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.

Most people I know who have visited Apalachicola fall in love with it. They can’t help themselves; the flowing river, the historical waterfront, and the magnificent bay all combine to remind us of a time when life was simpler. On the surface, Apalachicola is a sleepy place with a small-town feel. Sunglass-clad tourists dine on fresh seafood while birds lazily flap about the bay; both seem indifferent to the struggle between present and past tense that permeates the town and its seafood processing houses just down the road.

NRLI Fellows visited Apalachicola because the calm and shimmering waters of the Bay represent one of the most contentious and polarizing natural resource disputes in the State of Florida. For almost 30 years, Florida, Georgia, and Alabama have jockeyed for position over access to and control of water resources. At the center (and the margins) of the fight in Florida are the Apalachicola oystermen and women whose way of life is fast disappearing. Generations have plied the bay, fishing, crabbing, and tonging oysters. It is an economic system based on access to marine resources, but more importantly, it is a cultural system whose foundations have been rocked by decisions made elsewhere and by environmental changes few could have predicted. One member of our stakeholder panel described Apalachicola and its seafood industry as a “constant crisis interrupted only by disaster.”

The situation is complex and full of uncertainty and high emotions are the norm. There are upstream issues – the thirst of an important and vibrant Atlanta; midstream issues – agricultural water needs; and downstream issues – bay ecosystem health and economic collapse. As a result, states squabble and sue each other while researchers search for causes, document impacts, and model scenarios. Like most environmental conflicts, the issues go beyond saving an extraordinary ecosystem. There are serious threats to individual and community health and to the economic and cultural viability of the entire area. For residents, it must seem like there are always new challenges alongside old arguments over who is responsible for the problems and what should be done.

In Apalachicola, we learned that those who depend on the estuary have diminishing access to its dwindling riches and want more control over its future. They have clear, substantive socioeconomic needs, and they also want a fair and transparent process for decision-making and some semblance of dignity in the face of forced and accelerating change. Representatives of local interests joined an organization called the ACF Stakeholders, “A diverse group of individuals, corporations, and non-profit organizations throughout Alabama, Florida, and Georgia that represent all of the interests within the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint basin” (http://acfstakeholders.org/). Together, the members have developed a thoughtful and detailed proposal that offers a blueprint for breaking through decades-old intractability.

In the classic 60’s tune “Dock of the Bay,” Otis Redding looks out over the water and figures nothing will ever change. Those living in and around Apalachicola Bay look out and know that the opposite is true; everything changes, often when we least expect it. The ACF Stakeholders and local leaders are trying to wrest back control of decision-making and the future of the ACF basin; they are working to use conflict management as an opportunity for positive change.
Session Overview

Class XV met in beautiful St. George Island September 10-12 for Session 2: Threats to a productive estuary. We visited the Apalachicola community to learn about factors impacting the health of the Apalachicola Bay, seafood industries, and the livelihood and culture of the community.

On Thursday, September 10, Apalachicola Riverkeeper Dan Tonsmeire spoke to the group. Having begun his tenure in 2004, he has served as Riverkeeper since May of 2010. Dan provided background on the ecology and hydrology of the 19,600 square mile Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) River Basin. The 112,000 acre Apalachicola River floodplain hosts the highest biodiversity of any river system in North America; the ACF River Basin drains into the Apalachicola Bay, supporting a $200 million local seafood industry, an industry that has historically provided 90% of Florida oysters and 10% of U.S. oysters, shrimp, crab, and finfish. Dan noted that there are four interrelated threats to the health and productivity of the River Basin and Bay: reduced freshwater flows from the ACF River Basin, loss of floodplain and wetland habitat, increased pollution, and poorly planned, unconstrained growth. These factors are confounded by legal action amongst the states that the River Basin flows through (Georgia, Alabama, and Florida) and the multitude of stakeholder groups impacted by decisions made regarding water use, storage, and allocation. The Apalachicola Riverkeeper is a partner in the ACF Stakeholders group. Established 22 years ago, the mission of the ACF Stakeholders is “to change the operation and management of the ACF Basin to achieve: equitable solutions among stakeholders that balance economic, ecological, and social values and viable solutions that ensure that the entire ACF Basin is a sustainable resource for current and future generations.”

On Friday, September 11, the group took a three-hour boat tour of the Apalachicola River and Bay with representatives of the Apalachicola Maritime Museum. The trip provided Fellows with a better understanding of the river, those who depend on it, and the connection between the fresh and saltwater resources that nourish the bay.

