

Ocala to Osceola

October 8-10, 2009

NATIONAL FOREST ECOLOGICAL GREENWAY: COORDINATION OF FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL AND PRIVATE EFFORTS

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*This report forms part of a series
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*Reports represent and are a product
of the experiential learning process
that is a highlight of the NRLI pro-
gram and have not been formally
peer reviewed.*

WELCOME TO ORANGE PARK

This Third NRLI Session brought us to Orange Park just southwest of Jacksonville, Florida. This area is very typical of a "fringe" environment where a forest edge and Urban setting run right up to and inter-connect with each other. The Courtyard Marriott in Orange Park, hosted us in this not so rustic setting. Although not the most scenic setting it helped illustrate this session's theme of the wildland-urban interface and its issues.

We were met by June Coreless, Clay County Extension Director for a brief overview of the challenges faced in an Urban interface area. These numerous and interrelated challenges include factors such as; sharing borders with other larger counties, growth in population and development, competing user groups, large commuter population, tax base shifting, and high foreclosure rate, which together give the Wildland-Urban interface its unique qualities.



*June Coreless, CED for Clay County, welcomes the Fellows to the county during the opening session in Orange Park.
Photo by Candy Kaswinkel*

PICTURE FRONT PAGE: Jennings State Forest in Clay County is one link in the effort to develop a greenway between the Ocala and Osceola National Forests.

INTRODUCTION TO NEGOTIATION

An introduction to negotiation instruction session by Jon Dain helped to prepare us all for a practice session where we were able to utilize the skills necessary to negotiate from positions that we had never expected. The skills learned in this exercise were along the lines of what some of us may take for granted but only got better with practice such as preparation is everything or trying to figure out the other sides interest. This was summed up beautifully with the "Four Principles of Negotiation": Separate the people from the problem, focus on interests not positions, expand benefits for mutual gain, and use measurable and verifiable goals that are enforceable. We also were introduced to important concepts such as BATNA (Best alternative to a negotiated agreement) and WATNA (Worst alternative to a Negotiated Agreement).

The Culture of Negotiations could also be metaphorically viewed as an iceberg with little above water to be easily seen and a lot under the surface that may not be known. The importance of negotiating ethically was also discussed.



*NRLI Fellows participate in exercises to help them better understand the processes of negotiation
Left: Phil D'Amo and Paul Monaghan work together on negotiation skills.*

*Right: Tom Ostertag and Chris Johns brainstorm positions a person in Negotiations may take
Photos by Candy*



THE "O2O" AND THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA GREENWAY PROJECT



Photo by Candy Kaswink

Peggy Carr talks with the group about the process used to identify and prioritize critical habitat linkages across the state of Florida and how this information have been used to plan and implement eco-

We were then introduced to the Ocala to Osceola Ecological Greenway Project (the "O2O") by Peggy Carr – Associate Dean, College of Design, Construction and Planning, University of Florida. As we learned from the last session, there were a number of different ecological greenway efforts underway across the state of Florida through the Florida Ecological Greenways Network. Although these efforts have common broad goals and objectives, each one involves different sets of stakeholders and different social, economic and environmental issues. Last month we learned about the

Northwest Florida Greenway.

The O2O is located in northeast Florida and crosses parts of Duval, Clay, Baker and Bradford counties. The overall goal of the O2O is to conserve land that lies between the Ocala National Forest in north central Florida and the Osceola National Forest in northeast Florida. A primary reason for the creation of the greenway is to protect wildlife habitat and prevent habitat loss and fragmentation. Many wildlife species, such as the Florida black bear, are particularly vulnerable to habitat fragmentation. Key linkages for black bear habitat between the Ocala and Osceola forests have been identified by researchers, and these linkages have helped define the parameters of the O2O greenway. If the O2O project were fully achieved, it would span approximately 200 miles and contain almost two million acres of conservation lands.

We learned from Peggy Carr about the process that was used to identify and prioritize critical habitat linkages across the state of Florida, and how this information in turn has been used to plan and implement ecological greenway projects.

As we saw in the last session, the process of planning and imple-

menting an ecological greenway requires the consideration and inclusion of a multitude of diverse stakeholder interests. The remaining critical linkages will require a great deal of negotiation and cooperation among stakeholder groups.

