

Inside This Issue:

Introduction	Page 1
Community Economics	Page 2
Setting the Stage	Page 2
Florida Springs- the Big Picture	Page 3
Spring-shed Tour and Kayaking	Page 3
Introduction to Mediation	Page 4
Stakeholder Panel	Page 4
Dinner at Dixie Grill	Page 5
Framework for Collaborative Activities	Page 5
Session Wrap-up	Page 5
Ichetucknee Trivia Quiz	Page 6

Florida's Freshwater Springs: Collaborative Approaches to Protecting a Unique Natural Resource

Ichetucknee Springs/Live Oak

Photo by Melody Ray Culp

Introduction

The session was held in Camp Weed located in north central Florida. We were surrounded by 500 acres of beautiful unspoiled land. It was the perfect setting to reflect on our NRLI themes. Laila started our session welcoming the group, and reviewing the agenda and logistics for the following two and a half days. Then, we engaged in a group activity with the objective of reviewing topics covered in previous NRLI sessions. In groups Fellows highlighted specific topics, management tools, and some of the lessons learned from previous sessions.



Photo by Melody Ray-Culp

Camp Weed at dawn.

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Community Economics

Session Presented By David Mulkey



Photo by Melody Ray-Culp

▲ David Mulkey talks with the group about Community Economics during day one of the Live Oak Session

We heard a fascinating presentation by Dr. David Mulkey, a professor in the Department of Food and Resource Economics at the University of Florida. We discussed the structure and processes of a local economy and learned to relate that local understanding to economic impact analysis. Essentially, when a resident spends money locally, more money is available to other locals; and, therefore, they spend locally as well, creating a cascade effect. Ultimately, money has to leak out of the area, since not everything can be purchased locally. However, the local economy gets stronger as “leakage” is reduced, because more money can be spent locally and doesn’t have to leave the area. However, there is a need to export – hence the famous quote, “we can’t get rich taking in each other’s laundry.” Export industries are what tie us to the rest of the world. So, there is a complex relationship between the local economy and its export and service industries.

Setting the Stage

Session Presented By Cindy Johnson

Cindy Johnson, Suwannee River Water Management District and Coordinator of The Ichetucknee Partnership (TIP), presented on the development of this partnership. TIP grew out of the Ichetucknee Springs Basin Working Group (ISBWG), which is led by Jim Stevenson. Jim was previously with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and directed the Springs Initiative within that agency. ISBWG is a collaboration of technical staff and others who take a science-based and educational approach to the issue. Science is important to understanding springs issues and determine how to improve water quality within springsheds. This group understood that to more effectively reach the general public, a more comprehensive community outreach program that could get ISBWG message out in plain language to the entire community was needed. TIP was created to fill this need. Many of the stakeholders in the area signed on to TIP and are participating well in the partnership. The stakeholders realize that unless they approach water quality in a collaborative way, they will have to deal with additional regulations stemming from the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Program. Additionally, most of the stakeholders grew up in the area, have known each other their entire lives, share fond memories of the springs; and most importantly, they take ownership of the water quality issues that need to be addressed.”



Cindy Johnson talks with the Fellows regarding the Ichetucknee Partnership Initiative.

Photo by Melody Ray-Culp

Florida's Springs

The Big Picture

Session Presented By Richard Hamann

This session was presented by Richard Hamann, Assistant Director of the Center for Governmental Responsibility, at the University of Florida Levin College of Law. Mr. Hamann introduced the session drawing our attention to the fact that Florida has the greatest assemblage of artesian springs in the world. His presentation focused on scientific studies that evidence the threat and degradation of springs in Florida. Among the topics discussed were: Water uses and spring flow, the concentration of nitrate nitrogen pollutant, the importance of springs to humans, and spring management. A topic that captivated the audience was the concentration of nitrate nitrogen levels in the local springs. Data shows that the increase in population growth in Florida and the land use changes resulting from that population increase are affecting the quality of our groundwater. In localized spots “groundwater nitrate nitrogen concentrations have increased from a normal background of less than 0.02 parts per million to widespread concentrations over 1.0 parts per million,” Dr. Hamann stated. The increase of nitrate nitrogen concentrations in ground water is one of the biggest environmental problems resulting from half a century of agricultural and urban development. As part of the presentation we watch a video of the Florida springs that prepared us for our fieldtrip the next day.



Photo by Melody Ray-Culp

▲ Richard Hamann address the group as Jane Provancha looks on.

Spring-shed Tour and Kayaking

Session Presented by Jim Stevenson, ISBWG



Photo by Melody Ray Culp

The fieldtrip was guided by Jim Stevenson. At each of the four stops throughout the Ichetucknee Springshed, Mr. Stevenson explained the importance and connections of the local watershed, creeks, sinkholes and springs. Any type of pollution at any point of the watershed negatively impacts the water quality of spring and wells. At the Ichetucknee Springs State Park we picked up kayaks and embarked on an educational journey. We discussed the historical and cultural ties of the local community to the springs. Mr. Stevenson highlighted several scientific facts on the increase in nitrate nitrogen and its effect on algae growth in the springs. He also

explained the need to work with politicians and suggested that bringing them to the natural resource sites to experience their beauty and vulnerability is the best way to make elected officials aware of the issues. This tour is a regular part of the educational activities supported by the ISBWG, which mission is “to protect the ecological health of Ichetucknee Springs by restoring and protecting the quality and quantity of the water flowing to the springs.” The fieldtrip was without a doubt one of the highlights of the session.



