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Photo by IFAS Communication Services/Tyler Jones

Introduction

Graduation was held at the Paramount Resort Hotel in Gainesville and was well attended by leaders from UF IFAS, the School of Natural Resources and Environment, NRLI program staff, and NRLI Alumni representing all previous NRLI classes. The alumni were pleased to have the opportunity to visit with Drs. Roy Carriker and Burl Long; previous directors of NRLI. The current Director, Dr. Laila Racevskis, presented awards for Alumni of the Year and the Honorary Director's Award, as well as the 3rd Annual Burl Long Award. Congratulations to all twenty NRLI Class VIII graduates and to the award recipients!

The graduates of Class VIII are now part of a network of 155 natural resource professionals in local government, state, and federal agencies, agriculture, private industry, and academia throughout the State of Florida who maintain contact through the NRLI alumni organization.



Future NRLI Fellows

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Our Graduates

James Cato, Senior Associate Dean and Director for the University of Florida, School of Natural Resources and Environment presented the certificates to the graduating Fellows.



Steven Allen, Chief of Information Technology and Product Development, The Capstone Group



Elena Bastidas, Assistant Professor, Nova Southeastern University



Tatiana Borisova, Assistant Professor, UF Food and Resource Economics Department



Kevin Brown, Chief Appraiser, Farm Credit of Florida



Debra Butler, Ecologist, Johnson Engineering, Inc.



Diana Ferguson, Legislative Staff Attorney, Florida Association of Counties



Bryan Fluech Sea Grant Extension Agent, University of Florida Extension Service



Kevin Hennessy, Vice President and Shareholder, Lewis, Longman and Walker, P.A.



Chrissy Hensel, Senior Biologist, Earth Balance



Dianne Hughes, Environmental Consultant, Florida Department of Environmental Protection



Peter Johnson, Regulatory Scientist, St. Johns River Water Management District



Jennison Kipp, Resource Economist, University of Florida Program for Resource Efficient Communities



Carol Lippincott, Owner, Lippincott Consulting, LLC



Tyler Macmillan, Chief of Bureau of Land Management Operations, Northwest Florida Water Management District



Lisa Marie Phillips, Director of Project/Program Management, City Bradenton Beach



Jane Provancha, Senior Scientist and Manager, Dynamac Corporation



Melody Ray-Culp, Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Charles Shinn, Assistant Director of Government and Community Affairs, Florida Farm Bureau Federation



Jennifer Winters, Turtle Habitat Conservation Plan Manager, County of Volusia, Environmental Management

Not pictured:
Joanne Semmer, Environmental Planner, Consultant and Instructor, Osteo Bay Environment, Inc.

All photos were taken by Tyler Jones, IFAS Communications Services

Practicum Presentations

A significant element of each NRLI Class Graduation session is the presentation of the Fellows' Practica. The Fellows assume certain responsibilities when they are accepted into NRLI. Along with committing to participate in each of the seven working sessions, each Fellow agrees to work on a Practicum during his or her time in NRLI. Their Practicum can be a team effort with other Fellows or they can work on one alone. The Practicum should be related to a natural resource issue and should have a real-world outcome.



Charles Shinn presents his practicum while Jon Dain, Tatiana Borisova, Debra Butler and Elena Bastidas look on.

"Audubon of Florida Climate Change Forum." By Peter Johnson

"Community-based Conservation in Afro-Colombian Territories: Reaching Consensus through Conflict Maps." By Elena Bastidas

"Florida Farm Bureau and Community Supported Agriculture: Can They Complement each Other?" By Charles Shinn

"Scenarios: Developing a Community Vision of the Future of Florida Springs." By Carol L. Lippincott

"Living Shorelines – Promoting a Softer Approach than Coastal Hardening." By Melody Ray-Culp and Chrissy Hensel



Bryan Fluech and Joanne Semmer present their practicum during the Friday meeting of the session

"Organizing Community Stakeholders to Discuss the Emergency Dredging of Matanzas Pass." By Bryan Fluech and Joanne Semmer

"Basin Management Action Plan: What can other regions learn from the Lower St. Johns River Basin?" By Tatiana Borisova, Debra Butler, Diana Ferguson, Kevin Hennessy, and Jennison Kipp

"Sea Turtles and Coastal Roadway Lighting, Reaching a Balance for Sea Turtle Survival." By Jennifer Winters, Dianne Hughes and Jane Provancha.

