

## Ocala National Forest: Balancing Springs Protection and Recreational Use

Fellows came from near and far to Camp Ocala, a 4-H camp located in the Ocala National Forest. After lunch in the camp dining hall, Shawn Baltzell, the camp director, greeted all and gave warning of local wildlife – bears and alligators which have been spotted within the camp. We then relocated to the camp meeting room, and were welcomed by NRLI staff members.

David Holmes, UF/IFAS Marion County Extension Director, welcome NRLI to Marion County on behalf of the Mayor to Ocala and described County issues. Mr Holmes spoke of economic development and water quality at Rainbow, Juniper and Silver Glen Springs. He explained that the water quality in Silver Glen Springs is in jeopardy. Over the past 15 years population has grown by 100,000 people and less agricultural land is present. Marion County sits on 16000 sq miles and has a population of 330,000.

Mr. Holmes also warned of bears and alligators as he explained that Ocala is a Native American word meaning “big hammock, bear land”.



David Holmes, Marion County Extension Director welcomes NRLI to Ocala. Photo by Candy Kaswinkel





Carl Petrick speaks with the NRLI Fellows and Project Team about the issues surrounding Silver Glen Springs during the opening session in Ocala. Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

Carl Petrick, US Forest Service, Ecology Staff Director, graduate of NRLI class 4. Mr. Petrick gave an overview of the issues facing Silver Glen Springs and US Forest Service's future management goals of Silver Glen Springs.

Silver Glen Springs is one of 33 - 1st magnitude springs in Florida. The spring pushes a large volume of water which outlets into Lake George. Evidential remains show the Native Americans used the spring. Indian mounds are plentiful around the spring and prove the land and water was heavily utilized.

The spring run became more popular around 1989 when the St Joe Timber Company sold the land to St Johns. Due to the safety issues associated with a very large boating crowd on holidays in 2001 Marion and Lake County passed an alcohol ban in the spring run and recreational areas of Silver Glen Springs. After the alcohol ban use calmed down, it is manageable

now although there is still a problem with alcohol consumption as the run enters Lake George. Part of that area is in Volusia County which has not enacted an alcohol ban similar to Lake and Marion Counties.

In light of electrical power plant scheduling closures in 2007 Florida Wildlife Conservation approached Marion County regarding the manatee population. Without the warm water outlets produced by the power plants the manatees need to find another source of warm water to winter in. Biologists fear that the manatees will not enter the spring run of Silver Glen due to the number of boats that occupy the run.

Nine boats reside in the spring run. Recently, a letter went to boat owner demanding that they remove their vessels from the area in which they have been anchored. The buoy line which marks the designated swimming area for the spring is being relocated to enlarge the swimming area in November of this year. The buoy line will be moved back to the original position in the spring and continued to be moved seasonally. This is an attempt to help manatees feel safe within the spring and begin to use it throughout the winter.

Mr. Petrick shared the US Forestry Services desires for the future of the spring which is fair and equal access to people for appropriate traditional uses, watch wildlife, provide a safe and secure environment, managed with team work for day use and boater use.

**An Overview continued on page 4.**

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L to R. Fellows participate in a non-verbal communication goal exercise; Wendy-Lin Bartel and Jennifer Arnold teach on position vs interests and how to analyze conflict; Kat Diersen, Sherri Kraeft and Holly Ober share with the group their exercise on the “Triangle of Satisfaction”.

*Photos by Candy Kaswinkel*

### Training: Chair Conflicts

Jennifer Arnold and Wendy-Lin Bartels lead us in an exercise to highlight positions vs. interest. We were sorted into groups and given a secret goal. Verbal communication was not allowed: however, we needed to achieve our goal as a group. Each group had been given a differing design to complete utilizing all the chairs in the room. A chair war erupted; some of us guarded chairs some attacked other groups’ chair collections. No group achieved their goal.

Jennifer then spoke of the “Triangle of Satisfaction” which is a tool for analyzing conflict which takes into account the procedural, psychological and substantive interests of the stakeholders.

### SILVER GLEN SPRINGS - THE FIELDTRIP



Friday began with a tour of Silver Glen Springs by land and water. Carl Petrick, US Forest Service, explained the concerns with flooding and erosion. Port-a-potties are used as public restrooms. Due to heavy flooding from weather events permanent bathrooms are a challenge to install without possible impacts to the area. Foot traffic and recreational vehicle wear is present around the edges of the spring contributing to erosion issues. Installation of boardwalks and planting beds are being discussed as options to prevent further degradation.

Fellows boarded small boats captained by US Forest Service staff for a first-hand look at Silver Glen Spring’s run. Larger vessels were anchored in the run as we made our way from the cool clear water at the spring’s head into Lake George where Hydrilla abounds and visibility is poor. A variety of birds, plants and fish were spotted on this relaxing and enjoyable ride.

The tour was followed by a talk with Alice Whitehead, manager of Silver Glen Springs, who gave us her perspective on the current and future uses of the property, her daily routines and possible changes to make the area more enjoyable for all.

Under a canopy of Oaks we devoured a picnic lunch prepared by the 4-H Camp Ocala staff.. Adventurous Fellows entered the 72 degree spring water and enjoyed refreshing explorations while others hiked and canoed. White sand bubbled from the sand boils along a short hiking trail near the spring’s head. After lunch we returned to Camp Ocala.

