

## COASTAL ECONOMIES AND LAND USE PLANNING: THE EXPANSION OF PORT MANATEE



Photo courtesy of Port Manatee and Herald Tribune

**C**lass IX began at the Day Spring Retreat Center in Parrish, Florida. Fellows arrived from all different parts of the state, some fellows driving over eight hours and some just over half an hour. We represent a variety of professions from a variety of organizations, from professor to planner to potato farmer. But a shared interest in Florida's natural resources brought us together to this year's NRLI class.

During our first session, we tackled our first natural resources issue, port expansion. We had

the opportunity to visit an active growing port and learn about the potential natural resource conflicts inherent in a port expansion project. In addition to addressing our first issue, we got a better sense of the goals of NRLI, lessons on what being a NRLI fellow means, and a chance to get to know our classmates. We explored our expectations of the course, as well as what is expected of us as fellows. Overall, our first session helped establish the groundwork for what is sure to be a busy and exciting eight months in the world of natural resource leadership.

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*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-  
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peer reviewed.*

# Introduction to NRLI

## Getting to Know Each Other

The NRLI Program Leadership officially kicked off Class IX with introductions of our fearless leaders Laila Racevskis, Marta Hartmann, Jon Dain, and Bruce Delaney, and a welcome to Manatee County by John Stevely and Charlie Vavrina, both with IFAS. As part of our introduction, we were given our first challenge – create a map of Florida and major U.S. cities on the floor using masking tape and our collective sense of geography. We learned that the map was to serve as a guide as fellows introduced themselves by giving us a personal tour of their journey to NRLI using the face of the map. This helpful activity not only allowed us to get to know our fellow fellows, but also illustrated the extent of Class IX's depth of experiences and the enthusiasm we all have regarding Florida's natural resources. All fellows agreed the "Steps to NRLI" activity was an excellent introduction to the program and each other.



*Top: Bruce Delaney discusses group norms with the NRLI Class IX at the Day Spring Conference Center in Bradenton. .*

*Bottom: Map of Florida used to illustrate the "Steps to NRLI" each Fellow took to their participation in the program*

## Port Overview

Having gotten a better sense of who we are as a group, the NRLI leaders then proceeded to give us a run-down of just what NRLI is all about. We learned what is expected of us as NRLI fellows during the class, and received a general introduction into what natural resource issues we will be exploring in the months to come as we traverse the state from Pensacola to Miami. After this overview, we dove into addressing our first topic of the class, port expansion. George Isiminger, Director of Engineering and Environmental Affairs of Port Manatee, gave us an introductory presentation on Port Manatee's expansion efforts.

We learned about the issues involved with port expansion, particularly the tensions between busi-

ness interests and environmental interests. Port Manatee is uniquely located between two estuarine reserves, but situated with room to grow landward. We also learned that the widening of the Panama Canal has an impact on Port Manatee and its potential to increase its operations.

**Port Overview** *continued on page 3*



*George Isiminger talks with the group about Port Manatee's expansion efforts and impacts.*

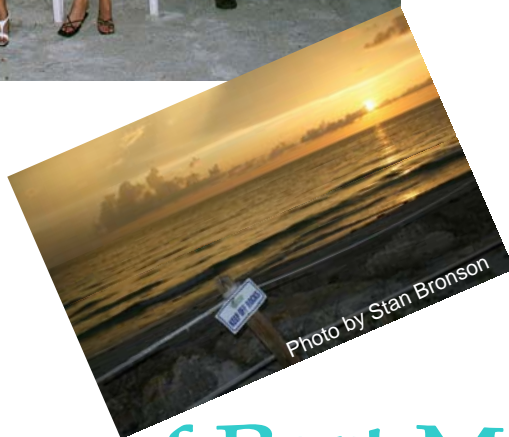


## Dinner at the Beach House Restaurant



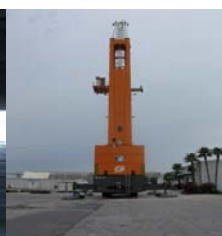
After a busy afternoon, Class VIII alumna Lisa Marie Phillips graciously arranged for the Class IX fellows to have a beachfront reception in Bradenton Beach. The informal setting allowed for the fellows to get to know each other better after our first day of our NRLI journey. Fresh seafood, refreshments, and a lovely sunset set the stage for an enjoyable evening. Thank you to Lisa Marie for showing Class IX Anna Maria Island's hospitality!