"Recreational Boating in Florida: The Issues of Public Access, Water Quality and Policymaking., Managed Anchorage and Mooring: The Ends to the Means." By Lisa Marie Phillips and Steven Allen

"Water Bottling Plants in the Santa Fe River Basin." By Kevin Brown

"Access Management Strategy for Florida River Island." By Tyler Macmillan

Speakers



Kirby Barrick, IFAS Dean for Academic Programs welcomes the graduates, alumni, friends and families to the Graduation Ceremony



Kevin Hennessey, Class VIII
Class speaker, reflects on his experiences as a NRLI Fellow.



Deborah Burr, NRLI Alumni President speaks at the NRLI Graduation ceremony.



Melissa Meeker,
Keynote Speaker
Board Member, South
Florida Water Manage-
ment District



Attendees to the 2008 NRLI Class VIII Graduation enjoy a welcome reception beside the pool before the ceremonies begin. In the foreground are Wes Wheeler, NRLI Alumni, Class IV and his wife Brenda.

Stan Bronson, NRLI Class II and Ed Wright, Class VI share thoughts during the welcome reception.



Director's Award

Laila Racevskis, NRLI director, presents the Director's Award to Deborah Burr, the NRLI Alumni President. The Director's Award is given each year to the person who goes the extra mile to help the Director plan and carry out the year's activities.



Burl Long Award



Burl Long presents the Burl Long Award to Bryan Fluech.

Started in 2007, the Burl Long Award was stabled to honor one of the founding directors of the Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute. This award is a peer nominated award and given to the Fellow that their classmates consider to have learned and changed the most as a result of their participation in NRLI. This year the class elected two of their classmates they felt held that distinction. They were Bryan Fluech of the UF/IFAS Extension Service and Lisa Marie Phillips with the City of Bradenton Beach.



Burl Long presents the Burl Long Award to Lisa Marie Phillips.

Outstanding Achievement Award

NRLI was pleased to be able to present this award the Melissa Meeker. Ms Meeker is currently employed by Hesperides Group Consulting Firm. She is currently serving on the Board of the South Florida Water Management District and is the President of Sustainable Treasure Coast, Inc.

Formerly, Melissa was employed by Tetra Tech, Inc. as their National Water and Natural Resources Lead. She was also, at one time, the District Director for the Florida DEP. There are many more positions and accomplishments that could be noted here but the important thing is that Melissa Meeker has consistently and effectively promoted responsible planning of Florida's valuable natural resources.



Deborah Burr (L), President of the NRLI Alumni Board of Directors, presents Melissa Meeker (R) with the Outstanding Achievement Award.



Alumni Award

This year's Alumni Award was presented to Deborah Burr, an alumnae of NRLI Class IV. Deborah works for the Florida Wildlife Commission and is the coordinator of the Gopher Tortoise Management Plan. The plan has allowed for the transfer of tortoises from sites proposed for development to natural areas where the tortoises will hopefully be able to thrive.

Wes Wheeler presents the Alumni Award to Deborah Burr at the 2008 NRLI Graduation in Gainesville.

NRLI Project Team

Roy R. Carriker
Jonathan Dain
Bruce Delaney
Marta Hartmann
Bob Jones
Burl F. Long
Laila A. Racevskis
Tom Taylor

2008 NRLI Class VIII Fellows

Steven Allen
Elena Bastidas
Tatiana Borisova
Kevin Brown
Diana Ferguson
Bryan Fluech
Kevin Hennessy
Chrissy Hensel
Dianne Hughes
Peter Johnson
Jennison Kipp
Carol Lippincott
Tyler Macmillan
Debra McQueen
Lisa Marie Phillips
Jane Provancha
Melody Ray-Culp
Joanne Semmer
Charles Shinn
Jennifer Winters

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Alumni Field Trip and Luncheon

By Deborah Burr

Following Friday's festivities, the new Class VIII alumni and approximately 20 other NRLI alumni went on a field trip to the Lake Lochloosa site owned by Plum Creek Timber. Alumni Greg Driskell (Plum Creek), Steven Miller (SJRWMD), and Deborah Burr (FWC) lead the discussion on public-private partnerships and how they were successful in achieving a multitude of conservation goals at this model site. This field trip was followed by the Annual Meeting of the NRLI Board of Directors held at the Yearling Restaurant in nearby Cross Creek. While hungry alumni ate a delicious lunch, the new appointees were confirmed by the current BOD.



Greg Driskell discusses Plum Creek's involvement in the Gopher Tortoises Relocation program at the NRLI Alumni Field Trip. Greg is an alumni from Class II.



NRLI Alumni, current fellows, project team and guests enjoy lunch at the Yearling Restaurant after the field trip and NRLI Alumni Annual Meeting.



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.