A key component of NRLI is emphasis on the importance of learning about diverse perspectives, particularly among those involved in and affected by natural resource issues in the communities that we study. After the boat trip and a riverside lunch in Apalachicola, Fellows spent the afternoon with stakeholders who joined us for a discussion of threats to the estuary and impacts on their communities. Stakeholders included:

- Betty Webb, City Administrator, Apalachicola; Board Chair, Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) Stakeholders
- Joe Taylor, Executive Director, Franklin’s Promise Coalition
- Steve Allen, Carrabelle Cares, Inc. Board Member
- Erik Lovestrand, County Extension Director; Sea Grant Regional Specialized Agent, UF/IFAS Extension, Franklin County

Following the stakeholder panel, Fellows had the opportunity to hear from lifelong resident of Apalachicola and former oysterman, Richard Scarabin. Having been involved in the seafood industry in Apalachicola for decades, Richard has seen many changes, both positive and negative. In a session facilitated by Bruce Delaney, he shared with Fellows his candid opinions and perspectives on the status of the industry and community as well as his vision for what the future holds.

To learn more about the session from the perspective of Class XV Fellows, please read the Fellows’ article written by Samantha Danchuk and Angeline Scotten (page 5).
During session 2, Fellows participated in activities designed to accomplish the objectives of the session which were to:

1. Define conflict and examine conflict related to natural resource management.
2. Explore the concept of stakeholders; distinguish between positions and interests.
3. Discuss and practice empathic listening.
4. Apply the ‘triangle of needs and interests’ to stakeholder analysis.
5. Learn about and practice using the situation assessment tool.
6. Explore session issue: threats to a productive estuary; meet with Apalachicola Bay stakeholders.

**Empathic Listening**

The skill of listening is a central part of the NRLI curriculum. Empathic listening is a way of listening and responding to another person to improve mutual understanding. The goal is to effectively understand and accurately interpret another person’s meanings, to “seek to understand before seeking to be understood.”

Empathic listening has several benefits: it forces us to listen attentively to others, it helps avoid misunderstandings, and it tends to open people up, to get them to say more. Empathic listening builds trust and safety.

During this session led by Paul Monaghan and Jessica Ireland, Fellows learned about the key qualities of empathic listening and then participated in a group role play where one Fellow played the role of the listener, one the role of the speaker, and another the role of the observer. The small groups rotated roles so that everyone had a chance to experience speaking, listening, and observing, then the group as a whole spent time processing the experience: Was it easy or difficult to be the listener? For the speakers, did you feel listened to; what did listeners do to indicate they were listening? What empathic listening skills did the listener employ?

**Introduction to Conflict**

NRLI focuses on conflict management and collaborative leadership. In session one (*Space Coast in Transition*), Fellows were introduced to the NRLI concept of leadership. In session two, the focus was on conflict. Because conflict is ubiquitous and complex, we use many different words to describe, manage, and frame it. The terms we use can either help or hinder problem solving. Jon Dain led Fellows through an activity that encouraged them to identify words associated with conflict. Fellows wrote words on post-its, stuck them on the wall, and then grouped and discussed them. We use so many words to describe conflict because it is such an integral part of our lives.

Jon then led Fellows in a discussion of the NRLI definition of conflict, the positive and negative outcomes of conflict, and the nuances of environmental conflicts. In NRLI, conflict is defined as: a relationship between two or more parties; a real or perceived threat to needs, interests, or concerns; marked by violence or not; and a normal part of human life. Although conflict is usually considered in a negative context (the roots of the word are “con” and “flict” — to strike together), conflict can lead to positive outcomes. In NRLI, conflict management is viewed as an opportunity for collaborative problem-solving and positive change.

Environmental conflicts of the type studied by NRLI Fellows are particularly challenging because they involve multiple and competing parties, jurisdictions, issues, and resources. They are often characterized by high emotions because the fundamental issues at stake can have implications for individual and community health, racial and ethnic justice, survival of species, integrity or destruction of ecosystems, economic or cultural viability, and access to treasured resources (Dukes, 2004). This is in contrast with interpersonal conflicts which are rarely simple but also far less complex.
Stakeholders, Positions, & Interests

Although the term stakeholder is widely used, it is not always clearly defined. This session, led by Jon Dain, began with brainstorming and open discussion regarding “what is a stakeholder?” Stakeholders are those affected by an issue or conflict, those who can affect an issue or conflict, or those who have special information or expertise on the topic. For stakeholders in a given situation to be able to collaboratively problem solve when there are strong disagreements, it is important for them to move beyond their “positions” and instead focus on “interests.” Positions are the parties’ preferred answers—what they want or don’t want; interests refer to why those answers are important—why they want or don’t want something (RESOLVE, 2007). Listening for and discussing needs and interests is vital to conflict management because positions cannot be negotiated, whereas sharing interests can create opportunities for mutual gain (Fisher & Ury, 1980).

