



## Indian River Lagoon: Estuarine Decline

*NRLI seeks to impact decision making in Florida by creating a network of professionals prepared to effectively address natural resource issues through collaborative leadership and conflict management.*

### Letter from the Director

As the newly appointed Director of the Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute (NRLI), I would like to introduce you to one of many initiatives both large and small that we have been engaged in as we work to increase the program's impact on the State of Florida. Starting this month with Class XIV, NRLI will publish an electronic newsletter for each NRLI session and distribute the newsletter to Fellows, NRLI alumni, IFAS Administration, and NRLI supporters.

Each session newsletter will include contributions from the Project Team; an article written by a pair of NRLI Fellows; information on the session venue and issue focus; an overview of the curriculum including tools, skills, and techniques covered; a spotlight on a current class Fellow; and a NRLI alumni spotlight.

I want to take advantage of this opportunity to update you on other positive changes at NRLI as the Program matures. NRLI is now part of the UF/IFAS Center for Leadership; a newly created center led by IFAS Associate Vice President Dr. Joe Joyce. The Center for Leadership will gather several IFAS Leadership programs under one organizational umbrella. While each program will maintain its unique niche within IFAS, the Center will provide new energy and opportunity in supporting the overall mission of IFAS and the University.

I would also like to welcome NRLI's new full-time Program Coordinator, Jessica Ireland, to the Project Team. The hiring of Jessica is yet another positive change for the NRLI program. Jessica is a native Floridian and a graduate of NRLI Class XIII. Prior to coming to work for NRLI, she was the coordinator of the multi-million dollar PINEMAP Project in the School of Forest Resources and Conservation at UF. Her graduate degree is in forest resources and conservation with a concentration in environmental education and communication. The rest of the Project Team looks forward to a long and successful working relationship with Jessica.

Finally, we have developed a schedule, including dates, locations, and topics, for NRLI Class XV (2015-2016). Applications will be accepted as of November 1, 2014. Class size is limited; applicants are encouraged to apply early. The project team will periodically review applications and notify applicants of their status. There is no application fee. Please visit the NRLI web site (<http://nrli.ifas.ufl.edu>) or contact Jessica Ireland ([jjtireland@ufl.edu](mailto:jjtireland@ufl.edu)) for additional information.

Sincerely,

*Jon Dain*

Thank you to Class XIV Fellows Stacie Auvenshine and Jessica Mendes for contributing material to the first issue of the NRLI newsletter.

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## Session Overview

Seventeen NRLI Fellows traveled from as far as Pensacola and Key Largo for the first session of Class XIV held August 7-9, 2014 in Stuart, Florida. The overarching theme of Class XIV is “Water and land use: Managing conflict in a changing landscape.” The issue focus for the inaugural session for Class XIV was estuarine decline in the Indian River Lagoon.

Dr. Mark Perry, Executive Director of the Florida Oceanographic Center, gave the context presentation, providing a thorough overview of water issues throughout south Florida, including Everglades restoration projects and estuarine decline in the Indian River Lagoon. Dr. Perry discussed flows from Lake Okeechobee contributing to water quality issues within the St. Lucie Estuary, as well as other factors that impact water quality, including agriculture and urban development.

For the field trip, fellows had the opportunity to go out into the lagoon and participate in seine netting. Seine netting is a method of fishing that employs a seine or dragnet. A seine is a fishing net that hangs vertically in the water with its bottom edge held down by weights and its top edge buoyed by floats. Seine nets can be deployed from the shore or from a boat. Tom Reinert, Research Administrator with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and his crew were generous enough to provide a marine research boat and seine net for the field trip. Fellows got into the lagoon and

deployed a 600 foot seine net and then pulled the seine net into the boat to identify species and take various biological measurements. Fellows pulled in 2 seine nets and got to see a large variety of fish, including trunkfish, flounder, sea trout, mullet, eel, snook, bonefish, lookdown, barracuda, and pufferfish.

A key component of each NRLI session is hearing from multiple stakeholders who are affected by or who have the power to affect the issue being studied. Hearing from stakeholders with widely varying perspectives provides background into the complexity of the issue and helps to shed light onto why conflict exists. At this session, a panel of stakeholders joined us to share their personal perspectives on the decline of the Indian River Estuary and how this has affected them and their community and/or businesses. Stakeholders who joined us at this session are listed below.

- ◆ Jim Borher, recreational fisherman
- ◆ Leroy Creswell, University of Florida IFAS Extension Sea Grant Program
- ◆ Scott Deal, CEO and President, Maverick Boat Company
- ◆ George Jones, Indian Riverkeeper
- ◆ Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch, Commissioner, Town of Sewall’s Point



Tom Reinert, FWC Research Administrator, talks to Class XIV Fellows about water quality issues in the Indian River Lagoon and the type of marine research that FWC conducts in the lagoon. Photo by Jessica Ireland.



