



# NETWORK THE NETWORKS

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**The Florida Waters Stewardship Program (FWSP) Natural Resources  
Leadership Institute (NRLI) Alumni Program**

# Issue Summary

- To connect, create, elevate, and build relationships in community, civic engagement, and environmental education by supporting and connecting alumni initially in the Pinellas County/Tampa Bay area from the Florida Water Stewards Program (FWSP) AND UF IFAS – Natural Resources Leadership Institute (NRLI) Alumni Program.
- Both programs, FWSP and NRLI share common goals: expert presentations, online explorations, experiential learning, field experience in watershed science, natural resources, and communication skills training. Both projects ask that participants develop a project to apply skills and concepts learned in FWSP and NRLI to actual conflict, decision-making, or leadership situations in our organizations or communities.
- This project's goal is to have alumni from all these programs volunteer to support activities throughout the region, but we also want to include time for meetings, discussions, guest speaker presentations highlighting local water resources, speakers' bureau/series, and field tours.
- The overarching meeting goal is to brainstorm with NRLI alumni on suggestions for expanding the FWSP program – ideas for key organizations or strategies or individuals that offer capillarity into those new communities/networks – across counties.

# Stakeholders

- FWSP and NRLI Alumni
- UF-IFAS Extension Agents and Programs
- Water Management District Staff
- Non-profit staff
- Business community
- Chambers of Commerce
- North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE)
- League of Environmental Educators in Florida (LEEF)

## Network the Networks -Questions

- What is the value of our networks?
- What are the professional networks?
- Many of us are also members of NAAEE and LEEF, what is the value of linking all these networks?
- How do they add value to FWSP and NRLI?
- Advice and ideas to support the FWSP and NRLI alum programs
- How they see that program expanding into that county?

# **NRLI competencies, skills, tools, techniques, & strategies used**

- Identifying stakeholders;
- Meetings; surveys
- Defining and examining conflict;
- Empathic listening,
- Situational assessments;
- Facilitation; Reframing discussions,
- Process agenda, Create Multi stakeholder processes/partnerships

# Outcomes

- Survey sent to FWSP alumni
- Discuss creation of survey to NRLI alumni
- Quarterly meetings
- Create event calendar of FWSP and NRLI activities
- FWSP and NRLI recruitment and presentations
- Increased collaboration and connection to NRLI and FWSP alumni
- Interest in exploring dual program by brainstorming options with FWSP and NRLI alum



# Lessons Learned

- There is a disconnect between groups supporting the NRLI and FWSP programs, many who are also members of NAAEE/LEEF.
- Many work at non-profits, water management districts, in elected offices or support elected officials.
- There is a wealth of knowledge and resources to be shared among the stakeholders that could really build a community of practice.
- There is an interest in re-engaging alumni while fostering relationships between FWSP, NRLI alumni, NAAEE/LEEF alumni which will build cross-collaborations.
- Mentoring the next generation of STEM and Natural Resources leadership.
- Despite FL Legislature anti JEDI and DEI efforts, encouraged by interest in supporting cross-collaborations and relationships as we work to create a more equitable and sustainable future in Natural Resources.

# Next Steps

- Continue to connect groups by sharing opportunities for collaboration.
- Continue to build on outcomes as noted in previous slide
- Continue to re-engage all previous alumni and engage new graduates and foster relationships between FWSP, NRLI alumni, NAAEE/LEEF alumni which will build cross-collaborations.
- Discuss creating a “Community of Practice”
- Continue to discuss how to assist Lara and Shannon with expanding the FWSP in these counties assisting in creating a regional FWSP since the program is also offered in Manatee, Sarasota, and now Polk counties.
- Support their podcast; invite alumni as guests
- Support NRLI alumni association; donate to scholarship funds



- Lara Podcast: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/polk/natural-resources-and-conservation/Naturally-florida-podcast>
- FWSP: <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/pinellasco/2021/07/19/become-a-water-steward/>
- UF IFAS NRLI <https://nrli.ifas.ufl.edu/>;  
<https://nrli.ifas.ufl.edu/alumni.shtml>
- North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE) <https://naaee.org/>
- Change Fellowship: Building Leadership in Civics and Environmental Education (CEE)  
<https://naaee.org/programs/cee-change-fellowship>
- The League of Environmental Educators in Florida (LEEF)  
<https://leef-florida.org/>

Questions?  
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