

STEINHATCHEE

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WORKING WATERFRONTS COMMUNITIES: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COASTAL ACCESS



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Photo on front by Jon Dain

*This report forms part of a series
written by current NRLI Fellows.*

*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 and Overview



Clay Olsen, CED for Taylor County welcomes the Fellows to Steinhatchee and gives an overview of the county's dynamics

NRLI Session Four brought Fellows to the banks of the beautiful Steinhatchee River, for a one-of-a-kind weekend. Fellows traveled to the southernmost point of Taylor County, to the unincorporated town of Steinhatchee to discuss the decreasing public access to the waterfront.

Clay Olsen, UF/IFAS Extension Agent for Taylor County, welcomed Fellows to the county that prides itself on having the longest coastline of any in the state. Mr. Olsen provided an overview of the population, employment, and per capita income of residents in the county. Taylor County has been designated a "rural area of economic concern" by the State of Florida, having some of the highest unemployment rates in the state.

We wrapped up the introductions and welcome with a mid-program review discussion with NRLI project team member Jon Dain. Fellows walked through where Class IX been and where we are going.

Working Waterfronts and Coastal/River Access

On Thursday afternoon, Linda Lampl, of Lampl-Herbert Consultants, and Melody Cox, Grants Coordinator for Taylor County, helped to provide the foundation for our weekend discussion on working waterfronts and coastal access.

Steinhatchee has limited public access to the Steinhatchee River and the Gulf of Mexico. For over eight years, Ms. Cox, Ms. Lampl, Taylor County, and the residents and business owners of Steinhatchee, have been working to obtain the property to construct a public boat ramp in their community. Without sufficient public access, there are severe economic impacts on a community that is struggling to survive.

During the most recent real estate boom, several marinas in the community were sold to developers leaving only two operating marinas in Steinhatchee where boaters are able to dock their vessels, fuel up, and grab the necessary bait before cruising out to the Gulf of Mexico.

During the property value boom earlier in this decade, properties in the community were bought by out of town individuals who have access to



Linda Lampl (above left) and Melody Cox (above right) speak with the fellows about the access problems in Steinhatchee and the effects of this to the community. Photos by Candy Kaswinkel

the water but were not enthusiastic about having a boat ramp, and the problems associated with boat ramps, near their property.. **Waterfronts**
(continued on next page)

Waterfronts. (continued from page 2) Finally, residents of the community believe that when it comes to the county commission their voice is not heard. Some believe the current focus of the commission is the incorporated city of Perry and the construction of a new multi-million dollar sports complex.

In 2008, Steinhatchee, the “scallop capital” of Florida, was designated a working waterfront by the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program. A working waterfront community is a community with: (1) businesses that need direct access to waterways, docks and/or ramps, (2) a direct connection between loading docks and roadways, and (3) access to specialized support services. A Working Waterfront is considered to be an area traditionally used for fish processing, selling fuel dockside, and boat repair.

In addition, in Steinhatchee, there is a weakened commercial fishing industry, increased pressure for private development in waterfront areas, escalated property taxes and reduced public access. Partnership programs have been established to assist working waterfront communities, including the Waterfront Florida Partnership Program and the Coastal Partnership Initiative. Waterfront Florida Partnership Program provides a \$25,000.00 grant to the community designated a working waterfront, grant training and other support. Coastal Partnership Initiative provides grants and matching funds to local governments

of coastal counties with a focus on access, stewardship, and working waterfronts.

Ms. Lampl provided several examples of remedies and solutions for working waterfront communities in Florida. Mayport Village, a working waterfront in Duval County and a traditional shrimp boat area, has drafted a planning document which requires proposed plan amendments to consider their impact to the shrimp and commercial fishing industry. Tarpon Spring, a working waterfront in Pinellas County, recently recognized food production as a local activity in their comprehensive plan. Franklin County, a working waterfront in the northwestern panhandle, received a grant from the State of Florida’s Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development to complete a feasibility study. The feasibility study paved the way for Franklin County’s Tourism Development Council to purchase property and construct a boat ramp for public access to the waterfront.

The community of Steinhatchee, as well as Ms. Cox, Ms. Lampl and others will continue to look for ways to gain public access to the waterfront.

Listening: the Core Skill



NRLI Fellows work together on the Listening exercise during the first day of Session 4. Several groups took advantage of the beautiful day and worked outside. Photos by Candy Kaswinkel.

We wrapped up the afternoon with a core skill session led by NRLI project team member, Marta Hartmann. The afternoon core skill session involved THE most important skill in life – communication. The most important element of being a good communicator is being a good listener. Fellows participated in an interactive group exercise to improve listening skills. Following the group activity, fellows discussed the five levels of listening – ignoring, pretending, selecting, attentive, and empathic.

Field Trip on the Steinhatchee River

Friday began with an field trip on the Steinhatchee River where we were shown several sites that were under consideration to have a public boat ramp built. The weather was perfect for boating and we were given a great tour by our excellent captains; each of whom was a local fishing guide. Our field trip took us on an enjoyable boat tour of Steinhatchee via the river where we got to view several locations that had been considered as sites for public access boat ramps. Discussion of the positive and negative qualities of each site ensued as we took in the scenery. We saw the one public ramp that was on the opposite side of the river. The site is plagued with several problems, two big ones are that there is no parking and it is only wide enough for a single boat to launch at a time. Adequate parking is a major issue for many of the proposed sites.

