



GROWTH AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUE: WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE (WUI)

Looking Back and Looking Forward

After a brief introduction by Dr. Long, Jon kicked off this session with a review of the issues we addressed last month in Cedar Key. Water quality and the clamming industry was the focal issue in Cedar Key. Clamming requires extremely clean water, and threats from river inputs, human and animal waste, and intensification of land use were explored. There is more that affects the clamming industry than simply clean water; many stakeholders are concerned with changes in the character of the island resulting from escalating land prices that tempt locals and bring in new, primarily wealthy, citizens. Issues related to higher land values such as affordable housing, access to boat ramps, and the tax situation of processing fa-

cilities will continue to challenge the community.

We discussed what the future holds for Cedar Key. Primary factors that will shape the future are the makeup of the citizens, their elected officials, economic forces, and the stability of their tax base. Overall, it was impressive to see that the stakeholders seem to be on the same page and very aware of their growth management issues. This is a "good news" story compared to the complexity of the situation concerning Lake Okeechobee.

Stage Setting

Jon went on to introduce the agenda and the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) issues that were the subject of Session 3, and one of our guest hosts and Class I Fellow, Dr. Martha Monroe of the University

of Florida. Conflicts that arise along the WUI include prescribed burning, wildfire control, wildlife/pet conflicts, wildlife/human conflicts, invasive plant species, conflicts with agriculture, and several other issues that arise along the boundary between urban and rural land uses.

Dr. Martha Monroe provided us with background information on the wildland urban interface (WUI) and how it affects all of us in some way. Whether you live near the WUI or enjoy a park near the WUI, the issues that arise along the borders between wild lands and suburban areas cause conflicts that may threaten human life, property, pets, livestock, and the ability to effectively manage and preserve lands.

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WUI, as envisioned by Team Leader John Dain



Dr. Martha Monroe introduces WUI to NRLI Fellows.

We're on the web:
<http://nrli.ifas.ufl.edu>

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2006 NRLI FELLOWS-

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Session III Summary

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DRAMA BY THE RIVER

Burl introduced us to an interesting way to experience group decision making with an exercise called 'Drama by the River'. Burl explained a scenario about several people living along a river, some hard choices they had to make, and the resultant consequences of those choices. We then broke into groups and had to come to

consensus about ranking the people in the scenario from best to worst in terms of our perceptions of their morality in the scenario. Despite having very different viewpoints, in each group it was relatively easy to come to a unified ranking of the worst people in the drama. However, the groups were somewhat varied in their

opinions. We explored the dynamics of compromise (giving in) versus consensus (agreeing). With little on the line and the friendly setting (it was just a NRLI exercise after all), we could reach a unanimous decision, but with more to lose, the negotiations could have been much different.

ECONOMICS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Dr. David Mulkey gave us a thorough explanation of basic economics and how they pertain to natural resources. We explored the role of government, which is to define and enforce property rights, set the rules of the game, and address issues with market failure. We learned about three critical concepts: 1) Externalities – an interaction between two groups that produces an effect on a third party. These "spillover" effects are typically not considered. 2) Public Goods—are not exclusive in consumption and not handled well by markets due to "free rider" problems. An example would be a wildlife preserve. 3) Common Property Resources—a resource with no defined property rights, such as redfish. Common resources often are private but embody aspects of both public and private goods. There is a long history of abuse, exploitation, and destruction of these resources.

Florida has historically taken a regulatory approach

to addressing public goods and common property resources, and often the systems create "perverse" economic behaviors and unintentional results. In moving forward, we need to explore ways to use market forces to accomplish natural resource objectives.



Dr. David Mulkey talks about the economics of natural resources.

WUI FIELD TRIP: ON THE ROAD

After a fine breakfast we all anxiously awaited our chariot (actually a large bus from a supposedly reputable outfit—according to Bruce at least) to carry us on our day's journey to explore WUI issues. Our agenda, largely organized by Dr. Jono Miller, included a stop at a nearby conservation subdivision, followed by a presentation and brief tour at the 'green' community of Lakewood Ranch, then on to Myakka River State Park, and concluded with a very brief stop at the Sarasota County Extension office. Well, the bus was a no show, but the No-See-

Ums were out in force. Not to be defeated by the lack of planned transportation and the swarm of bloodthirsty insects, the NRLI spirit persevered and people stepped forward to offer their vehicles in a carpool. We loaded up and hit the dusty trail to our first stop. The posse included the standard NRLI culprits (Team Members and Fellows), as well as Dr. Martha Monroe, Dr. Jono Miller, Martha Horton & Allan Horton (local land owners), and Ed Freeman (The Nature Conservancy—TNC).

NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUE: FIELD TRIP IN DETAIL

River Forest

Our first stop of the day was at a conservation subdivision aptly named River Forest. Developed 4-5 years ago by architect Joe King, River Forest is located along the Braden River in southern Manatee County. This was an aesthetically pleasing subdivision with lots of native vegetation—and potential fire hazards. Joe King had preserved lots of pervious surfaces and used grassy swales, rather than curbs and gutters, to deal with storm water. Although this was a visually appealing development, there was no sense of community and residents did not have a convenient place to shop. Because of our tight schedule (due in large part to the transport), our visit was brief.

Lakewood Ranch/Schroeder-Manatee Ranch

Lakewood Ranch is a 5,500-acre master-planned community. It includes residential development, corporate business parks, recreation opportunities, easy access to medical care, retail shops, and schools. The Schroeder-Manatee corporation is also involved in several agricultural ventures: citrus, vegetables, cattle, timber, and rock mining to varying degrees.

We met Rex Jensen who gave an informative presentation about the Lakewood Ranch development and other activities. Rex gave a history of the land that is owned by Schroeder-Manatee, Inc. This included a succession of land uses: timber—cattle—vegetables and sod—real estate development. Current agricultural ventures provide an agricultural exemption for

some of the land currently and this allows the corporation, which is privately controlled, to keep its property. Land prices in the area have skyrocketed in the past decade and there is extreme pressure on folks with land in agriculture to sell their property.

Schroeder-Manatee, Inc. is a conservation-minded development corporation. As far back as 15-20 years they recognized the need to conserve water and today only use non-potable water to irrigate landscape plants in Lakewood Ranch. Additional ‘green’ features of the community include an extensive trail and ‘park’ system for residents, educational signage, and protection of riparian areas. Ranch managers use prescribed fire as a management tool and they constantly have to educate new residents of Lakewood Ranch about this practice. Wildland/urban interfaces issues are certainly a concern here.

After the presentation by Rex we drove through a small portion of Lakewood Ranch *en route* to our next stop. The houses we saw were on very small lots with little vegetative cover. Some NRLI fellows agreed that this was not the most appealing looking development and it did not exude a conservation ethic. If we had toured the entire development our view may have been different.

Panther Ridge

We made a brief stop at Panther Ridge, an established development of 5-acre ranchettes, to complete our tour of residential developments and contemplation of the WUI issues faced by resi-

dents in each community. Many NRLI fellows agreed living out in the ‘country’ with a home on a large lot was appealing. However, this lifestyle comes with a price. There was no convenient shopping or entertainment, which necessitates time, fuel, and frustration (traffic) on the part of residents. The development was on wells and septic systems, which is less than ideal from a water quality and quantity perspective compared to city water/sewer. Furthermore, the threat of wildfire to homes in Panther Ridge is a serious issue.

Myakka River State Park

We traveled to Myakka River State Park where we were greeted by Belinda Perry. Belinda used to work at the park but is presently employed by Sarasota County in their natural resources division. Belinda gave us an overview of the park’s natural features and discussed the prescribed burn program. She also told us about the increasing pressure on the park’s boundaries caused by development. Large land owners, many of them cattle ranchers, are selling off their holdings to developers who are subdividing the property into 5-acre ranchettes. The new residents really need to be educated about living in a rural area next to a state park, according to Belinda. Because of the lack of education of the new residents at the wildland/urban interface, the park staff are feeling pressured to burn outside of the growing season to meet their burn goals each year.



NRLI Fellows, guests, and team leaders feed the No-See-Ums at DaySpring.



Martha Horton talks about the River Forest development as NRLI Fellows Wade Waltmyer, Ed Dunne, and Ellen Huntley look on.



NRLI alum Dr. Jono Miller discusses urban-wildland interface issues with Ed Freeman (TNC, striped shirt) as NRLI Team



Belinda Perry talks about the prescribed burn program at Myakka River State Park.

REVIEW

After returning to DaySpring we did a quick group exercise in which we listed the challenges and solutions observed at each of the three developments as they relate to natural resource and quality of life issues. We then discussed growth and land use considerations in the region.



Drs. Martha Monroe and Jono Miller lead a discussion about natural resource and quality of life issues at the three developments we toured.