Photo by Stan Bronson



## Tour of Port Manatee

Our fieldtrip began with a stop at the Port Manatee office to get our badges (we did need those stinking badges!) which was soon followed by a flat tire and a field experiment in leadership and team building. Everyone chipped in with their hands or with jokes and comments. Chris proved to be a good person to have in a crisis and he showed us new techniques for using common tools. Thanks, Chris. George Isiminger took us on a tour of the estuary zone, the warehouses (stacked with plywood from Brazil) and the loading docks. We got to see Big Joe and the big spoil mound. It occurred to us that George was extremely generous with his time and even though he is a very busy guy, he gave us the full tour of the facility and answered all of our questions.



Photos by Laila Racevskis

**Port Overview** *continued from page 2.* As part of his presentation, Mr. Isiminger explained how as part of a prior port expansion project, the Port worked on an extensive seagrass mitigation project and spoil island restoration used as a bird habitat. The presentation offered us a glimpse into what we'd learn during Day Two's field trip to the Port.

## Stakeholder Panel

### *Stakeholder Panelists give insights to the Port Manatee expansion process*

The stakeholder panel had to be the highlight of the NRLI session because it perfectly illustrated the concepts Jon had talked about earlier in the day regarding conflict over natural resources and the different means of resolving them. Needless to say, the issues and conflicts over the expansion of Port Manatee were not resolved by the end of the panel, but we were much wiser for the discussion that ensued.

The participants included a county commissioner, local business owner, environmental activists, a Sea Grant Extension agent, an attorney for the port, a port manager and a professor in public policy. Each of them had extensive experience with either the Tampa Bay ecosystem or Port Manatee and each brought a unique perspective to the issue of port expansion. What they told us was that the port is in competition with a global market in shipping which is about to expand rapidly with the new Panama Canal and if they did not act quickly in expanding their own capacity, they could potentially miss out on this opportunity. Some also felt that the past expansion had been slow and tedious but had yielded some

positive environmental benefits such as sea grass mitigation and the creation of a bird sanctuary. Others on the panel (and some of the NRLI fellows) were not so sure that expansion has been harmless in the past and that in the future there would even be the current level of environmental protections. There are local jobs at stake, politics, potential for increased pollution, agreements struck with state regulators and lawsuits. In short, it had every element for a good conflict over natural resources. In our debriefing the next day, some NRLI fellows saw benefits in the mitigation approach taken in the past, while others questioned whether politics could be separated from environmental protection and we debated whether the court system is really the best place for resolution of conflict or whether it is better to compromise and strike deals. In short, we didn't resolve the issues. But this was why the stakeholder panel was so fascinating. The NRLI staff is to be commended for bringing these folks together and we want to thank all of the participants on the panel for their time and honest responses to our questions.



Photo by Laila Racevskis

*Stakeholder Panel From Left: Ann Hogdson; John Stevely; Karen Bell; David Klement; Maggie Mooney-Portale; Ron Getman; George Isiminger; and Glenn Compton*

## Introduction to Natural Resources Leadership



Photo by Stan Bronson

*Above: Marta Hartmann conducts the Introduction to Natural Resource Leadership training session at Port Manatee*

Three activities followed the stakeholder panel discussion. One was an artistic exercise in describing our interpretation of the word “leadership”. Marta collected our pictures to grade them and return them to us later. Then we had a lively discussion, first in small groups and then with the whole group, on what are the defining characteristics of leadership. We didn’t agree and ended up with a list of about 20 qualities that make a good leader, including long-term vision, inspiration, motivated followers, a crisis situation, an iron fist, good listening skills, mentoring skills, emotional intelligence and a cult of personality (like Jon has). We also mentioned about 20 examples of successful leaders, including everyone from Martin Luther King, to Gandhi, Lewis and Clark, JFK, George Bush and Chris’ dad. Marta then gave us a list of 8 skills that are necessary to be a leader in a globalized workplace: 1) Ability to convey a shared vision. 2) A global mindset. 3) An ability to see the big picture through systems thinking. 4) A commitment to risk taking and innovation. 5) Confidence with new technology. 6) Recognition of ethics and spirituality. 7) Service orientation. 8) Be a model for life-long learning. As NRLI fellows, we hope to learn all these characteristics by the time we graduate.