Fellows were also introduced to the “triangle of needs and interests” which is based on the theory that people have three interdependent types of needs and interests that should be carefully considered when holding difficult conversations or planning activities to address contentious issues (CDR Associates, 2007 – based on C. Moore, 1986). The three types of interests are: procedural (how people want to be involved—process matters); psychological (how people want to be treated—relationships matter); and substantive (what people care about—substance matters). Conflicts can arise when people feel that one or more of their needs and interests have been unnecessarily sacrificed in pursuit of someone else’s objectives (Arnold, 2011). After introducing the triangle of needs and interests, we also discussed types of environmental conflicts and what makes environmental conflicts unusually difficult to solve (i.e., the complexity, the upstream/downstream aspects, and the multiple jurisdictions that are often involved).

Finally, Fellows were introduced to and practiced using a tool called the situation assessment. This matrix can be used to help one define the issue being examined, including the stakeholders involved and their respective positions and interests; the power stakeholders have to influence the situation; strategies for engaging stakeholders; the history of the issue; and relationships between stakeholders. It was a lot to cover in one session, but Fellows now have a basic set of concepts and skills that will serve as a base for the rest of the year’s activities.

NRLI Practicum

For the practicum, Fellows develop 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 came to session 2 with initial ideas for their practicum project and a technique called the Margolis Wheel was used to engage them in sharing those ideas and providing feedback on the ideas of others. Sharing ideas also allowed for identification of opportunities for partnering on a project. Fellows will come to the next session with a draft practicum proposal and situation assessment.

Two-minute Introductions

In an effort to help Fellows get to know each other better while practicing the challenging art of conveying complex topics in a short amount of time, group members were tasked with introducing themselves via a two-minute presentation. The only rules were a two-minute (enforced) time limit and the prohibition of PowerPoint. The Project Team (and the Fellows) were amazed and impressed by the creative and effective presentations which included the use of props, poems, images, and music to share personal stories.
The second session of NRLI Class XV took place in picturesque Apalachicola. Upon arrival, the Fellows enjoyed a beautiful, scenic drive along Franklin County’s coast up along the Apalachicola Bay. For those of us who had never been to this region before, the beauty of the Forgotten Coast was not lost on us.

This session delved into Threats to a Productive Estuary, but it also focused the Fellow’s attention on conflict related to resource management, the concept of stakeholders, and empathic listening.

Apalachicola is a proud community that relies on the resources of the Apalachicola Bay. One of the main resources that they relied upon in recent history was oysters. With the collapse of the Bay in 2012, locals saw their previous way of life changing. Many oystermen could no longer make a living, he moved to landlocked Tallahassee. After spending the weekend with NRLI, I understood but knew that there was much more to the story. I smiled and thanked him and drove across the street to catch my flight. On the plane, I reflected on the uniqueness of the local lifestyle, the calmness of the river and downtown area, how much easier it is to breathe in such a low density community surrounded by natural space, and how impossible it would be for a coastal native like me to move more than even 10 minutes from the ocean permanently. It finally hit me how much Apalachicolans are having to give up by leaving their home for economic opportunity. The ones who stay innately embody the resilient and adaptive spirit most desired but not well replicated in the more developed areas of the state. I realized they are the people that will survive the next real estate crash or natural disaster. Not because of all of the systems, infrastructure, and policy constructed to protect but because they have naturally learned to adapt for generations while living off of the land. This trip gave me new perspective on community resilience. It also reminded me to listen, to avoid assuming one stakeholder represents all, to remember an informal one on one conversation can be as enlightening as a panel of experts, and to realize that removing oneself from their professional role in order to understand someone else’s perspective may yield a more functional solution. Kudos NRLI!

The cause of the collapse of the bay is somewhat debatable. Depending on the source, the cause is a lack of freshwater from the river, restrained at the headwaters in Georgia, over-harvesting, impacts from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, use of dispersants, or a combination of the above.