TOOL TIME I

John Dain led our first Tool Time session, which focused on process design, keeping on track with the principles of effective collaboration. Following the completion of a situation assessment, how can you get people to work together effectively? The next step in the process of effective collaboration, following the stakeholder identification and input phase, is to develop a 'process map'. We did an exercise based on an example of dealing with phosphorus in Lake Okeechobee to demonstrate process design. In small groups we ordered events that build effective collaboration and discussed the exercise as a large group.

SESSION III PANEL

DISCUSSION: RESPIT

At 3:00 the stakeholder panel was convened to talk about growth management and dealing with WUI issues. The panel included Allan Horton (cattle rancher and environmental journalist), Belinda Perry (Sarasota Co. natural resources), Chuck Johnson (fire chief for Sarasota Co.), Martha Horton (cattle rancher and Sarasota Co. growth management), John Thaxton (realtor, environmentalist, and Sarasota Co. commissioner), and Jim Strickland (cattle rancher). Betty Staugler moderated and asked each panel member to open with a brief perspective of their experiences and solutions involving wildland/urban issues. The topic of rampant growth and increasing pressures being placed on large landowners to sell to developers was pervasive throughout the informative panel discussion. There was a concern among all the panel members about how to preserve agricultural lands in Sarasota County and the region.

Following the panel discussion we adjourned for a break followed by a repast at the DaySpring cafeteria. The early evening was spent in the project team's suite sipping adult beverages and watching the NCAA tournament (little did we know our Florida Gators would go on to win the championship). Some NRLI fellows continued discussion of the day's events over an aerial map of the region. After the social hour the guys filtered back to the 'Bear Cave' to attempt to get a sound night's sleep, which was preclude for some because of a squeaking ceiling fan and the sawing of wood (and other various noises and smells)!



Stakeholder panel: Allan Horton, Belinda Perry, Chuck Johnson, Martha Horton, John Thaxton, Jim Strickland

Building collaborative partnerships: "Any campaign is more about people than land. If you want to save the eco-system, you have to understand the "ego-system." Emotions always win over facts. Talking with people, especially perceived "enemies," is key. Create a relationship.
-Jono Miller

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Following a filling breakfast at the DaySpring buffet we met for a one hour leadership workshop presented by Dr. Jono Miller. Some of Jono’s more salient messages were to bring as many stakeholders to the table as possible, including those with divergent opinions about the issue, and to make friends of your enemies. It is important to make friends and allies early—it is not effective to go to someone for the first time when you have a problem. Find things in common and establish personal connections. Jono gave an example of a land acquisition program he was involved in Sarasota, which was successful in part because of his leadership skills. He stressed the importance of doing your homework and determining what opposition may exist ahead of time.

We next spent some time discussing the practicum process. Each team or person gave a brief summary of their progress to date.

TOOL TIME 2

Our second exercise to help fill our conflict resolution ‘tool box’ was lead by Bruce Delany—it was called ‘Decision by the Dots’. This was a consensus-building exercise to identify the most important issues to stakeholders. It is an equitable means to allow people to identify those issues of greatest importance to them or their constituents. The initial step is to come up with a list of issues important to stakeholders. The stakeholders should comment on why they feel their issues are important so that the audience understands their point of view. It is important to have the issues condensed into short phrases and that everyone understand what the phrases mean. Duplicate issues are next purged from the list and the remaining issues are distilled into as few as possible, being sure all stakeholders are satisfied. Next the stakeholders are given several colored ‘dots’ and asked to post the dots next to the issues they feel are most important. This leads to a consensus of the most important issues that then need to be addressed.

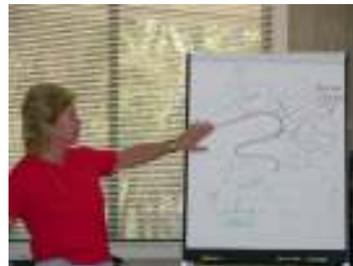


Project Team member Bruce Delany demonstrate the ‘Decision by the Dots’ (in this case stars) exercise in consensus building.

REFLECTION

Judy Yates did a thorough job during the debriefing session to summarize the issues we had addressed during this session on the WUI. The feedback panel of Ellen Huntley, Ed Dunne, Paul Haydt and a supporting cast of NRLI Fellows, including the now infamous ‘Luther’ Williams, gave a very humorous skit to wrap up the session. They played upon the theme of ‘Drama by the River’, Thursday’s exercise lead by Burl Long, and had everyone bent over with laughter.

Following the feedback session we tidied up the meeting room and went back to the cafeteria for yet another meal (NRLI feeds you well), then said our goodbyes until next month in Vero Beach to discuss “The Multi-stakeholder Process and The Sustainable Treasure Coast.”



Judy Yates leading debriefing session.