After we viewed several proposed sites we were treated to a tour of the extensive grass flats located just off the coast. Through the crystal clear water we could see several species of grass along with some sea life. One noticeable thing missing from the scenery was development. Several large conservation areas are located around Steinhatchee resulting in no noticeable development for miles along the coast.

The tour was capped off by a talk with Sherry Powell, an owner of a local marina, who gave us her perspective as a private business owner who launches boats for a fee. She noted how quickly the boom hit their area and how many public access ramps were sold to private entities



Top: One of the proposed boat ramps the county is proposing to open to the public. Bottom: Sea grass bed near the mouth of the Steinhatchee River. Photos by Greg Lang

Stakeholder Panel



Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

Left: Stakeholder Panel discusses the access problem in Steinhatchee with the NRLI Fellows. Pictured L to R: Steve Kroll, Pepperfish Key Charters; Jack Brown, Taylor County Administrator; Fred Shore, Gulf Breeze Properties; Jim Hunt, Pelican Pointe Hotel and Fiddler's Restaurant; Lt. Bruce Cooper, Fish and Wildlife Service; and Rhoda Moehring, local resident and member of the Steinhatchee Waterfronts committee.

Next was the stakeholder panel discussion involving 6 stakeholders representing various local perspectives of the public access issue. . **Stakeholder** (cont on page 5)

Framing: A Look at Different Perspectives

Afterwards, our training discussion was focused on the topic of framing. The discussion was led by Jon-Dain. He introduced us to the concept of framing and then we had a brief discussion about how the issue of public boat ramp access was framed by the different panel members. Jon explained how framing can be used both positively and negatively and went into greater detail of just what frames is which methods of framing an issue are most effective.

Drama By The River

We then moved on to the “Drama by the River” activity. This was a tale filled with juicy controversial drama capped off with group discussion that effectively demonstrated how different people can have very different values and opinions. We discussed what values are and discovered that they can be very challenging to define. The “Cognitive Hierarchy Framework” was introduced to illustrate how values fit into our lives and determine our actions. A simple exercise involving words written on note cards and prioritizing of those cards was used to demonstrate how complicated it can become to balance and prioritize competing diverse values.



Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

Above: Burl Long and Laila Racevskis set the scene for the “Drama by the River” activity.

Dinner by the Gulf

After our Drama by the River activity, we were treated to another activity by the river that was, thankfully, drama free. Jim Hunt graciously opened his beautiful riverfront home to us and hosted a dinner consisting of copious amounts of delicious seafood he prepared himself. As we ate and chatted we took in the beautiful river scenery visible from his outdoor kitchen/ dining area. It was an extremely entertaining time and one of the most memorable evenings we’ve had thus far.



Stakeholder (cont from page 4) The panel members were: Steve Kroll, a local charter fisherman (and one of the guides from the morning’s fieldtrip); Jack Brown, a Taylor County Administrator; Fred Shore, a local developer; Jim Hunt, a member of the Steinhatchee Chamber of Commerce and our gracious host for the evening’s festivities; Bruce Cooper, a Florida Fish and Wildlife officer; Rhoda Moehring, a local resident and member of Steinhatchee Waterfronts organization.

Our stakeholder panel discussion was moderated by Will Miller who did an effective job of facilitating discussion and making sure all panel members were engaged by using timely leading questions

Practicum Plan Discussion

Saturday morning, began with a beautiful sunrise and hearty breakfast. After refueling, fellows met with our practicum team and mentor to discuss practicum plans. During the practicum plan discussion, fellows had the opportunity to discuss with their mentor the “four P’s” of the practicum: purpose, people, process, and progress.

At right: Chris Johns and Staci Braswell discuss their practicum during the Saturday morning session.



Effective Meetings: Agenda Design and Planning

Although we were running a few minutes behind Saturday morning, NRLI project team member Bruce Delaney kicked off a session on Effective Meetings: Agenda, Design and Timing. Fellows discussed meetings that were not successful due to lack of planning. Some reasons for unsuccessful meetings included lack of agenda, lack of order, no breaks, and lack of key decision makers. Fellows agreed, when a meeting is not successful it leaves those in attendance frustrated.

After discussing what doesn't



Above: Adrienne Dessy, Chris Johns, Shenley Neeley and Joy Hazell work together on Effective Meetings activity. Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

work in planning a meeting, fellows had the opportunity to break out in groups of four to plan a successful meeting. Ideally, when someone looks at a meeting agenda they should be able to determine the location, date, start time and end time of the meeting, and objective of the meeting. The moral of the story...a successful meeting takes a lot of time and preparation on the front end.

Feedback, and Debrief



Above: Shenley Neeley leads the session debrief at the close of the session in Steinhatchee. Photos by Candy Kaswinkel



NRLI fellows, Scott Dudley, Emily Ott, and Josh Wilks, wrapped up an amazing weekend on the banks of the Steinhatchee River with an entertaining feedback panel

At Left and Right: Josh Wilks, Emily Ott and Scott Dudley give an entertaining glimpse at the session's activities during the feedback wrap-up.



This and That



Alumni take time out of their busy schedules to attend portions of the Steinhatchee session. Left: Charles Sidman (class V) and Adrienne Dessy work together on the Effective Listening activity. Near Right: Deb Burr (class IV) and Hank Vinson (class VII) chat with Staci Braswell during the break after the Stakeholder Panel. Far Right: Sue Colson (class V) and Greg Lang visit during Friday's afternoon session.



