

The Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute¹

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Introduction

The Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute (FNRLI) is an outreach program of the School of Natural Resources and the Environment at the University of Florida. It was founded in 1998 to address leadership challenges posed by conflict over environmental issues in Florida.

Conflict over environmental issues is common in society. One reason for the conflict is our tendency to frame environmental issues in adversarial terms. We often lack the know-how to approach environmental conflicts in a collaborative manner that reduces conflict. The challenge is to prepare and nurture leaders from all environmental perspectives who can bring about positive changes for a sustainable future. The FNRLI is meeting this challenge.

One premise of the FNRLI is that complex disputes in the environmental arena often produce unsatisfactory outcomes for some or all concerned. Such outcomes include impaired ecosystems and scenic vistas, loss of jobs and/or species, costly lawsuits, disproportionate exposure to environmental damage by race or social class, inefficient waste disposal and recycling systems, and intergenerational harm to human health and biodiversity.

There are a number of reasons for our inability to deal effectively with environmental problems without conflict, including:

- Inadequate understanding of complex issues
- Inadequate financial resources for addressing issues
- Lack of enthusiasm and skills for mobilizing involvement of affected persons
- Diversity of social values inherent in a pluralistic society
- Fragmented communication among agencies, organizations, and the public
- Overlapping or incomplete government and agency jurisdiction
- Mistrust of collaborative processes and their advocates
- Piecemeal legislative policy subject to competing political priorities
- Inadequate leadership

1. This is EDIS document FE667, a publication of the Food and Resource Economics Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL. Published September 2006. Please visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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A core assumption of the FNRLI is that these problems persist not because we lack leaders, but because we lack leaders who understand and recognize the full range of choices open to them. With broader awareness about themselves and others and the various approaches for resolving environmental conflict, leaders can help participants to achieve more productive outcomes.

The FNRLI is patterned after the North Carolina Natural Resources Leadership Institute, founded in 1994 by North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension with major funding by the Kellogg Foundation. The North Carolina template has since been adapted to other states and regions, including Alaska, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Montana, the Pacific Northwest, and Virginia. Tailored by each state, all the Natural Resources Leadership Institutes share core design principles of diversity of perspectives (multi-sector participation), a series of multi-day sessions over a period of months, a curriculum emphasizing process as well as substantive content, and efforts to transfer learning to participants' communities and organizations.

This EDIS publication provides an introduction to the FNRLI. It describes the structure and the content of the FNRLI curriculum, profiles the natural resource leaders for whom the program is designed, and introduces the faculty and staff.

Our Goal

The goal of the FNRLI is to help rising leaders to develop the skills to build consensus around contentious environmental issues and move beyond conflict to find collaborative solutions. People involved in land and water resource disputes can reach mutually acceptable solutions by becoming more knowledgeable about public issues, communicating in a more meaningful and effective manner, opening the debate to include all stakeholders, and using negotiation skills to settle disagreements.

Institute Fellows

The FNRLI trains Floridians who have a stake in the use and conservation of Florida's natural resources. The FNRLI seeks people from water and

land management agencies, resource-based industries, environmental and conservation organizations, and local government. It also recruits owners and managers of land, educators, elected officials, and others who are concerned about the way Florida's natural resources are managed. Institute participants (fellows) learn about natural resource and environmental policy. They learn how to participate in the policymaking process. They learn to bring people together around issues, plan for change, and get things done in a principled way. Institute graduates will help the people, industries, and institutions of Florida collaborate to achieve and reconcile the sometimes conflicting goals of protecting the natural environment while accommodating necessary and inevitable economic development.

The Program

The FNRLI is structured around seven monthly three-day seminar and activity sessions, a practicum, and a graduation session. Each new class convenes in January and graduates in October. No sessions are held during the months of July and August. All sessions begin at 12:00 p.m. (Noon) on Thursday and end at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday. Lodging and dining arrangements are made by Institute staff, and are included in the registration fee. Fellows are responsible for personal transportation to and from sessions.

Graduation from the program is contingent on the participant's involvement in sessions and the successful completion of a practicum.

In seminars, Institute fellows study personal and group leadership skills, communication skills, dispute resolution techniques, and environmental law and policy. Activity sessions include tours of key natural resource sites around the state and discussions with managers, leaders, stakeholders, and policy-makers who are directly involved in natural resource utilization and protection. Fellows learn to delve into the science and policy behind natural resource issues and to explore alternative ways to resolve those issues.

Program sessions include:

- Skill building in leadership, communication, and conflict resolution
- Learning about natural resource issues and how decisions concerning them are made
- Exploring real-life examples through field trips to natural resource areas in Florida
- Applying knowledge to current natural resource issues and problems

Sessions are “hands on” in nature and provide ample opportunity for fellows to practice new skills through role-playing, meeting management, and discussion groups.

