

Welcome to Lake Louisa

We arrived at Lake Louisa State Park in Clermont on a gorgeous Florida Fall day only to learn that the water was unsafe to drink and cook with and that the cabins each had three beds instead of four. But not to worry, the NRLI Project Team and Fellows adapted as if climate change was nipping at our heels! This session was marked by the rolling hills, scenic lake views, and the quaint cabins where we shared our meals and skills. Candy Kaswinkel was the session MVP due to the delicious food that she prepared for us all weekend long. Many fellows enjoyed their first “Low Country Boil” as coordinated and prepared by several of their colleagues. This session was not all picnic tables and bonfires though; we also explored conflict, values, the role of agriculture in protecting natural resources, conservation easements, our practicum and more.

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The Floridan Aquifer: Balancing Use and Sustainability

FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT

Laila Racevskis kicked off the post lasagna session by welcoming us and providing an introduction to the region. To situate ourselves we collectively recalled what had stood out from our previous session in Punta Gorda and then began to explore the important aspects of this session, located near the Green Swamp. Once we were familiar with the session context, Jon conducted activities designed to deepen our understanding of conflict. In groups of two we came up with definitions of conflict which were then discussed and compared to a “formal” definition from the conflict literature. We then listed as many words as possible that suggest conflict, from slang to synonyms to words linked to emotions. After compiling our lists we discussed the reason for so many different words; just as Eskimos have many terms for snow because it is something they live with all the time, we have many conflict-related words because it is so pervasive, because we need to be able to describe it. After a subsequent brainstorming session on potential negative and positive outcomes of



Jon Dain leads the Fellows in a session to deepen their understanding of conflict. Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

conflict, Jon reminded us that conflict just “is” - it is not in itself good or bad and we have some power to control outcomes. In NRLI we are learning how to maximize the *positive* potential of conflict while minimizing the negative. There is not always a “resolution” for a given conflict, sometimes conflict just needs to be managed to keep it from escalating and becoming destructive.

DRAMA BY THE RIVER: AN EXERCISE IN VALUES.

After a short break Bruce lead us through the final activity of the day designed to help us reflect on the role of values and perceptions in situations of conflict. He led us through an engaging theatrical exercise titled, "Drama by the River". Bruce set the stage by telling us a story about five characters that were involved to varying degrees in a violent and deceitful scenario. Each of us had to rank the characters according to how badly we thought they had behaved. We were then divided into groups of five and tasked with reaching group consensus on the ranking of character's behaviors. The result was a great deal of "spirited" discussion and debate and the exercise drove home how difficult it is to bridge values differences. Not all groups were able to reach consensus in the time allotted and varying methods for reaching consensus were employed. It was notable how many of us had very different perceptions of the severity of the characters' behaviors.



NRLI Fellow rates personal values in the exercise, "Drama by the River".



Dean Saunders, Father of the Green Swamp Land Authority speaks with the Fellows during the opening day at Lake Louisa State Park. Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

The conflict discussions were followed by a talk from our context speaker, Dean Saunders, former state representative and staffer to Governor Lawton Chiles. He is a real estate broker in the region and was largely responsible for developing a conservation easement program for landowners in the Green Swamp area. Dean reminded us that the upland area we were studying used to be characterized by citrus groves which were devastated by multiple freezes in the 1980s. As a result of the freezes, many farmers threw in the towel and converted their groves to high density housing developments, much to the dismay of Dean and others. In response, Dean created the legislation that

SAVING THE GREEN SWAMP

formed the Green Swamp Land Authority, the first state mechanism for purchasing conservation easements from landowners in this region. The concept was initially resisted by state agencies who instead wanted to purchase conservation land outright for the State, but eventually the legislation passed. Dean is passionate in his advocacy for protecting landowner rights and spoke about diminishing property values as a result of comprehensive plans and growth management policies, which decrease the density limits for landowners wishing to develop their properties. He views the purchasing of conservation easements as an opportunity to compensate land owners for their losses when potential land uses are limited by regulations. He also stressed that landowners do not like to be told what they can do on their property, and that one of the beauties of conservation easements is that landowners can continue many of their existing uses, such as farming while still protecting areas designated for conservation.

