



PANAMA CITY

November 4-6, 2010

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION AND PROTECTION ALONG THE ECONFINA CREEK

Session Four focused on access and use issues in the context of ecosystem restoration and protection. Properties in the Econfina Creek watershed that have been acquired by the Northwest Florida Water Management District and are managed in conjunction with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission are a laboratory for resolving the competing demands of surface water recreationists, hunters, hikers, cyclists, birders, and equestrians while attempting to restore the edges of major springs damaged by over-use and re-establishing a climax long-leaf pine community throughout much of the area's uplands. The session location provided an opportunity to explore the different types of impacts and user values associated with aquatic and terrestrial systems, and to discuss approaches to these problems with the property managers. Enhanced listening skills and understanding the how parties frame issues were the key points of training.

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BAY COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR WELCOMES FELLOWS TO COUNTY

Dr. Marjorie Moore, the Bay County Extension Director, welcomed us and reported on the role of her office, which is a system of delivery for solving individual problems via a non-formal education system. The Bay County program emphasizes one-on-one and group settings. She informed us that agriculture in Bay County is limited to horticulture. The program makes use of many advisory committees and has an added focus serving military families. There has been much success in their 4-H, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Sea Grant programs, and a documented 81% reduction in the use of pesticides and fertilizer affecting water resources.

Values and Perceptions

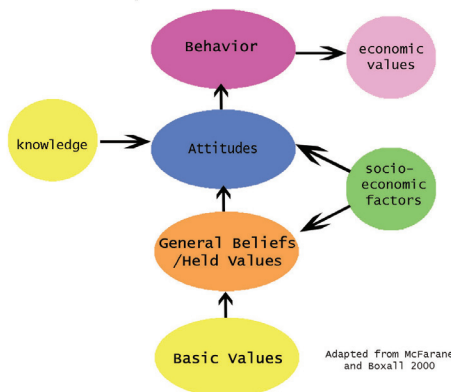
Drama By the River

Dr. Laila Racevskis and Dr. Marta Hartmann led the fellows in the “Drama by the River” exercise, which explains how values and perceptions affect behavior, opinions, and decisions about resource use. We discussed definitions of “worth” and the qualities that make something desirable. We identified various types of “values” including economic, political, social, financial, cultural, moral, and ecological. We discussed the measure of value including market price, time, belief systems (subjective), willingness-to-pay, non-market valuation (Contingent Valuation Methods), and ‘deliberative valuation’ methods.



Above: Marta Hartmann and Laila Racevskis use an interactive learning tool call “Drama by the River” to discuss how everyone has a different definition of values and how that affects behavior.

Cognitive Hierarchy Framework



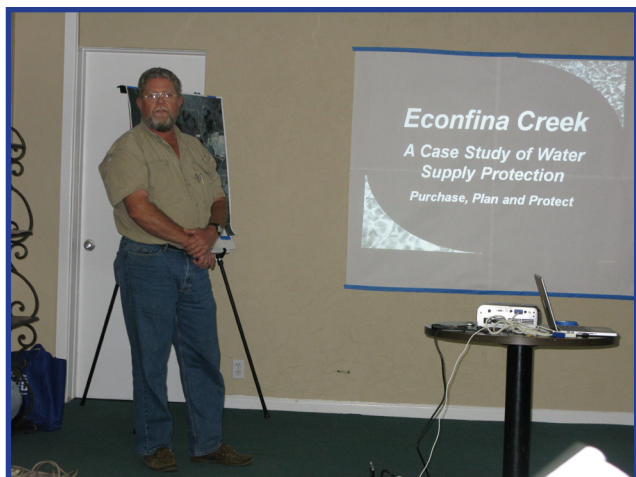
The Cognitive Hierarchy Framework

Compromise is harder to reach when values are at stake; a leader must recognize when values impact behavior.

Dr. Racevskis introduced the Cognitive Hierarchy Framework, in which basic values drive “generally held beliefs” that govern attitudes (also are fed by knowledge and socio-economic values), which in turn drive behavior and choice. This tool helps us to understand the other party and ourselves. Bruce reminded us this was similar to the iceberg model in which we see only the top while the bottom two-thirds of the framework is not seen. Compromise is harder to reach when values are at stake; a leader must recognize when values impact behavior.