Each session is held at a different location within the state and focuses on an environmental issue-theme specific to that location. Examples of locations and issue-themes from past FNRLI programs include:

- *Everglades Restoration and the Everglades Agricultural Area*—Clewiston
- *Agriculture, Economic Growth, and the Health of Lake Okeechobee*—Okeechobee
- *The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary*—Key Largo
- *Economic Growth and the Health of the Indian River Lagoon*—Vero Beach
- *South Florida Water Management and the St. Lucie Estuary*—Jensen Beach
- *The Southern Water Use Caution Area*—Ellenton
- *Manatee Protection*—Fort Lauderdale and Sarasota
- *Phosphate Mined Land Reclamation*—Haines City and Ellenton
- *National Forest Access*—Ocala National Forest (Camp Cloverleaf) and Apalachicola National Forest (Apalachicola)

- *Forests as Habitat Versus Forests as Timber Products*—Fernandina
- *Nitrates and the Health of the Suwannee River*—Live Oak
- *Clam Farming and Water Quality in Cedar Key*—Cedar Key
- *Tri-State “Water Wars” and the ACF River Basin Compact*—Apalachicola

The Practicum

To make the Natural Resources Leadership Institute program applicable to the work and experiences of participants, Fellows work individually or in small groups to develop and implement a practicum—a real-world application of knowledge and skills acquired through participation in the FNRLI. The nature of these projects is suggested by several practicum titles from previous classes:

- *Establishing Dialogue between Members of the Clam Industry and State Regulatory Agencies*
- *Reactivation of the Indian River Lagoon Biotxin and Aquatic Animal Health Working Group*
- *Involving Stakeholders in Agency Rule-Making for Public Recreational Access to Government-Owned Lands*
- *Participatory Decision-Making: Dogs and Deer Hunting at Tide Swamp*

Fellows are encouraged to select practicum topics that relate specifically to their own involvement with natural resources and the environment. Faculty and staff of the FNRLI serve as advisors, coaches, or mentors as Fellows develop and conduct their practicum projects.

Institute Faculty

The faculty and staff of the FNRLI include tenured professors and lecturers from the University of Florida, and professional mediators and facilitators from the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium

located at Florida State University. Members of the faculty and staff are:

- Burl F. Long, Ph.D., Director of the Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute and Professor of Food and Resource Economics and Affiliate Professor in the School of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of Florida
- Bruce L. Delaney, Executive Director of the Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute and Director of the Florida Agricultural Mediation Program, University of Florida
- Bob Jones, J.D., Director of the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium, Florida State University
- Roy R. Carriker, Ph.D., Professor of Food of Resource Economics and Affiliate Professor in the School of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of Florida
- Marta Hartmann, Ph.D., Lecturer in Agricultural Education and Communication and Director of the Gender, Environment, Agriculture, and Participation Program, University of Florida
- Thomas A. Taylor, Ph.D., Associate Director of the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium, Florida State University
- Jon Dain, M.S., Lecturer in the Tropical Conservation and Development Program at the Center for Latin American Studies and in the School of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of Florida

Sponsoring Organizations

Since its inception the FNRLI has received significant financial support from several institutions and businesses, including:

- Progress Energy
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation
- Florida Coastal Management Program, Florida Department of Community Affairs

- Office of the Dean for Extension, University of Florida, IFAS, Cooperative Extension Service
- Office of the Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Florida, IFAS

In addition to organizations that have provided significant funding, several organizations have assisted the FNRLI by sponsoring Fellows and by assisting in the development and delivery of programs for specific sessions of the Institute. These organizations include:

- Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium
- School of Forest Resources and Conservation, University of Florida
- Florida Sea Grant Extension Program
- Florida Farm Bureau Federation
- South Florida Water Management District
- Saint Johns River Water Management District
- Suwannee River Water Management District
- United States Forest Service
- The Timber Company
- Mosaic Company

Alumni

Since its inception, the FNRLI has graduated six classes and is recruiting its seventh. A total of 120 participants have graduated from the program. The diversity of background and perspective represented by FNRLI alumni can be partially illustrated by a list of agencies, organizations, and industries whose employees have completed the FNRLI:

- Florida Farm Bureau
- The Timber Company
- Arthur D. Little, Inc.
- Earth Balance
- Florida Environmental

- Brown and Caldwell Engineering
- Johnson Engineering
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- The National Wildlife Federation
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- South Florida Water Management District
- Northwest Florida Water Management District
- Suwannee River Water Management District
- Saint Johns River Water Management District
- Florida Department of Community Affairs
- East Central Florida Regional Planning Council
- Gainesville Regional Utilities
- Cedar Key City Commission
- Charlotte County Extension
- Palm Beach County Extension
- Saint Lucie County Extension
- Polk County Extension
- New College, Sarasota
- Conservation and Development Program, University of Florida
- Tropical Conservation and Development Program, University of Florida
- Food and Resource Economics Department, University of Florida, IFAS
- Wildlife Ecology Department, University of Florida, IFAS
- Forestry Department, University of Florida, IFAS
- Center for Natural Resources, University of Florida
- Broward County Department of Planning and Environmental Protection
- Martin County government
- Pasco County government
- Sarasota County government
- Seminole County government
- Gulf County Commission
- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Natural Resource Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- United States Forest Service, National Forests of Florida
- Florida Sea Grant Extension Program
- Florida Center for Environmental Studies
- Florida Defenders of the Environment

To this list should be added the names of several practicing attorneys, farmers, and agricultural land managers.

Summary

The FNRLI provides rising leaders in natural resource and environmental professions with the knowledge and skills needed to bring people together around issues, plan for change, and get things done in a principled way. Institute graduates will help the people, industries, and institutions of Florida to collaborate in achieving and reconciling the goals of protecting the environment and accommodating growth in population and economic activity.

For additional information regarding the Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute (FNRLI), including application procedures and fees, contact:

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