Class XIV Fellows, under the instruction of FWC Marine Biologists, begin to deploy the seine net in the lagoon. The net was 600 feet long! Photo by Jessica Ireland.



Pufferfish and Striped burrfish were among two of the many species collected (and released!) during the seine netting activity. Photo by Jessica Ireland.

# Curriculum Focus: Introduction to Natural Resource Leadership

During Session 1, fellows spent time getting to know each other and were welcomed to the NRLI program and introduced to the NRLI leadership philosophy. Specifically, the objectives of session 1 were to:

- ◆ Build a cohort and atmosphere of trust.
- ◆ Explain the NRLI curriculum and Fellows' tasks.
- ◆ Review Fellows' and Project Team roles and expectations.
- ◆ Visit the Indian River Lagoon; meet and hear from stakeholders.
- ◆ Explore the concept of leadership in natural resource management.
- ◆ Initiate a discussion of water issues and stakeholders in Florida.

Everyone was nervous and excited to meet and learn more about their fellow NRLI scholars, and the first exercise, "Steps to NRLI," was a tool for getting to know each other. Fellows used masking tape to make a giant map of the United States on the ground so that everyone could walk around the map, stating where they are from and describing 3-4 steps in their life/career that brought them to the NRLI program.

Fellows were introduced to the NRLI philosophy of leadership in natural resource management and the NRLI competencies and Fellows' tasks. Fellows also worked together to establish group norms for their class, including 'respect time,' 'be engaged and participate,' 'be positive,' 'listen,' 'be respectful of others' opinions and respect differences,' 'don't disrupt,' and a long-standing NRLI tenet, 'hard on the issue, easy on the people'.



Fellows discuss NRLI competencies. Photo by Jessica Ireland.

To assure that the skills learned in NRLI go beyond the classroom, a practicum is built into the program. Each fellow develops a project that allows them to apply skills and concepts learned in NRLI to actual conflict, decision making, or leadership situations in their organizations or communities. Fellows were introduced to the NRLI practicum during session 1 and encouraged to begin brainstorming ideas to share at the next session.

To gain a better understanding of the complexity of water issues in Florida, Fellows worked in small groups and brainstormed the major water issues in Florida, thinking about both water quality and quantity, as well as access to water resources, control of water resources, and access to and control of decision-making.



Fellows brainstormed water issues in Florida. Photo by Jessica Ireland.

## Looking ahead: Class XIV Session 2

For session 2, we will be in Pensacola. The issue focus is beaches, hurricanes, and sea level rise, and the curriculum focus is analyzing natural resource conflicts and collaboration.

## Class XIV Fellows

**Alison Adams**, Assistant Professor, University of Florida School of Forest Resources and Conservation

**Carrie Stevenson**, Coastal Sustainability Agent, UF/IFAS Escambia County Extension

**Gene McAvoy**, Regional Vegetable Extension Agent/County Extension Director, UF/IFAS Hendry County Extension

**Jeremy Olson**, Land Management Specialist, St. Johns River Water Management District

**Kimberly Sykes**, Deputy Manager, Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Clay Coarsey**, Professional Engineer, Suwannee River Water Management District

**Greg Gibson**, Lt. Colonel/Deputy Director, Division of Law Enforcement, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

**Matt Arsenault**, Policy Analyst, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Office of Energy

**Stacie Auvenshine**, Biologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**Bonnie Wolff-Pelaez**, Environmental Manager, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

**Scott Calleson**, Biological Scientist IV, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

**Patty Hutfles**, Senior Project Manager, Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Inc.

**Beth Dieveney**, Deputy Superintendent for Science and Policy, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**Tamela Kinsey**, Environmental Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**Jessica Mendes**, Research Analyst, Lee County Environmental Policy Management

**James Erskine**, Acting Director, Water Resources Department, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida

**Allen Scheffer**, Assistant Director of Field Services District I, Florida Farm Bureau Federation



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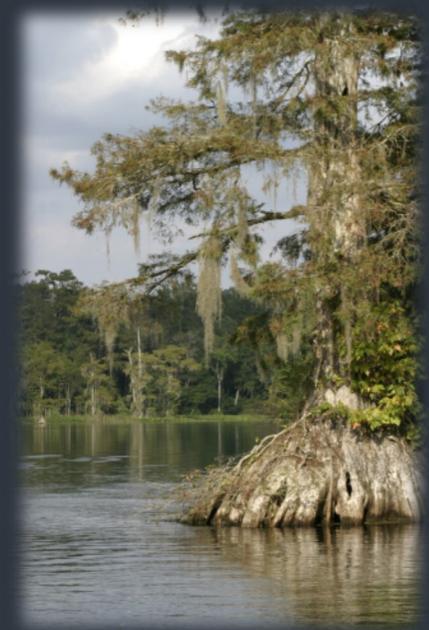
*Collaborative solutions for natural resource challenges*

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