

The Springs Group

Our Springs, Our Community, a Facebook Live Event

The use of live streaming, via social media platforms, provides a unique opportunity for public engagement and access to agency experts working in science and government. The ability to ask real-time questions and receive immediate answers, all from the convenience of the viewer's preferred location, increases equitable access to knowledge and public engagement on issues concerning communities.

The NRLI Springs Group conducted a Facebook Live event to test the applicability of scheduling and executing an informative session on Florida's springs focusing on subjects from environmental impacts, historical social injustices and spring restorations. A panel of five experts, from both science and history, convened for a two-hour town hall-style public discussion with the goal of information sharing, community engagement and trust building. Pre-planning for the event involved panelist interviews, location scouting, equipment checks, and promotion of the program; which included graphics, social media and press invitations.

The event was conducted live at the Seminole Ranger Station on the Ocala National Forest in Umatilla, FL, with five panelists and five members of the Springs Practicum Group present. Each panelist was allowed to expand on a spring related topic for around ten minutes. Immediately following each panelist's discussion, questions from the viewing public were allowed. After all panelists had spoken, a group Q&A was held with more questions from the public and the NRLI facilitators. Our fellows divided duties into two discussion facilitation roles, a camera operator and two Facebook chat monitors, respectively.

The session resulted in over 700 individual viewers tuning in live during the event, 1700 total views and dozens of questions from the public asked and answered. The public was very positive with several viewers asking for more live programs like we conducted.