Arguably, one of the most enjoyable parts of this session was the Fellow’s candid conversation with a local oysterman. His perspective and unfiltered description of the bay, the changes, and his theory for the collapse of the bay gave the Fellow’s a unique perspective into this little town. The oysterman left most of us feeling gratitude for our professions and our roles as stewards to Florida’s natural resources. A reflection by one Fellow on the uniqueness of the local characters and their challenge is shared below:

“On my way out of town, I could not resist stopping for a bag of Cajun boiled peanuts. I wanted just one more reminder of our trip to Apalachicola, a land of simple pleasures and traditions and open and honest people. On the drive, my thoughts had already wandered back to home. This stop was about to be the last time I thought about an alternate way of life for a while. As I walked up to the truck, I overheard the peanut man sharing a story with the customer ahead of me. I assumed they knew each other. Then, I realized he was just another stranger like me. Even so, the peanut man was comfortable sharing family details and inviting people into his world. When it was my turn to order, he changed stories, talking about buying feed and selling peanuts at 7:30 this morning. For some reason, I followed his example and randomly shared I had brought the rain with me from Apalachicola. He lit up and said he had kinfolk there. In fact, he was from there but moved because he felt he could not do anything without getting a ticket. I asked him if he was an oysterman. He said yes, and a crabber and fisherman, amongst other roles. When he

Images of the Apalachicola River (top) and Bay (bottom) from the Session 2 field trip. Photos by Jessica Ireland.
Erin McDevitt
South Region Marine Habitat Coordinator, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Erin McDevitt has been the Southeast Marine Habitat Manager for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) since 2005. She received her BS in biology from Florida Atlantic University in 1996 and her MS from the Florida Institute of Technology in Environmental Science in 2003. Her primary objectives are to work within the FWC’s Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Restoration Section to manage estuarine and marine habitats within the Southeast Florida region. Her job duties include coordination with local, state, and federal agencies and stakeholder groups to manage estuarine and marine resources. A primary objective is identifying, developing, and implementing coordinated restoration projects for estuarine and marine resources, including mangrove, seagrass, oyster, and coral reef communities. An example of successful restoration partnerships includes the initiation of a mooring buoy program in Palm Beach County in 2009 designed to protect nearshore reefs from anchor damage. Another project, just completed, restored 13 acres of “dead zone” in the Lake Worth Lagoon to seagrass, mangrove, and tidal marsh habitat. A project near completion is restoration of an impounded mangrove marsh in St. Lucie County which will result in restoration of 178+ acres of mangrove marsh currently infested with Brazilian Peppers and experiencing a mangrove die-off due to impaired hydrology. Working with stakeholders is a vital aspect to Erin’s position, too, and currently includes serving as a Vice Chair of the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative (SEFCRI). The SEFCRI Team first gathered in May 2003 to develop local action strategies targeting coral reefs and associated reef resources from Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Martin counties to improve the coordination of technical and financial support for the conservation and management of coral reefs. Job responsibilities also include duties pertaining to marine debris, exotic marine species, tracking and monitoring coral disease, responding to ship groundings, and providing comments to regulatory agencies in regards to Environmental Resource Permit applications. Erin enjoys participating in outreach events and presenting marine habitat topics and issues to schools and community groups. Prior to obtaining her current position, she worked at the Florida Marine Research Institute in Tequesta, Florida as a Fisheries Biologist.

Erin lives in Hobe Sound with her family. Erick, her husband, is a fish biologist with FWC currently engaged in research tracking snook and goliath grouper through an acoustic tagging program. Her 8-year old daughter Emilee is a music lover and likes to spend free time reading and writing books and playing Minecraft. Jake, her 4-year old son, likes to “nuggle” (i.e. snuggle) and is obsessed with cars, construction equipment, helicopters, and tormenting the family dog. Erin has a not-so-green thumb but still likes to garden and especially enjoys attracting and raising butterflies. A highlight for the family is their twice annual visits to Erin’s hometown in Pennsylvania where the kids love to fish in farm ponds and to catch crawdads, frogs, tadpoles, and lightning bugs.

Jody Lee
Environmental Manager, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Agricultural Water Policy

Jody is currently with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) in the Office of Agricultural Water Policy (OAWP). He has been with OAWP since 2001. The OAWP has staff in all of the Water Management Districts, and Jody is based in Palatka at the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD). Jody assists producers in enrolling in Best Management Practices (BMP) Programs as well as assisting them with cost share programs. Jody also conducts Implementation Assurance visits to make sure producers are implementing appropriate BMPs as well as conducting workshops with various agricultural groups throughout the District. Jody is also involved as a member of several Basin Working Groups to develop Basin Management Action Plans in the SJRWMD. Jody finds it enjoyable work to see the advancements made in agricultural production regarding conservation over the last several years. Prior to his time with FDACS, Jody was with the SJRWMD for 10 years doing water quality and maintaining a geophysical logging database. Jody lives in Palatka with his wife Cristie, daughter Lexie, and son Brandon. The family also has three dogs, Abby, Eli, and Ziva.

