following the Stakeholder Panel Debrief, the Fellows moved quickly into a pseudo panel discussion on how to work with elected officials. The panel consisted of Tim Smith; Putnam County's Clerk of the Courts and former Mayor of Palatka, Robert Hutchinson; Alachua County Board of County Commissioners, and our very own Project Team Member Bruce Delaney; who, in this capacity, recounted his experiences as Mayor of Gainesville. While the discussion included real life experiences from each of the panel members, it mostly focused on the process and parameters within which elected officials must operate. Specifically mentioned was the 'Sunshine Law'. Its importance was described, but so was how it can constrain the process, often delaying progress.

Day 3: Introduction to Mediation; Debrief & Feedback

Introduction to Mediation

The NRLI Project Team briefly reviewed and discussed the eight steps of structured mediation: Opening Statement; Uninterrupted Time; The Exchange; Separate Meetings; Setting the Agenda; Building the Agreement; Writing the Agreement, and; The Closing Statement. The role of a mediator is to promote civil discussion between the parties that allows them self-determination on all relevant issues brought out and discussed. The mediator can help create the conditions for agreement and self-determination, but cannot drive the agreement.

Bruce and Jon then introduced the next interactive role-play session titled “Clam Disaster in Cedar Key.” The class divided up so that three separate mediation sessions were held using the same simulation story. Characters/Stakeholders included a mediator, Mr. & Mrs. Cook - who own a family clam business, and USDA representatives from the Agency’s Non-Insured Assistance Program. This hands-on mediation process exercise was a great learning experience for all participants in that we lived our roles and the emotion and passion behind them. It also linked into our knowledge and appreciation of the clam industry after our earlier session in Cedar Key. Many of us in the group also had agency staff or UF Links to the area. The need to be well prepared and respect all parties in the mediation was clearly reinforced as a result of this mediation simulation and learning session.

Debrief & Feedback

Dr. Gina Ralph led the final debrief session by using a series of questions that led the group through the agenda and drew out key take-home messages. Several class members leveraged the acronym MLATNA (Most-Likely Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement) that Paul Monaghan had mentioned. Regarding the field trip, classmates reported observing stakeholder passion, complexity of the issues and appreciation/recognition of that complexity, aquifer connectivity (direct connection with sand chimneys vs. “lovely bottom” peat and/or clay seal). When reflecting on the elected official session, it was noted that each elected official is an individual and you have to get to know them; each has specific ways that they can be reached to facilitate listening to a particular constituent and engaging in their issue.

Ms. Holly Edmond, Ms. Gina Ralph, and Mr. Bob Buschbacher led the feedback panel session. They reached back to the Gradients of Agreement scale to fully engage the class in assessing our food, location (lodging and meeting room), negotiation activity, context speaker, reading discussion, field trip, stakeholder panel, elected officials discussion, and mediation exercise. Congratulations to the feedback panel for keeping the class engaged at the eleventh hour on the last day of our Palatka session and in leveraging this activity as an energizer. Speaking of energizers, our class clearly sees the value in taking a pause from the routine to pump up the participants because one feedback comment that had unanimous class support was that we were short on “Dain” energizers in Palatka... The class also asks for the NRLI Project Team to discuss more real-life examples to supplement the role playing to enhance and reinforce the learning experience. Finally, since several meals ran late this session, more flexibility in the post-dinner sessions or events may be appropriate (lesson learned).