

CEDAR KEY

August 12-14, 2010

IMPACTS OF WATER QUALITY AND CLAM FARMING ON WATERFRONT COMMUNITIES

WELCOME TO NRLI

We began our retreat at Cedar Key, FL with a scrumptious lunch in the Island Room Restaurant. Laila kicked off our first session with a warm welcome. The class went over NRLI's mission statement, how and where topics were chosen, and introductions from the team members. In introducing the Project Team, Laila pointed out that John Dain is on sabbatical and Marta Hartmann will join us in future sessions. Present were Candy Kaswinkel, Bruce Delaney, Laila Racevskis, and Jennifer Arnold. Alumni present were: Stacey Braswell, Joy Hazell, Teresa Watkins, and Ginger Adair and Sue Colson.

Vice Mayor, and alumna of NRLI Class V, Sue Colson gave the class an overview of Cedar Key, its past and current challenges as well as what the future may hold for this unique small town.

As part of getting to know each other, the Fellows took part in an ice-breaker exercise known as 'Steps to NRLI'.

Bruce Delaney led an exercise to help us establish group norms. We agreed to the following:

1. What happens at NRLI stays at NRLI
2. Punctuality
3. Honest and open dialogue
4. Participation
5. No personal attacks (Hard on the issues, not on the people)
6. Be fully engaged during sessions
7. Cell phone ringers will be fined \$5.00 (Bruce was first to pay up!)



Brooke Saari, Leslie Corcelli and Kat Di-ersen discuss their expectations during a break-out session on the first day. Photo by Nicole Wulff.

We concluded our first afternoon together with a session to find out what our expectations of the NRLI program are. The list included:

- 1) Understand the niche
- 2) Become more comfortable with conflict
- 3) Better skills to address things from a political perspective
- 4) Improve professional skills development
- 5) Dispel pre-determined opinions about other issues or advocacy groups
- 6) Hands on case studies
- 7) Improve communication skills
- 8) Motivate the unmotivated
- 9) Improve the variety of fellows who participate

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CEDAR KEY - THEN AND NOW

Thursday evening, we met at the Cedar Key Library for a presentation, by Cedar Key City Attorney David Coffey on the history of Cedar Key; particularly the relationship of the city's development to resource extraction.

Prior to David's presentation, Community Redevelopment Director, and NRLI alumnus, Greg Lang took a few minutes to discuss renovations to the library that include solar power, and energy efficient windows and cooling system.

David Coffey had fished the Cedar Key area for years but his professional relationship with the city began when he sued Cedar Key on behalf of a client. He was eventually hired as City Attorney. David drew on his experience as Mayor of Gainesville and as an instructor at UF's Center for Governmental Responsibility to help Cedar Key create a Community Redevelopment Agency which allowed, and continues to allow, more tax dollars to be targeted to infrastructure.

The town of Cedar Key has historically enjoyed significant political power relative to its size. This political power is evident in Cedar Key's K-12 school. Cedar Key may be the only town its size with a school of its own.

Cedar Key continues to promote itself as a tourist destination and has assets to do so. Aside from its fame as a launching point for recreational fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, it is enjoying a growing reputation among kayakers, birders, motorcyclists and even star gazers.

David Coffey's presentation included the points of contention that Cedar Key and its public have faced



David Coffey, Cedar Key City Attorney discusses the history of Cedar Key with the Fellows during the Thursday evening session. Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

over the past several years.

Points of contention:

1. The 'Gulf Trail' project polarized the community and was never constructed. However, after time had passed, a sidewalk project that accomplishes some of the goals of the 'Gulf Trail' project has been implemented and seems to enjoy public support.

2. The Net Ban Constitutional Amendment was a very divisive issue. It pitted commercial fishermen against recreational fishermen. The creation of the clam industry has provided employment for many of the displaced commercial fishermen.

3. Kayakers were seen as speed humps by the clam farmers. Over time the clam farmers realized the importance of other sources of income making its way to Cedar Key.

4. The municipal marina became a mud flat, then got dredged and has grown and been further developed.

5. Curb side recycling was initially controversial, but is, at present, enjoying significant public support.

6. Wayside Park was proposed for an overhaul that has turned out well and the residents were again pleased with the outcome.

7. Cemetery Point Park had access issues and trail issues. Those were worked out and residents and visitors alike can utilize the new trail without disrupting the grave site.