Above: a flowchart depicting the Cognitive Hierarchy Framework

A Case Study of Water Supply Protection - Purchase, Plan, Protect



Above: Bill Cleckley presents to the group the development of the Econfina Creek restoration project.

Bill Cleckley, Director of Land Management and Acquisition for the Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD) was our context speaker and presented “A case study of water supply protection – Purchase Plan and Protect.”

The Econfina is the only Class I (surface) water supply within NFWFMD and presents a challenge in balancing water resource and habitat protection and public access. The Econfina Creek Springs system includes the Gainer Springs complex, a first magnitude spring. The District owns roughly half of the high recharge springshed. Because of the rapid groundwater movement the vulnerability of the area is high, necessitating protection. While most of the springshed is in timber, there has been development pressure and sand mining.

Bill presented the history of land purchases in the area. Most of the uplands purchased are in sand pine,

but the area historically was longleaf. About 25000 acres require restoration and will need about 18 years to conclude at a pace of about 1800 acres per year. Groundcover restoration is the greater challenge; the limiting factor is seed. Fire is needed to manage hardwood at donor sites and to allow collection. Seed is being collected and tested for viability; Emily's thesis is examining potential for the cleaning and coating of seed for direct seeding rather than preparing plugs. IFAS is conducting nutrient studies to promote private sector growing of seed — between \$9-20M in seed value is required to meet regional restoration needs each year.

The property is subject to high demand for public recreation and access and has experienced much erosion on its unimproved roads and at unimproved (and unofficial) boat launches. Heavy boat use at Rattlesnake Lake in Washington County resulted in the issuing of annual permits. The FL Natural Scenic Trail runs through the Econfina corridor, which is a state designated canoe trail. The District has responded to recreational demand and related erosion by improving sites such as the Walsingham canoe launch, the Highway 20 boardwalk, and Pitt Spring and by the removal of ropes (swings). The District has provided hunting areas for mobility impaired hunters and shifted to single use trails. The District has also acted to distribute pressure to the natural area by managing access. Bill discussed the benefits of bringing in all stakeholders for brainstorming and participation in advance of this move, which can reduce questions at permitting time.

A LOOK BACK - A LOOK AHEAD



NRLI staff led us through a discussion of where we had been so far and to where we would be heading in the remaining sessions. We reviewed the group's norms and agreed they still worked. We discussed how we might improve the stakeholder panel and audience's roles. We need to address 'contingencies,' handle follow-up questions, and balance specific vs. open-ended questions. We are learning how leaders can take away lessons about dialog and questions, 'positions' and 'interests.' We agreed that there were logistics challenges in St Augustine, including the opportunity for a full debriefing of the late Friday exercise with Richard Schneider. Bruce introduced the idea of the Groan Zone. Staff agreed there were one too many stops on that field trip.



Pictured Above: Fellows and guests enjoy canoeing the Econfina Creek and relaxing at Gainer Springs during the first leg of the Field Trip.

CANOEING THE ECONFINA: THE FIELD TRIP PART ONE

We were guided by canoe on the coldest morning of the year so far by Bill Cleckley, Carol Bert and Tyler Macmillan. The first stop was Williford Spring where we observed bank degradation from foot traffic. Access to the spring is now limited to walk-in, and Bill described proposed improvements to the site, including interpretive trails, pavilions, a composting toilet and ADA boardwalks. At Sylvan Spring restoration was underway with a new deck and boardwalks and nature trails to be added later. Bill explained the challenge in restricting access to the ecologically sensitive areas while encouraging recreation and maintaining a positive relationship with users. The next stop was the Gainer Spring complex, where we left the canoes to see numerous improvements to protect the spring and to accommodate an increasing base of users. Trails, pavilions and boardwalks were under construction, each designed to protect sensitive areas. One boardwalk led us to unique karst features. We concluded this part of the field trip above Gainer Spring at a pavilion on the Patronis property.



