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## Introduction

Thursday, April 17, 1:30 – 2:45

Dr. Bob Swett set the stage for NRLI session #4 at the comfortable, rustic Youth Camp Lodge at Hugh Taylor Birch State Park, a pocket of green amidst the high-rise condos and hardened shorelines of Ft. Lauderdale. Dr. Swett directs the University of Florida's Boating and Waterway Management Program, serves as Florida Sea Grant's Extension Specialist in Boating and Waterway Management, and is an Assistant Professor with the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences. As such, he was well-qualified to help us shift gears from balancing the needs of agriculture and the farm workers of Immokalee (session #3) to balancing the wants and needs of stakeholders desiring access to Florida's 1350 miles of coastline.

Given that 75% of Floridians live in coastal counties and hundreds of people move to our state every day, the topic was a timely one. Floridians (including the 25% who don't live in coastal counties) and non-Floridians from every state in the country are among the owners of the one-million-and-rising vessels registered in Florida. Rapidly increasing numbers of boats combined with decreasing access to coastal waters have analysts, advocates and boaters themselves concerned about a rapidly emerging boating access crisis.

The dilemma of balancing growth in boating, waterway use and associated coastal development with the conservation and management needs of estuarine resources is complex and difficult. Dr. Swett introduced the NRLI Fellows, themselves anxiously awaiting a 3-hour investigative

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# Introduction (continued)

cruise along south Florida's waterways, to some of the important stakeholders they would encounter during the three-day session. These interested and affected parties include: 1) Environmental advocates concerned about prop-scars in ecologically-important sea grass meadows, wounded and dead manatees, increased pollution, derelict vessels, and concrete encrustation along the waterways; 2) commercial fishermen who feel that they have been out-competed for marine services and docking facilities by racko-miniums; 3) Average recreational boaters who are seeing decreased marine access and increased accidents and ramp rage due to higher boat density and the associated competition for water space; 4) Very wealthy recreational boat owners, who, in turn, are competing for space with hyper-wealthy vessel owners; and 4) paddlers and sailors who see their lifestyle threatened and consider their vessels to be quiet and of low-impact.

Dr. Swett's presentation set the stage for understanding both the issues and stakeholders relevant to the discussion of access to Florida's shores



Photo by Melody Ray-Culp

Thursday, April 17, 2:45-3:00

After a brief break it was time to get back to work and our first skills and concepts training session, Effective Meeting Management. Our task was to work in small groups to create an agenda for an upcoming 4-hour meeting intended to develop consensus among a group of 15 diverse Broward County stakeholders. The meeting was to have three objectives: 1) Prioritize the boating and waterways management issues facing the county; 2) Prioritize potential solutions to those issues; and 3) Define the next steps for developing strategies, timelines, and funding in order to address the issues and solutions identified. An important element of the design was to achieve stakeholder buy-in on the results.



Photo by Melody Ray-Culp

After intense group work and a short break it was dinnertime. Fellows and the Project Team fired up the grills for a delicious hotdog and hamburger cookout, followed by marshmallow-roasting and stories around the campfire.



Photo by Laila Racevskis

A picture of a "rackominium" building in Ft. Lauderdale

# Water Taxi Tour

By Dianne Hughes



It was my third cruise on a tour of the “Venice of the Americas” and although it seemed the same it was different. It was still wall to wall sea walls, nothing new to me, but my compatriots were quite surprised. I heard exclamations of “shock and awe.” Certainly, I was shocked by the sheer size of the new boats in the basin – much larger than before – and the newly reconfigured 17<sup>th</sup> Street Causeway bridge which was beyond comprehension (65’ clearance and clearly built to take a hit by major sized vessels). As Kevin Carter (or was it the Boat Captain?) said, “In south Florida the Super rich are overtaking the rich.” Where does that leave access, water viewing and facility availability to you and me?

Our trip took us by the Bahia Mar Marina with 250 mega-yacht slips for 80’ and larger size yachts. This marina is also the only place where commercial dive boat operators can dock. The dive boat operators bring in \$3 million per year to Broward County but they, like the average boater, are having their access limited. This is also where we saw the 200+’ mega-yacht, Utopia, which sold last year for \$93 million. We also cruised by Port Everglades. At forty feet deep it is the second deepest port on the East Coast. Broward County certainly has infrastructure that supports commercial and high end boating.

Oddly enough, most of the marinas in Broward County are located inland on Fort Lauderdale’s Marina Mile. Many of these marinas are being targeted for development into dockaminiums. Facilities and access will disappear from these marinas for the lower to middle income person. The few public access boat ramps left have few parking spaces and are only accessible to those who believe in the saying “the early bird gets the worm.”

Broward County has tried to provide some water view access, albeit limited, for the non-boaters in “pocket parks” located on streets that dead-end on the water. The county has also been innovative in helping to clean up the crowded local waters via the Pollution Solution, a boat that travels the New River Loop collecting trash on the water. Under consideration is the development of a spoil island in an area of the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) where, during low tide, a sand bar is exposed. This will provide recreational benefits for local and visiting boaters if permitting issues can be overcome.

One of the saddest highlights of the trip had to be the almost total lack of natural shoreline on the ICW. One 50 acre parcel of mangroves has been set aside for preservation but is under attack for new access to the ocean. The project is currently under review. If that project is approved the ICW will be devoid of habitat for flora and fauna.