Tracy Wyman
Landscape Architect, Independent

Tracy Wyman is an emerging professional in Landscape Architecture with two years’ experience in professional practice. She received her BLA from the University of Florida in 2013 with a minor in Sustainability in the Built Environment. Her personal and academic travels to Central America and Southeast Asia have contributed deeply to her interest in understanding cultural and natural resource perspectives - the catalyst of her passion for thoughtful and truly sustainable design that is both ecologically functional and culturally meaningful, being inclusive of community in the process.

She enjoys bringing visibility to natural systems through a variety of projects, and desires to apply her love for landscape architecture through design that artfully inspires and promotes restoration of the human-nature relationship.
NRLI Alumni Spotlight

Steve Allen
Board of Directors, Carabelle CARES; NRLI Class VIII

Steve Allen was a NRLI fellow in class VIII and was sponsored by a local non-profit, Carabelle CARES. He thoroughly enjoyed this experience and attributes his success on local, state, and national initiatives to the concepts he learned and the experiences he had as a NRLI Fellow.

As a member of the Carabelle CARES board, Steve has participated in emerging community issues which include: development of a management plan for McKissick Beach and Jordan Bayou, environment and historic preservation issues, and ongoing initiatives to protect public access.

Professionally, Steve serves as the National Services Coordinator of PolicyWorks, a national non-profit targeted to helping young people with disabilities connect to jobs and careers. He is also an architectural designer working with Hexaport, a Florida-based company specializing in the design and manufacture of environmentally-friendly, high quality modular homes in Northwest Florida.

Steve is a charter member of the Board of Carabelle CARES and play important roles in the community including: President of the Board of the Crooked River Lighthouse, Coordinator of the Carabelle Riverfront “Pirates of the Carrabellan” Festival which each year draws thousands of visitors to Carabelle to experience local seafood and enjoy the hijinks of the invading Pirates. He has also served as a member of the Carabelle Planning and Zoning Commission since 2004.

Looking Forward

Class XV Sessions 3-8

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Class XVI (2016-2017)

We are currently accepting applications for Class XVI which will begin in August 2016 and conclude in April 2017. The Class XVI schedule (including topics and venues) will be finalized and posted soon.

For additional information, visit the NRLI website (http://nrli.ifas.ufl.edu/NRLI_classXVI.shtml) and/or contact NRLI Program Coordinator Jessica Ireland (jjtireland@ufl.edu).

http://nrli.ifas.ufl.edu
Class XV Fellows

Brad Austin, Dairy Farmer/Co-Owner, Cindale Farms
Angela Collins, Florida Sea Grant Extension Agent, UF/IFAS Extension/Sea Grant Manatee County
Samantha Danchuk, Assistant Director, Broward County Environmental Planning and Community Resilience Division
Lori Edwards, Supervisor of Elections, Polk County
Gretchen Ehlinger, Senior Technical Manager/Senior Biologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Planning & Policy Division Jacksonville District
Greg Harden, Field Representative, Florida Farm Bureau Federation
Andy Kohler, Land Management Specialist, St. John’s River Water Management District
Shelby Krantz, Coordinator, Southeast Climate Consortium, University of Florida
Jody Lee, Environmental Manager, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Agricultural Water Policy
Erin McDevitt, South Region Marine Habitat Coordinator, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation
Cheryl Millett, Biologist, The Nature Conservancy
Marta Reczko, Water Resources Manager, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida
Chad Rischar, Senior Project Manager, St. John’s River Water Management District
Fred Rondeau, FWC Captain, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Division of Law Enforcement
Angeline Scotten, Senior Wildlife Assistance Biologist, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation
Jason Spinning, Chief, Coastal Navigation Section, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Planning and Policy Division, Jacksonville District
Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch, Town Commissioner, Town of Sewell’s Point
Nick Trippel, Research Associate, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
Ivan Vicente, Visitor Services Specialist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Tracy Wyman, Landscape Architect, Independent

Collaborative solutions for natural resource challenges

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