Top left: Emily Rodriguez explains the Long-leaf seed collection process at her research site. Center: John Valenta, a NRLI Fellow talks with the group about NFWFMD/FWC wetland and upland mitigation venture at the Fitzhugh Carter Tract. Top Right: Dusk falling over the pines at the Green Ponds

LONG LEAF PINE AND HABITAT RESTORATION: THE FIELD TRIP PART TWO

After an exercise we continued the field trip to visit two other sites. First, we visited one of Emily Rodriguez's, a graduate student at UF and USDA Fellow of the Minorities in Forestry Program, test seed collection plots located in a rare patch of mature longleaf pine savannah. The second site was a wetland and upland mitigation bank at the Fitzhugh Carter Tract that operated as a joint venture between the NFWFMD and FWC. The purpose of this bank is to restore water quality and habitat for state and federally listed species and to sell mitigation credits to entities impacting these resources elsewhere in the Panhandle.



Stakeholder Panel L to R: Neil Lamb, Louie Roberson and Don Wildman

The Econfina Creek stakeholder panel included Dr. Neil Lamb, retired chief of environmental resources at Tyndall Air Force Base and representative of Bay County Audubon; Louie Roberson, regional director for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; and Don Wildman, owner of the Double D Riding Stables and longtime area equestrian. Many of the Fellows' questions were geared towards understanding how the FWC and NFWFMD balanced restoration and protection needs with the demands of recreational users. Mr. Lamb noted that recreational access on public lands in Northwest Florida was geared towards hunting and fishing but less towards passive recreation such as hiking and bird watching. Mr. Roberson emphasized the value of partnerships and stewardship education. The nature of the area has changed from pulp timber to

one which is more capable of supporting hunting and equestrian use. The panelists agreed that the area is taken for granted by downstream beneficiaries and that education of the next generation of users is critical.

The panelists discussed the effects of upland habitat management on trails. Mr. Wildman noted that while equestrians are stakeholders, they accept that they have limited influence where management modifies areas with riding trails. Dr. Lamb suggested that controlled burns, while necessary, have become an industry that affects a range of habitats and dependent species. District staff described efforts to protect vegetation in the riverine corridor, valuable for migrating birds.

The panelists addressed the accommodation of hunting and the relative balance of acreage for this use. Mr. Roberson noted that hunting is seasonal, does not preclude other uses, and generates revenue for restoration and management. The discussion captured the issue of fee structures (including opportunities for licenses for non-hunting uses and the impact of regulations and fees on prospective users) and the political power of the hunting lobby. The panelists agreed that the balance among users was close and that major changes in management or regulation were not needed. There was mutual concern about development pressures, loss of the commons, and the need for education about water conservation.

FRAMING - A NEGOTIATION SKILL

At the pavilion, Fellows participated in an exercise exploring the various ways that a discussion or argument can be framed. As small groups we cast current events in different lights using framing techniques such as citing impressions as facts, making sweeping statements without supporting evidence, and utilizing personal attacks. Fellows discussed ways in which we use framing to define ourselves, characterize others, and describe issues. We realized that within conflicts others will frame issues, so we must use critical thinking to understand how and why issues are framed for us.



Fellows participate in the Framing exercise at the Gainer Springs Pavillion. Out-of-door exercises such as this help keep the Fellows motivated and engaged.

SPECIAL EVENT

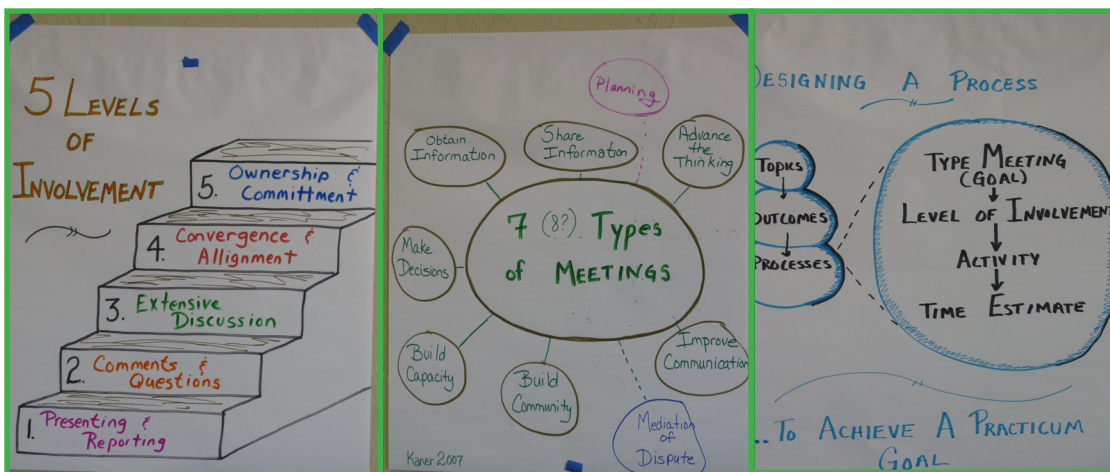
Class X rounded out their day with a fish fry prepared by Bill Cleckley and assisted by Tyler Macmillan, Carol Bert, and Sarah Martin. Bill provided grouper and mahi-mahi he had caught, along with home-made hush-puppies. Sarah made a fantastic chocolate dessert. The affair took place in a newly constructed pole barn with a fire pit where the Fellows attempted to stay warm and enjoy tales from NRLI alums.