From my perspective, I have been a part of a boating family since the age of 5 on the Great Lakes of Michigan and all of our family boating trips were to very remote areas of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and Canada which were very undeveloped. I wonder how they look today. It has been over 20 years since I have taken that trip with my family. Does it look like South Florida? Currently I live in Martin County and access to me appears to be very available; however, to my husband who was born and raised in Ft. Lauderdale, access is disappearing. Everyone has a different perspective. Still Martin has miles and miles of natural shoreline, largely due to the taxpayers and voting public. Martin County is quite a contrast to Broward County.



Photo by Laila Racevskis

# Florida Working Waterfronts



Photo by Laila Racevskis

From Left: Steve Allen, Bryan Fluech, Kevin Hennessy, Joanne Semmer, and Lisa Marie Phillips shared their experiences in regards to Florida Working Waterfronts (FWW).

Below: The value of waterfront properties in South Florida continue to rise.

This interesting and informative session focused on our own NRLI Fellows' collective knowledge and experience with Florida Working Waterfronts (FWW). Each Fellow had a different story to tell about how their communities FWW programs were initiated, developed, and, if applicable, completed.

Lisa Marie and others in her community developed W.A.V.E.S. principals and had them adopted by their city council.

Joanne's community focused on Boca Grande issues, one of which was to keep commercial access channels navigable.

Kevin discussed issues of public access and marina conversion to "dock-a-miniums" in Manatee County.

Bryan has worked with Collier County on manatee safety, public access, and the issue of lack of public boat ramps for small boats.

Steve Allen has worked in Carabelle and Franklin County to maintain a balance between historic fishing village and modern waterfront usage.

After the Fellows presented their cases, the rest of the group asked questions and discussed options and solutions to FWW issues. One suggestion from Tyler was to "buy the dirt." Although the suggestion might make more sense in the rural cost effective areas, more creative strategies needed to be worked out for expensive portions of the state like South Florida. ■



Photo by Laila Racevskis

# Stakeholder Panel



Photo by Laila Racevskis

As slips in Fort Lauderdale become more expensive, the Fellows considered if there would be more conversions of public marinas to private slips and condominiums in Florida counties to the north of Broward. Many of the Fellows mentioned that they saw the beginning of this trend in their counties.

Moderator: Jennifer Winters

Panelists: Frank Herhold, Bill Richards, Jeff Torode, Ray Kooser, Susan Engle, and Christopher “Kit” Denison

The stakeholder panel discussed how much of an economic driver the boating industry was in Fort Lauderdale. Four out of the six panelists are employed in marine related sales, real estate, or consulting industries. They represented the “big money” segment of waterfront users. One panelist was in the charter dive industry, and the other was an agency coordinator for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Clean Marina Program (non-regulatory).

As the panelists shared experiences and participated in a question-answer session, the Fellows began to see how the public and commercial coastal access issues played out

in Broward County. A huge issue appeared to be the impasse between the Broward County manatee protection plan and permitting of new docks, marinas, and slips for commercial usage.

Another important issue was the preservation of working waterfront dockage for charter boats (e.g., fishing, diving, ecotourism) and other commercial marine industries (e.g., construction, boat building).

Finally, the panel voiced concerns about affordable slips for private yachts and sailboats to be kept either in dry-dock or in wet slips. Ray Kooser mentioned that he pays about \$20,000 a year to dock his 40-foot yacht in Fort Lauderdale. ■

Panelist Bill Richards of Florida DEP Clean Marina Program discusses how public and commercial usage of waterways impacts an area’s natural environment.



Photo by Melody Ray-Culp

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## Report Layout

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Charles Shinn, Elena Bastidas, and Tyler Macmillan work on their respective practicum projects.

# Practicum Overviews

Our day on Saturday started with an informal time for practicum teams to discuss their progress and plan next steps. Bruce and Laila talked to the groups and provided valuable tips and examples from the Practicum experiences of previous NRLI classes. This

was followed up with a quick group discussion of each other's practicum topics and progress. All of the Fellows seemed to be making progress toward carrying out the steps, techniques, and tools provided throughout our previous and current NRLI sessions.

## Bird Sightings in Ft. Lauderdale

Northern Gannet	Ring-billed Gull	Fish Crow
Brown Pelican	Herring Gull	Tree Swallow
Great Blue Heron	Royal Tern	Tufted Titmouse
Great Egret	Least Tern	Carolina Wren
Snowy Egret	Rock Pigeon	Blue-gray gnatcatcher
Little Blue Heron	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Grey Catbird
Green Heron	Mourning Dove	Northern Mockingbird
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Black-hooded Parakeet	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black Vulture	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Prairie Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Belted Kingfisher	Palm Warbler
Osprey	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Black-and-White Warbler
Red-shouldered Hawk	Downy Woodpecker	Ovenbird
Red-tailed Hawk	Great Crested Flycatcher	Common Yellowthroat
Common Moorhen	Loggerhead Shrike	Swamp Sparrow
Ruddy Turnstone	White-eyed Vireo	Northern Cardinal
Sanderling	Red-eyed Vireo	Red-winged Blackbird
Laughing Gull	Blue Jay	Boat-tailed Grackle
		American Goldfinch

Compiled by Peter Johnson

*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.*