Fellows and Project Team members traveled to Crystal River, Florida for the sixth session of NRLI Class XVI, which focused on recreation and the endangered Florida manatee. Fellows heard from Ivan Vicente, NRLI alumnus of Class XV who works for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service as Visitor Services Specialist for Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Ivan explained how the weather systems trigger the arrival of manatees and with temperatures dipping into the low 40s, Fellows were in for a treat. He described numerous stakeholder meetings that he had attended and facilitated as well as how perceptions of manatee protection have changed over the years. Recreation and species protection goals do not always go hand in hand.

On Friday morning Fellows participated in a ‘swim with the manatees’ tour with Captain Mike. The trip to Kings Bay allowed Fellows to observe both the manatees and the surrounding ecotourism scene. After having lunch, Ivan Vicente led us on a boardwalk tour of Three Sisters Springs where large groups of manatees had congregated to keep warm. Field trips are generally followed by an opportunity to hear from a variety of stakeholders. As part of each monthly session, we invite individuals who represent a range of viewpoints and have first-hand knowledge of the topic to take part in a stakeholder discussion.

Joining us for a conversation about recreation and the Florida manatee were:

- Mike Engiles, Crystal River Watersports; President, Manatee Ecotourism Association (META)
- Pat Rose, Director of Science and Conservation, Save the Manatee Club
- Joyce Palmer, Refuge Manager, Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Roger Smith, Water Patrol, City of Crystal River
- Lisa Moore, President, Save Crystal River Inc.
- Phyllis Rosetti-Mercer, Chair, Waterfront Advisory Board, City of Crystal River

The NRLI Project Team would like to extend our sincere thanks to Ivan Vicente, NRLI Alumnus Class XV, for his assistance with and valuable contributions to the Crystal River session. Thank you, Ivan, for all of your time and efforts!
During the skill-building portions of the session, Fellows practiced framing for collaborative problem-solving and considered the role of collaborative approaches in advocacy. To initiate learning, the group was divided in half for a role play. Fellows represented two organizations that were tasked with advocating for particular approaches to managing water releases from Lake Okeechobee. A central goal of the activity was to recognize that we all frame issues as a way to organize our world. However, recognizing our own patterns and learning how to re-frame issues can be a tool for conflict resolution. By understanding the issues that are important to “the other side” and by considering that our assumptions are often based on limited information, we can begin to create pathways toward collaboration. In closure, Fellows reflected on how they frame issues within their organizations and how this might affect the options available for finding common ground among stakeholder groups.

Prior to session 6, Fellows received an assignment to observe a meeting at their work or in their community and to write up an analysis. During the session, a panel of Fellows described those meetings and key lessons learned. Common questions emerged, such as

- What happens if there is no agenda?
- What do you do when more people show up than expected?
- What happens when facilitators fail to pay attention to cultural norms of who can or should talk first?
- Can ice breakers really change institutional power dynamics?

Fellows observed the importance of managing both task and maintenance functions of groups. One person reflected on the critical need for practicing patience — “Be flexible and let things unfold.”

During another curriculum-related activity, Fellows practiced strategies for dealing with difficult interpersonal and group dynamics. They began the activity in pairs, discussing behaviors that bug them. After considering why those behaviors tend to trigger a negative response, they examined what they do themselves to irritate others. Moving beyond self-reflection, the discussion focused on how difficult behaviors in group situations, such as during meetings, can be managed through specific interventions. In selecting strategies, facilitators are called to think about what is best for the group. Coping strategies might include: taking a break, forming small groups, using the “parking lot” flipchart, redirecting and rephrasing. Understanding what is behind the behavior is often the first step to selecting an appropriate strategy. Therefore, Fellows were encouraged to consider: Why do talkers talk and why are some people quiet?
Class XVI Fellows

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**Tyler Beck**, Snail Kite Conservation Coordinator, Species Conservation Planning Section, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

**Amy Castaneda**, Water Quality Manager, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida

**Walter Cheatham**, Education Coordinator, Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium

**Houston Cypress**, Co-Founder, Love the Everglades Movement

**Courtney Davis**, Florida Vegetable Sales Representative, Speedling, Inc.

**Sarah Funck**, Nonnative Fish and Wildlife Program Coordinator, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

**Margaret Guyette**, Water Resource Data Manager, St. Johns River Water Management District

**Katie Hallas**, Environmental Administrator, Office of Agricultural Water Policy, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

**Basil Iannone III**, Assistant Professor, University of Florida School of Forest Resources and Conservation/Program for Resource Efficient Communities/Center for Landscape Conservation and Ecology

**Scott Kihei**, Law Enforcement Captain, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

**Audrey Kuipers**, Program Manager, Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District

**Jason Mathis**, County Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship (CARES) Program Coordinator, Florida Farm Bureau Federation

**Meredith Moreno**, Archaeologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**Maddie Southard**, Communications Consultant, Florida Wildlife Corridor

**Jessica Stempien**, Environmental Administrator, Office of Agricultural Water Policy, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

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**Donald Voss**, Founder/Long-term Strategies, One Florida Foundation, Inc.

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