One critical linkage in the O2O is the "Camp Blanding to Osceola Greenway", a subproject of the greater O2O effort. This has been proposed as a critical linkage that would involve contribution of conservation lands by a military site. This land has been listed on the state's Florida Forever land acquisition "A" list and is currently under negotiation. The movements of panther # 62 across highways that can be deadly for the panther, illustrated the difficulty animals have when habitat is fragmented. Perhaps it also illustrates that when growth does not consider natural systems and ecological greenways in the design process the resulting habitat fragmentation creates costly and complex problems to overcome.



After dinner we returned to our meeting room to enjoy a 15 minute DVD called "When Nature is at Your Doorstep" a video about the Wildlands/Urban Interface which made us all want to buy a home in the Wildland/Urban Interface! Despite the allure of being happy hobby farmers, we learned that it is often costly and impractical to deliver services outside of municipal service boundaries. Additionally, homeowners in the WUI often contribute to the growing problems of habitat fragmentation, the introduction of invasive species, erosion, onsite sewage disposal system pollution and others. To request a copy of the video (VHS or DVD) contact Nicole Wulff at (352) 378-2451 or nmwulff@fs.fed.us You can also view the video online at <http://www.forestryvideos.net/videos/when-nature-is-at-your-doorstep>.



LEFT: Steve Miller with the SJRWMD talks with the NRLI Fellows about the importance of Jennings State Forest and the "O2O" Greenway.

RIGHT: Heather Venter and Frank Burley stand in a palmetto patch on the edge of forest with butts up against a sub-division. to discuss the impacts of wildland-urban interface and the problems they face in maintaining the forest ecosystem.

Photos by Candy Kaswinkel



After a great nights sleep in these excellent accommodations we were up for some breakfast before meeting with the St. John's River Water Management District (SJRWMD) team in the parking lot where we loaded up and headed out on our field-trip to Jennings State Forest which comprises part of the O2O Ecological Greenway. With over sixty miles of boundary, Jennings State Forest is an excellent case study in the wildland-urban interface. One and a half million people live within a one-hour drive of the forest and there are a number of subdivisions and high traffic roads that abut the forest.

Fieldtrip:

Our field trip to Jennings State Forest was guided by Steve "Torch" Miller from SJRWMD. Steve is also an Alumnus of NRLI, Class VII. This state forest is located on the northeastern side of the O2O, and therefore is in close proximity to the Jacksonville metropolitan region. We heard and saw specific examples of the wildland-urban interface issues that arise from this proximity of a natural area to an urban area (see page 6)

The O2O corridor lies just to the west of a densely populated urban region that includes many areas where urbanization and development have been continuing at a fairly rapid pace. The expansion of urban areas into forested and other natural areas is referred to as the wildland-urban interface (or WUI). Many complex issues arise at the WUI, and research has shown that these issues can generally be grouped into the following categories:

- ◇ demographic changes,
- ◇ diverse public attitudes and perceptions,
- ◇ economic and taxation issues,
- ◇ land-use planning and policy,
- ◇ land-use change,
- ◇ changes to ecosystems,
- ◇ risks from increased human influences, and
- ◇ lack of public education about natural resource issues.

The issues related to the WUI create many challenges for natural resource managers, such as increased difficulty in the use of prescribed burns. They also involve many complex interconnections among economic, social and environmental factors that, of course, are related to the interests of diverse stakeholder groups. We saw first hand the difficulty in managing the many legal and illegal vehicle access points and the challenge that prescribed burning presents when it is adjacent to homes. In addition, the destruction of Bay trees from a non-native ambrosia beetle was evident.



Top Left: Nicole Wulff of the US Forest Service presents the overview of the Changing Roles: WUI Professional Development Program on Friday.



Middle: Joy Hazell and Adrienne Dessy work on an Changing Roles activity as Jon Dain and Kristina Jackson (NRLI Alumna class II) look on.



Bottom Left: A house that sits on the edge of Jennings State Forest shows an example of wildland-urban interface.

Photos by Candy Kaswinkel

Stakeholder Panel



Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

Stakeholder Panel seated Left to Right: Mike Webster, Ray Bunton, Hallie Stevens, Busy Shires Byerly, Paul Catlett and Carl Petrick.