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CLAM FARMING - AN OVERVIEW OF THE CLAM FARMING INDUSTRY

Leslie Sturmer prepped us for the field trip by explaining the origin, development, and current status of the clamming industry. The industry began in the 80's and underwent rapid development and regulatory framework implementation in the 90's. Due to a number of factors including fisheries closures, the ban on gill nets, and job retraining program opportunities; clamming grew in popularity assisting a few coastal communities in their efforts to maintain their coastal livelihoods and economic viability. The industry boom (number of clams produced increased from 2.4 million clams in '87 to 184 million clams in '07) has spurred additional economic growth in aquaculture supply support industries such as the sewing of bags and customizing of fishing boats. Today, Cedar Key is a leading producer of clams in the nation and has the largest marine aquaculture industry in the state. Leslie explained the interrelatedness of clams, water quality, and community viability by explaining that pollutants can biomagnify in shellfish, which may then create a health hazard, leading to fisheries closures, loss of income, and way of life. As a result, clam farmers have become advocates of clean water as citizen stewards supporting and encouraging a host of water quality activities at the county and state level.



L-R- Leslie Sturmer explains to the Fellows the history of clam farming in Cedar Key; Bobby Witt, local clam farmer, demonstrates the art of harvesting clams; view of the Southern Cross operations; Cedar Key Indian burial site.

Photos by Nicole Wulff and Candy Kaswinkel

Our morning field trip was a crash course in the clamming industry and a whirlwind tour of the island. We began with a morning boat ride out to Atsena Otie Island, where Sue and Leslie set the stage for our field trip by explaining the critical importance of the Suwannee Water Management District's purchase of the island. Keeping this island free of development is key to maintaining high water quality and thus, ensuring the sustainability of the island's clam industry.

Next, our group hopped on board with Captains Bobby Witt and Russ Colson for a visit to one of Bobby's clam leases at the Dog Island Lease Area. Leslie and Bobby gave us insights into the day-to-day work of clam farmers. Topics discussed included: methods of tracking and rinsing the bags, environmental conditions preferred for clam growth, as well as different clam markets and prices. Captain Bobby very generously shared part of his clam harvest with us. Special thanks to Bobby Witt, Russ Colson, and Officer Sherman James for providing transportation by boat to Atsena Otie and to the clam leases.

Southern Cross Clam Farm was the next stop on our tour. Here we learned about the role of wholesalers in the industry. In the hatchery we saw the different rearing techniques and stages of the clam lifecycle from microscopic seed to baby clams ready for the open water as well as processing, bagging, and storing of adult, harvested clams.

Midmorning, we loaded up the golf carts for part II, our terrestrial tour of the island. Greg Lang and Sue Colson explained more about the Reclaimed Water Plant and park irrigation system. Next, we took a look at the more industrial and commercial use area of the island with the well-disguised Reclaimed Water Plant and stone crab trap storage area. Here we learned about a collaborative effort to address the serious issue of grease and fat disposal from local restaurants, which included a social marketing campaign to increase public awareness.

Field trip continued on page 4

STAKEHOLDER PANEL



L-R. Greg Lang, Cedar Key Redevelopment Agency; Ken Edmunds, Local Business Owner; Lily Rooks, Levy County Commissioner; J D McCormick, Natures Landing Management Co.; John McPherson, Cedar Key Water & Sewer District; Leslie Sturmer, Aquaculture Extension Agent for Levy County; Earl Starnes, Community leader; and Sue Colson, Vice Mayor for Cedar Key. Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

The panel was an opportunity for Fellows to hear additional perspectives on the focal issue from stakeholders directly. We had a diverse seven-person panel representing academia, the city council, county commission, IFAS extension, chamber of commerce, water and sewer district, city redevelopment agency, clam industry, and business interests. Some of the main take away points included:

- + Effective communication and relationship building are keys to identifying problems and finding solutions.
- + Several factors were cited as contributing to the city’s successes. First, many community members have learned to view threats as common because they affect everyone on the island. Similarly, community members have a tendency to “look out for each other”. With the community’s small size, most people know each other and this may contribute to an increased sense of unity. Many members of the community are knowledgeable about the issues and civically active.
- + Tourism and clamming are Cedar Key’s top industries and comparable in their contributions to the local economy. Diversification would be beneficial to the island’s long-term sustainability.
- + There was concern expressed that the effects of the oil spill will be either down played or largely forgotten by the American public. Additionally, there is uncertainty as to how the oil spill will affect water quality and the community of microorganisms that clams feed on. Only with time and research will we have a clearer picture of the real impacts.

Then and Now. cont. from page 2

8. Golf Carts in the neighborhood were initially a point of contention due to their slow speed in traffic. However, they are much more energy efficient and maybe safer, so residents are more accepting at present.
9. New Development has and will likely continue to be an issue of contention. The town has changed many times in the past, so change is inevitable for this small yet dynamic community.

Field trip. cont. from page 3. The next few stops highlighted the city’s efforts to repair the sewer system, improve storm water management, protect heritage trees, eliminate seawalls, restore living shoreline, relocate the school road, and preserve an Indian burial ground. Often, such efforts require creative problem solving, consensus building among community members, and solid leadership. Cedar Key was an excellent setting in which to get the new Fellows thinking about the topics that we’ll be learning about and the skills we’ll be trying to develop in the coming months. By land and by sea, our field trip experience clearly demonstrated the city’s commitment to managing natural resources and maintaining water quality.