Day Three focused on moving the Fellows' practica forward and improving active listening skills. Fellows learned about designing the Practicum Process through seven types of meetings (e.g., to obtain information; to be a focus group or listening session; to share information; to advance the thinking about a topic; to increase capacity; to make decisions; or to mediate disputes). We discussed the need for a clear purpose for meetings and the roles of preparation and follow-up. We explored five levels of involvement in meetings (presenting and reporting; comments and questions; discussion; convergence and alignment – the “groan zone”; and ownership and commitment). In designing a process, topics feed outcomes which in turn feed processes. The process then defines the type of meetings to be held, the level of involvement, the supporting activities, and

the time required. Different types of meetings can require differing levels of involvement. For example, a “sharing” meeting can stop at level 1 or 2, while others require higher levels. These are all directed to achieve the practicum goal.

As an exercise, we were encouraged to pick a final outcome and to work backwards. In response, Leslie presented a schedule on her involvement in developing the new Basin Management Action Plan for the central Indian River Lagoon. Eric explained how the US Army Corps of Engineers is based extensively upon scheduling, defining activities and the resources required, establishing milestones and products separately from the process, and tracking scheduled dates versus actual dates. Josh and Luke described the development of the Adventures program (agriculture for children) and detailed their proposed activities

by month for an event to occur in May (early crop harvesting time) and how they will address issues with the end of the school year.



Flip charts to graphically introduce the concepts of the Practicum Process Design are shown at right. They include 5 Levels of Involvement; 7 Types of Meetings and Designing a Process to Achieve a Goal.

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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.

LISTENING - A BASIC SKILL



Above: Marta Hartmann leads training on Active and Empathic Listening skills.

Dr. Hartmann led the training on Active and Empathic Listening, noting that verbal and nonverbal cues affirm the conversation. She emphasized that listening promotes candid discussion, and that feedback about listening promotes dialog. She highlighted what to infer from specific nonverbal cues such as avoiding eye contact, body

*LISTENING PROMOTES CANDID DISCUSSION, AND THAT
FEEDBACK ABOUT LISTENING PROMOTES DIALOG*

movements, and facial tension. We learned that a willingness to politely interrupt can be a signal of active engagement, and that it is OK for an empathic listener to take over the speaker role. The identity of the parties matters and the context is a key factor that defines roles and can govern the style of communication.

Challenges to listening include interjecting your own experiences and avoiding the directing of conversation back to oneself, while balancing this with the value of resonance and personal sharing that builds credibility. The display of empathic listening promotes the same in the other party. Dr. Hartmann introduced the SOLER approach to managing nonverbal cues: S – squarely face the speaker; O – being open in posture means being open to message; L – lean in towards speaker; E – eye contact; and R – relax. Fellows conducted a small group exercise in which they took turns discussing something that was important to us; while another person practiced empathetic listening, and a third person evaluated that person’s use of empathetic listening skills.

DEBRIEF AND FEEDBACK

Brooke Saari provided a thorough debriefing of the session. Debra Segal, Tom Abbott and Nicole Wulff served as the feedback panel. They amused the other Fellows with an entertaining skit in which they mimicked speakers from two different news outlets (Fox News and National Public Radio) to show us how even the skills we had learned about in the session could be framed in very different ways.



Above: Deb Segal, Tom Abbott and Nicole Wulff lead the Feedback Panel at the conclusion on the session.
Right: Brooke Saari engages the Fellows during the debrief.



“Farm Family of the Year”



Congratulations to our own Luke Langford for receiving the “Farm Family of the Year” award for Holmes County.