## “What Do We All Do”

Our third activity occurred that evening after dinner when each participant got a chance to tell the group about their jobs and what brought them to NRLI. We didn’t finish until 10:00 PM and then some participants continued the discussion in cabin 6 late into the night.

## And More Training

Our last day of Session One kept us on our toes as we arose bright and early to meet with our Learning Updates Project Teams for a 7am working breakfast. During our meetings, our Project Team leaders explained the Learning Update process and teams discussed the benefits of this self-evaluation tool designed to assess our individual NRLI learning goals. Following breakfast, we engaged in a lively discussion regarding our field trip to the Port and an evaluation of the stakeholder panel. Discussing the stakeholder panel as a group proved to be a valuable opportunity to explore the purpose of the panel presentations and lessons in panel dynamics.



Photo by Laila Racevskis

*Above: Rod Clouser, Professor with the Food and Resource Economics Department at UF speaks with the group about policy development.*

Our Day Three training session was a presentation by Dr. Rod Clouser from the UF Department of Food and Resource Economics who encouraged us to think outside our personal “pet” issues and realize that all issues must be evaluated within a larger context, positing that this realization contributes to being a good leader. Dr. Clouser also challenged us to consider the factors behind policy development and explore the idea of what makes a policy “good” or “bad.”



## Practicum Overviews and Feedback



Also as part of Day Three, we learned more about the practicum requirement thanks to presentations by NRLI alumni Stan Bronson and Joanne Semmer, and Marta Hartmann provided a timeframe of our practicum requirements leading to our graduation in March. We also participated in a debrief of Session One led by Jon Dain, where we reviewed each stage of the session and what tools we took away from our first meeting, including setting group norms and reviewing the experiential learning cycle. Lastly,

we ended with a feedback panel led by fellows Joy Hazell, Rob Northrup, and Jeff Hill, which featured a recap of the changing tire heroics and encouragement to be more aware of recycling during our NRLI stays. The feedback panel also expressed many thanks to our NRLI leaders for providing a great first session experience. Overall, Day Three of Session One left us energized and with forward momentum for next month's adventure in Pensacola!

## Interesting Information about Port Manatee

- ◇ In 1965 Florida Legislature passed the Manatee County Port Authority Act, officially creating the port and its oversight board.
- ◇ The Port Manatee Spoil Island is a 65 acre spoil island was created in 1969 by side-casting spoil dredged from the Port's access channel.
- ◇ Fifth largest of Florida's 14 deepwater seaports
- ◇ The port is governed by the Manatee County Port Authority – a seven-member oversight board which sets policy and oversees major expenditures for the port. Manatee County Port Authority members serve four-year staggered terms with an annual election of officers.
- ◇ As a leading economic engine, Port Manatee adds more than \$2.3 billion dollars annually in regional economic impact and supports more than 20,000 jobs.
- ◇ Manibirtee Key (spoil island) transformed into a bird refuge in partnership with Gulfstream Natural Gas System Audubon of Florida. The restoration has also successfully provided habitat migratory avian species with over 60 species of birds observed by the National Audubon Society.
- ◇ Port Manatee handles approximately 9 million tons of cargo each year.
- ◇ In May of 2009 a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Panama Canal (ACP) and Port of Manatee, to share information and participate in joint marketing efforts to mutually increase business opportunities for each organization. The two-year accord elevates Port Manatee's profile within shipping circles to attract containerized cargo to the port and new developments to the encouragement zone.



Top to Bottom: Manibirtee Key, Lumber waiting to be shipped; Bird on its way to Manibirtee Key, Port Manatee Port Authority building