Photo by Melody Ray Culp

Jim Stevenson shows the Ichetucknee Springshed map to the Fellows during the session field trip. The Springshed covers a 300 square mile basin and parts of three counties in northern Florida. ►

Introduction to Mediation

Tom Taylor with the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium conducted a group exercise with the class regarding mediation. We were each given roles to play and took turns stepping out of those roles to mediate within our respective group. The fictitious scenario consisted of a city proposing a plan to build an arena and update the transportation system in its business district. Stakeholders included the company constructing the arena, the local business council, a neighborhood group, an environmental group, and the city. Stakeholders discussed their interests with very strong opinions. The goal was for the mediator to bring those interests together into a plan that could work for everyone.

Stakeholder Panel

Moderator: Tatiana Borisova

Panelists: John Wheeler, Chair of the Education and Outreach Committee of the Ichetucknee Partnership; Dana Bryan, Environmental Policy Coordinator in the Director's Office of the Florida Park Service; Jim Stevenson, Coordinator of the ISBWGroup; Rob Mattson, Staff Environmental Scientist V, SJRWMD; Brad Dicks, Realtor and Developer; and Andrew Walmsley, Florida Farm Bureau

The panel discussion, held at the Ichetucknee Springs Park meeting room, was moderated by Tatiana Borisova. The stakeholder panel was comprised of John Wheeler, Chair of the Education and Outreach Committee of the Ichetucknee Partnership; Dana Bryan, Environmental Policy Coordinator in the Director's Office of the Florida Park Service; Jim Stevenson, TISBWG Coordinator; Rob Mattson, Staff Environmental Scientist V, St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD); Brad Dicks, realtor and developer; and Andrew Walmsley, Florida Farm Bureau. It was evident from the beginning that although the stakeholders disagreed on the issues discussed, they all shared the same concern for "the health" and future of the springs. In contrast with other stakeholder panels, where animosity among members was evident, the panel of stakeholders approached the issues in a more collaborative manner. The fact that most of the stakeholders are members of TIP or TISBWG, and are continuously en-

gaging in discussions related to the pressing issues of the springs - by focusing on solutions and not blaming each other - was evident and made a big difference.



Photo by Melody Ray Culp

From Left to right: Andrew Walmsley; Jim Stevenson; John Wheeler; Brad Dicks; and Rob Mattson. Not shown: Dana Bryan.

Dinner at the Dixie Grill

Friday evening's dinner, at the Dixie Grill in Live Oak, was a special treat. Arranged by Fellow Kevin Brown, and donated by his employer, Farm Credit of North Florida, the dinner was an opportunity for the entire class to sample a variety of local fare including smoked mullet, fried catfish and mullet, mullet gizzards, boiled peanuts, swamp cabbage, grits, baked beans, hush puppies, and all kinds of pie. Everyone left the event, one of the best of the session, having tried something new and sufficiently satisfied as well.



Photo by Melody Ray Culp

A Framework for Collaborative Activities

Marta Hartman started the day on Saturday introducing a collaborative framework. The framework is designed to make community, organizational and business collaborations more effective. Marta explained the steps of this framework, which includes community connection, evaluation of factors, collaboration foundation, and outcomes. We put this framework to practice through a group exercise where we applied the framework to TISBWG. The framework proved to be a very useful tool for analyzing collaboration initiatives.



Photo by Melody Ray-Culp

Carol Lippincott; Kevin Hennessey Dianne Hughes and Tatiana Borisova work on their exercise for Framework for Collaborative Activities session.

Wrap-up Session



Photo by Melody Ray-Culp

Jane Provancha, Chrissy Hensel, and Tyler Macmillan provide feedback for the session

Tom Taylor recapped the mediation exercise from the previous day. Deb Butler and Peter Johnson provided the session's debrief; and Jane Provancha, Chrissy Hensel, and Tyler Macmillan constituted the feedback panel. Most of the feedback from this session was very

positive. Everyone particularly enjoyed the kayaking fieldtrip, making this session a favorite for many of the Fellows. The project team proceeded then to give us the details for the October graduation session.

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Photo by Melody Ray Culp

Turtle resting on a fallen branch in the Ichetucknee River

Ichetucknee Trivia Quiz

1. Who was the first European explorer to visit Ichetucknee Springs?
2. Ichetucknee Springs State Park generates \$ ___ million per year for the local economy.
3. The water that supplies Ichetucknee Springs comes from rain in a ___?
4. Where is the headwaters of Ichetucknee Springs?
5. Name three tributaries of the Ichetucknee River?
6. Where is the largest underwater cave in Columbia County?
7. How far have cave divers explored in the cave reference above?
8. Dye was injected in sinkholes in Clayhole Creek and found at?
9. Where was the largest Timucuan Indian village in Florida located in 1500?
10. What industry was active at Ichetucknee Springs in 1900?

Answers: 1. Desota; 2. \$22; 3. 300 square mile basin; 4. Alligator Lake; 5. Cannon Creek, Clayhole Creek, Rose Creek; 6. Rose Sink; 7. 1 mile; 8. Ichetucknee Springs, Rose Sink, a private well, Columbia City Elementary School well; 9. Ichetucknee Springs; 10. Phosphate Mining.