Later that evening, after a delicious taco bar dinner, Whitney led the readings discussion about chapter three from the book Getting to Yes and an article titled, "I'm OK, Your Biased." Chapter three was titled, "Focus on Interests, not Positions" and we discussed examples from the book where independent parties were able to quickly find solutions once they focused on their underlying interests (why they wanted something vs. what they wanted). We also discussed the challenges of putting yourself in the shoes of others. The article on behavioral science led us to an interesting discussion about the biases that we all harbor and the new understandings of these biases revealed by current scientific research. Many of these are stronger than most of us realize. As Daniel Gilbert notes "Research suggests that decision-makers don't realize just how easily and often their objectivity is compromised. The human brain knows many tricks that allow it to consider evidence, weigh facts and still reach precisely the conclusion it favors".

Tour of Shinn Groves and Conservation Easements:

Day two started out with a picturesque sunrise coming through the Spanish moss hanging from the cypress trees that surrounded Lake Dixie and waving in the breeze. To learn more about agriculture and conservation easements we visited a local citrus farm and later discussed easement and landowner issues during a stakeholder panel. In the late afternoon we dove into more techniques for engaging stakeholders, and then concluded the day with a delicious low country boil.

The Fieldtrip:

We left promptly at 8:15am for our field trip to James Shinn's citrus farm near the Green Swamp area. James is a third generation citrus grower, farming land that has belonged to his family since the 1950's. Despite the devastating freezes of the 80's and urban sprawl inflating land values in the area, James made the tough decision to stay in agriculture. Due to his concern about water sources he was eager to learn more about the conservation easements being established through the Green Swamp Land Authority approved in this area and ended up putting an easement on part of his property.

Conservation easements allow farmers to continue farming but require them to increase the Best Management Practices employed in their operation and prevent development from taking place. There is a onetime payment to the seller of the development rights (in this case James Shinn) for this permanent encumbrance of the title. In this way the land stays on the county's tax rolls while maintenance remains the responsibility of the farmer.

James's easement gets inspected once a year to make sure that there is no prohibited construction occurring and to insure he is maintaining all of his required BMP's and controlling exotic invasive plants. On our tour of his citrus farm he showed our group where he has put in buffer areas of pine trees between groves and wetlands to help slow down and remove nutrients from run off. He is also required to carry out controlled burns to clean out underbrush and control pine density. James manages the wildlife on his property and noted that feral hogs are a huge and persistent problem.

All though James' citrus grove provides the majority of his income, he has diversified with a commercial beef cow/ calf operation and is now experimenting with cultivation of Florida peach tree varieties from IFAS. James continues to be a leader in agriculture in this area.



As pictured top to bottom: James Shinn, owner of Shinn Groves, speaks with the Fellows about his farms' conservation efforts and the value of the Green Swamp as Jacob Larson and looks on; Conservation easement located on the Shinn Groves next to the Green Swamp; : James and Charles Shinn show the Fellows an example of citrus greening; Conservation easement provide windbreaks that help protect the groves during major weather events.

Photos by Candy Kaswinkel

STAKEHOLDER PANEL DISCUSSION

Moderated by Ramona Madhosingh-Hector



Fellows sit down with Stakeholders for an informal discussion during Friday afternoon's stakeholder panel

In the afternoon Ramona Madhosingh-Hector moderated this session's Stakeholder Panel Discussion. Panelists included James Shinn (a farmer in the Green Swamp area), Charlie Shinn (a Florida Farm Bureau employee and citrus grower in Indian River County), Shannon McGee (a Natural Resource Extension Agent in Polk County),

and Mark Oswalt (an area land owner and the former Executive Director of the Green Swamp Land Authority).