Our afternoon stakeholder panel discussion focused on the status and potential of acquiring the linkages within the O2O. The panel was made-up of 6 stakeholders: Carl Petrick; US Forest Service, Ray Bunton, Director – Division of Land Acquisition for SJRWMD; Paul Catlett, Forest Area Supervisor for Camp Blanding; Busy Shires-Byerly, Executive Director, Conservation Trust for Florida; Hallie Stevens, The Nature Conservancy; and Mike Webster, Former Board Member of Florida Wildlife Federation. Many issues were discussed on the methods and validity of attaining such large tracts of land. It was clear that with all the battles to attain or purchase land that good relationships between the parties involved is vital. Although there are competing interests among the stakeholders there is enough common ground to promote the overall goals of the greenway. Ginger Adair did an excellent job of keeping the stakeholders and fellows engaged in the discussion.

Focus Groups

Late in the afternoon on Friday, we became participants in a Focus Group dealing with Agriculture and Natural Resource Issues in Florida. The focus group was led by Angie Lindsey and Karen Cannon, Department of Agricultural Education and Communication, UF/IFAS.

Our group had no shortage of opinions to share and Angie and Karen called the focus group a success, if for no other reason except to get away from us!

Focus Groups: Purpose, Methods and Applications

After breakfast on Saturday, we discussed what focus groups are, why they can be an effective tool, and how to conduct one. Laila Racevskis provided a summary of Focus Groups: Purpose, Methods and Applications.

We learned the steps for planning and conducting a focus group:

- Planning
- Recruiting
- Moderating
- Analysis and Reporting

After the Focus Group discussion the NRLI Team described the Practicum Process and design of the Practicum in more detail.

Steps in the process discussed included:

1. Set goals and objectives
2. Identify partners
3. Identify resources
4. List action / permission steps
5. Determine risks
6. Determine desired outcomes / results
7. Determine measurement tools
8. Reporting to employer / citizens, etc.

The concept of envisioning an outcome and working the process

backwards may be a useful tool when designing a practicum process. Additionally, we discussed designing a successful meeting process. Finally, the goal of having our practicum completed by March or well enough underway to provide an interim report.

R: Angie Lindsey leads the Fellows in a Focus Group exercise dealing with Agriculture and Natural Resource issues in Florida



Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

THIS AND THAT



Friday evening dinner was at [The Blu Grotto Trattoria and Pizzeria](#), local restaurant where we all enjoyed a delicious meal in a very nice setting.



Jon Dain prepares one of his infamous “low tech, no tech” presentations.



A number of the NRLI Fellows enjoyed a series of late night, pool-side, in depth philosophical discussions.



Hey, Jon, what’s with the pumpkin?

DEBRIEF AND FEEDBACK

The debrief session was led by Tom Ostertag. Tom skillfully, helped stimulate a full discussion of the previous days events and allowed the class to share insights that led to a greater appreciation of the session by all.

Feedback Panel

The feedback panel was enjoyed by all (at the expense of the very generous and self effacing NRLI team). NRLI Fellow Will Miller, Paul Monaghan and Ginger Adair did a great job spoofing focus groups and stakeholder panels. When the NRLI team was asked to serve on a mock focus group and stakeholder panel the NRLI Fellow made sure that the questions asked were not only impossible to answer but any attempt to answer was met with disrupting applause in style of a corporate motivation meeting.

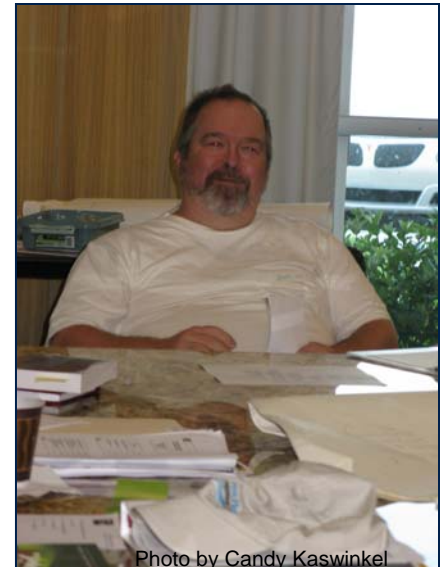


Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

Tom Ostertag leads the debrief session during the final day in Orange Park



Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

Paul Monaghan and Ginger Adair spoof focus groups and stakeholder panels during the Fellows Feedback session

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