Scenes from Silver Glen Springs. *Photos by Michelle Atkinson*



## SILVER GLEN SPRINGS - STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVE



Picture at Left: Eric Bush moderates the Stakeholder Panel at Camp Ocala. NRLI Fellows had a chance to ask questions of the panel regarding the problems dealing with Silver Glen Springs. Photo by Candy Kaswinkel



Picture at Right: Panel Members, From Right to Left: Matt Moss, Tow Boat US; Carrie Christman, US Forest Service, Deputy District Ranger, Lake George District; Bonnie Basham, Capital Ideas; Kevin Lucas, Lake County Sheriff's Dept.; Dawn Jennings, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Office; Bob Knight, Wetland Solutions, Inc.; Paul Oulette, Florida Wildlife Commission. Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

The seven member stakeholder panel, which was moderated by Eric Bush, consisted of Matt Moss, owner of Tow Boat,US; Carrie Christman, US Forest Service Deputy District Ranger in the Lake George District; Bonnie Basham, with Capital Ideas; Kevin Lucas, Deputy with the Lake County Sheriff's Department; Dawn Jennings with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Office; Bob Knight, biologist and owner of Wetland Solutions, Inc.; and Paul Oulette, with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The panel gave the Fellows an opportunity to hear more about Silver Glen Springs, which they had just visited that morning. After seeing the Springs and the spring run first hand, it was use useful to hear the stakeholders share their perspective on it.

The three days per year of highest use are Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Labor Day. On those days, visitation by boat into the Springs and the spring run is highest. On those same major Holidays the park is already full of visitors who have arrived by vehicle.

In the past, the sheer number of visitors on those days was problematic.

Everyone agrees that the recent addition of channel markers and the ban on alcohol in the Springs and the spring run is beneficial to human recreation and to the Springs and park.

All stakeholders agreed that an open dialogue regarding any changes in regulations/statutes that effect human use of the Springs is essential.

**An Overview continued from page 2.** The recreational land area is not currently being managed as it should be. Erosion is an issue. Various types of vehicles are contributing to this erosion. The US Forest Service has a group who will tour other springs to develop uplands management alternatives for Silver Glen. The Forest Service is also revisiting an environmental assessment that was conducted in 1990. That assessment will be updated. An independent study was conducted 2003 and 2010 which showed some impacts to the resources. What is needed now is the creation of an advisory group.

## TRAINING - SITUATION ASSESSMENT

Jennifer and Wendy-Lin lead a Situation Assessment where we looked for common interests among the Silver Glen Springs stakeholders, tried to define the issue and to define each stakeholder's power to affect the situation. Particular emphasis was placed on identifying and understanding stakeholder interests and relationships. Matrices were completed by groups which were then presented and compared.

With the grill sending mouthwatering scents into the air we headed to the cabins to freshen up. We all enjoyed a hearty steak dinner with delicious desserts. Later in the evening we found ourselves, like moths, attracted to the bonfire. Even with temperatures in the 90's the kid in us cannot pass up a camp fire. Shawn, the camp director, did not disappoint as he had the makings of s'mores on hand.



Jennifer Arnold and Wendy-Lin Bartels lead the Situation Assessment Training during day two of the Ocala session. Photo by Candy Kaswinkel

## PRACTICUM BRAINSTORMING



Above: Fellows meet with their mentors to discuss their practicum ideas.

Left: Burl Long and Marta Hartmann speak with the group about the steps to developing a good practicum.

Right: Sandhill cranes give their input.  
Photos by Candy Kaswinkel

Saturday morning, began with a beautiful misty sunrise enjoyed by kayakers on Lake Sellers. It was then time to recharge with a nourishing breakfast after which fellows met in groups with our mentor to discuss practicum plans. We reconvened with NRLI staff members, Burl Long and Martha Hartmann, directing us in a practicum brainstorming session. Ideas and comments were shared among staff and fellows regarding the practicum topics shared. The resident Sandhill Cranes stopped by peering into the glass door to give their input as well.





## DEBRIEF AND FEEDBACK

### Debrief



Jason Wiles plays “Are You Smarter than a NRLI Fellow” as a debrief tool during the final day in Ocala.

*Photo by Candy Kaswinkel*

With practicum ideas and advice swirling in our heads, it was time for our debrief session led by Fellow, Jason Wiles. Jason stayed up into the wee hours the night before to design the game “Are You Smarter than NRLI X”. We were divided into three groups and points were awarded as questions were answered correctly under the topics; Tools, Stakeholders, The Glen, As Seen @ NRLI, Re-cap and Potpourri. Our competitive qualities emerged as we inched closer to the end of the game where the stakes were high. A great time was had by all as we recounted our Silver Glen Spring experience.

### Feedback Panel

Brooke Saari, Craig Diamond and Joshua Craft provided entertainment as they preformed a skit recalling our days together. The skit featured session highlights as well as made light of some confusing topics i.e. the meaning of “Restricted to the Public” and creating the “Octagon of Satisfaction”. The Feedback panel left us laughing and looking forward to the next NRLI session.



The Feedback Panel consisting of Joshua Craft, Brooke Saari and Craig Diamond play out the ups and downs of the Ocala Session.

*Photo by Candy Kaswinkel*

## THIS AND THAT



From left to right: A spider’s view of Silver Glen Springs; a live oak that had grown on top of a shell midden. The shell had been illegally removed possibly in search of artifacts or to get material to put on roads which was a common practice at the turn of the century; Camp Ocala at daybreak; Silver Glen Springs Run as it flows into Lake George. Since the the alcohol ban in two of the three counties which surround the springs, this area has become a popular site for party boats as it is part of Volusia County which does not have the ban. *Photos by Candy Kaswinkel.*

*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.*