The initial conversation addressed the topic of conservation easements. Mark provided considerable insight from his vantage point as former GSLA coordinator. He explained that a growing population, a rise in development pressures, and a decrease in potential land-use permits from the DCA all helped make conservation easements look like a good idea. As a participant in the easement process

James was able to explain to us how the process works while noting its costs and benefits. Shannon added her perspective on conservation easements by citing data and sharing area viewpoints as to the advantages and disadvantages of the model. Even though the green swamp was initially thought of as a water recharge area for the aquifer, it is now better understood as

the headwaters for several important rivers vs. a vital underground water source. The question was finally asked about climate change and if there seemed to be a noticeable difference over the past few years. Mark made the point that the biggest change in the area for the last 40 years has not been the climate but the population. He acknowledged that weather patterns had changed some but noted that there have been recorded hard freezes in that area since the late 1800's.

We had a much needed break after the panel discussion, then Laila led a debrief of the experience. The biggest concern was that there was not someone on the panel that opposed the idea of conservation easements. Most everyone liked having the panelist sit among instead of up in front of the fellows and all were very complimentary of Ramona for the job she did as the moderator.



Due to our stay at a park it was the responsibility of the fellows to help provide dinner. Jack Daugherty and Allen Martin took the lead by preparing Low Country Boil. They filled large pots with water and set on the burners to boil. Once boiling, salt was added to season the water and then potatoes, corn on the cob, and mushrooms were added, followed by hot sauce and sausage. Last to enter the mix was fresh shrimp. When declared done, the large pots were dumped out on newspaper-covered table tops for everyone to pick at and enjoy.

It must have been good because there was not much left.

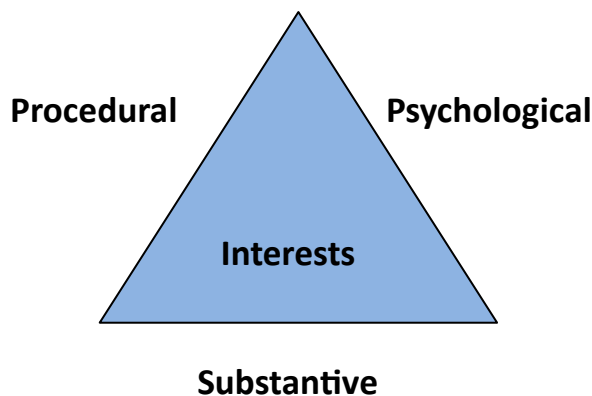
Later that evening there was a great surprise birthday celebration for Laila. We all sang happy birthday and enjoyed a delicious cookie cake made by Jon's daughter Beatrice. The day was enjoyed by all.