INTRODUCTION TO NATURAL RESOURCES LEADERSHIP

We participated in an activity aimed at identifying the characteristics of a good leader. We broke into small groups to discuss and list the qualities of a good leader and then reconvened to discuss as a group. A few of the common qualities identified included the following:

- Understands and respects all interests and perspectives,
- Leads by example,
- Knows people's strengths and weaknesses,
- Creates new leaders,
- Gives adequate resources,

- Allows employee to stumble and then provide necessary support afterwards,
- Communicates effectively,
- Delegates well,
- Acts as an advocate for employees,
- Is a subject matter expert,
- Is fair, firm and equal to all,
- Is solution and not problem oriented,
- Enthusiastic about the subject of work.

As fellows, we hope to make progress in developing these qualities through our NRLI experience.



Fellows meet in small groups to discuss the qualities that they believe a good leader possess. Above left: John Valenta, Michele Atkinson, and Sharon Tatum; Above middle: Sherri Kraeft, Jason Wiles, Micah Thorning; Above right: Brooke Saari, Leslie Corcelli and Kat Diersen. Photos by Candy Kaswinkel



Brooke Saari, Jason Wiles, Nicole Wulff and Debra Segal share a laugh during the evening session. Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

“WHAT DO WE ALL DO?”

Fellows, instructors, and alumni met after dinner on Saturday night.

Fellows had the opportunity to share with the group more details about their job, responsibilities, and roles. Some fellows explained the origin of their inspiration to apply to NRLI and/or what they hope to gain from their participation. Beverages and snacks encouraged mixing and mingling.

STAKEHOLDER PANEL FEEDBACK

Feedback on the stakeholder panel was mixed. Fellows thought the panel was too big and very cautious about what they said. An idea of prepping the panel with questions before the actual stakeholders' meeting was discussed. Lessons learned included the value of good communication and networking as components of leadership. When dealing with a complex problem, ask for help!

THE DEEPWATER HORIZON BLOWOUT - UF'S Response to the Gulf Oil Spill



Dr. Mike Spranger speaks with the NRLI Fellows about the Gulf Oil Spill during the closing day of the Cedar Key session. Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

Dr. Mike Spranger – Associate Dean and Professor, Office of Dean for Extension and Florida Sea Grant Associate Director gave an informative presentation on the Deep Water Horizon Blowout. Dr. Spranger discussed the history to date on estimated amount of oil in the Gulf, where the oil is going, and attempts to stop the leak. Current clean-up costs are totaling at least 3 billion dollars. Dr. Spranger also spoke to the effects on society and communities the oil spill is and could have in the future.

Dr. Spranger then gave an overview of the University of Florida's involvement in the spill:

- 1) UF set up a website for high quality information
- 2) Established academic oil spill Task Forces
- 3) Training coordination for citizens who want to help.

Brooke Saari discussed her role in the extension office as the counties were looking for information, training, and guidance. Sue Colson's counterpart, Leslie discussed how she and other locals addressed the oil spill relative to the clambers.

All 39 shell fish harvesting areas remained open throughout the oil incident as they were not affected. Leslie had to stay vigilant by keeping information correct and up-to-date.

Dr. Spranger concluded his talk by discussing the future: Environmental, Economic, and Social Impacts and the unknown.

PRACTICUM OVERVIEW AND EXPECTATIONS

Teresa Watkins discussed her practicum which consisted of a workshop that included multiple interests (stakeholders) to raise awareness on the water quality issues associated with development in Florida. Her practicum resulted in the creation of her current position with the St. John's Water Management District; an impressive outcome!

Bruce Delaney's practicum was a team effort with another Fellow in NRLI Class II. Their project consisted of getting two organizations together to develop methods of more effective cooperation. The two organizations involved had developed a nonproductive working relationship and needed help getting back on track. The Practicum that he and his partner developed used several of the NRLI skills that we will be learning over the next 7 months.

DEBRIEF AND SESSION FEEDBACK

Debrief

The Debrief session was conducted by Jennifer Arnold. She demonstrated a method that we can use to debrief workshops and other group sessions. Jennifer divided the Fellows into groups of three. Each group of three was given one of the elements of the agenda and a few minutes to discuss the element that they had been assigned among themselves. They then reported out to the larger group. This method led to a thorough review of the entire three-day session.

Feedback Panel

The group put on a skit in which they regularly defied our group norms in an effort to create humor. Kat played Laila with John Valenta and Lisa Krinsky in supporting roles.

All in all, the trip was wonderful and everyone is excited about Ocala in September. The Project Team made note of areas that could be fine-tuned in the future.

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 program and have not been formally peer reviewed.