FRAMEWORK FOR UNDER- STANDING CONFLICT- PART II

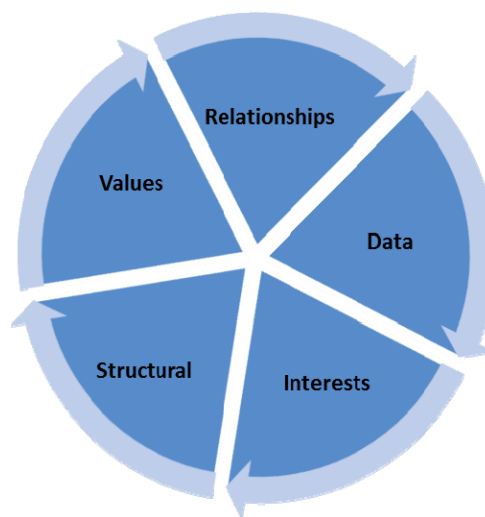


The afternoon continued with part II of Jon Dain’s presentation, “Frameworks for Understanding Conflict.” We learned about the “Triangle of Satisfaction” and the need to consider three different types of interests when negotiating, mediating or even arranging meetings with diverse stakeholders. They are Psychological (how people want to be treated – the emotional aspects of an issue), Substantive (what people care about) and Procedural (how people want to be involved, the process). Recognizing the three types of interests can help reduce the possibility of needless contention by helping us think about stakeholder needs in a more complete way, recognizing that interests often include more than just substantive issues. Jon presented model for better understanding the roots of conflicts which, along with clashing interests, include structural issues (the way a situation is set up), differing values, poor relationships, and concerns about data. We were asked to apply this model to situations we had experienced and attempt to identify invisible but important sources of conflict. The session ended with Jon noting that most environmental management conflicts are rooted in *access* to resources and the *control* (or lack of control) of resources.

Triangle of Interests



Factors that Influence Conflict (Moore 1996)



Practicum Project Proposal Presentations

Day three began with a focus on the practicum projects. Each Fellow gave a 4 minute presentation summarizing their project proposal. Below is a brief synopsis of the proposals being considered and still subject to change:

1. Ondine and Bob - Surveying agencies to determine their responses and preparedness to climate change
2. Ellie - Creating a handbook for agencies to use while addressing climate change
3. Scott and Jacob - creating a local CARES event to let producers know what it takes to become a CARES farm and for educating the public on what local farmers are doing.
4. Mike - Working with multiple agencies to address the ongoing issues at Silver Glen Springs
5. Jack - Addressing derelict boat policies and evaluating current pilot projects.
6. Stacie - Revamping Alachua County Energy Champs program to incorporate water conservation and to assist the County in leading by example.
7. Scott - Assessing the viability of working with volunteers on hunting programs
8. Libby and Ramona - Looking at several Pinellas County municipalities using the NOAA model for Preparedness for Sea Level Rise.
9. Whitney - Evaluating what the Natural Resources Adaption Action Areas could mean for coastal communities
10. M J - Looking at Winter Haven's rain garden projects to see how volunteers and/or students can be utilized.
11. Bette - working with a Bolivian University to develop a master's program
12. Maria - Oyster restoration projects near Panama City, as a means for later addressing more controversial projects.
13. Andy - How to include adaptive management into design and construction projects
14. Allen and Alex - How to properly collect human dimensions into new bass regulations
15. Jen - Working with a partner organization for python competition
16. Katrina - Reviving Volusia County's Sustainability program

Planning Collaboration TimeLine Tool



The final “content” part of the Clermont session was the presentation and practice of a NRLI “tool”. Jon showed how to use the Timeline Tool as a mechanism for getting stakeholders to talk with each other in a non-confrontational way. To better understand how it works we were tasked with creating a timeline of our NRLI experience to date on several pieces of paper taped to the floor. As individuals and as a group we noted key events and learning experiences on the timeline using markers and engaged in a lively discussion about them. It was clear how having a physical activity to complete together facilitated conversations. We then discussed various variations of the exercise such as adding in key events yourself as a facilitator (which may miss what the audience feels are the most important events) and using dots or other symbols to highlight what individuals feel were key

moments, events, conflict points or breakthroughs. There are many ways to use the timeline to glean additional information or facil-

Debrief:

Mike Herrin led the debrief session by using the After Action Review (AAR) methodology in which we collectively answered five questions: 1) What did we intend, 2) What happened, 3) What can we learn from what happened?, 4) What would we do next time, and 5) What can we do now? Some suggestions that came out during the debrief session included providing a sneak preview of the next session at the conclusion of sessions, creating a balanced panel, and the time management options of Fellows presenting practicums.

Feedback:

Maria Merrill; Ellie Sommer; and Alex Gulde led the Feedback Panel. They asked us to write down positive and negative feedback for this session on index cards. They broke us into teams of 4 and each team elected an actor for acting out the feedback cards. This was an energizing and amusing method for exploring feedback.



The Fellows give feedback to the session by acting out different scenarios.
An entertaining way to end the session.

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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 program and have not been formally peer reviewed.