

## FLORIDA EXTENSION INITIATIVE 3:

# ENHANCING AND CONSERVING FLORIDA'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

## STATEWIDE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN **INFORMED COMMUNITY DECISION MAKING**

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### SITUATION

Local governments must provide leadership on the issues that balance the needs of the people and the economy with environmental safeguards. Florida Extension provides science-based information for environmental quality issues involving water, soil, urban and agricultural lands, and aquatic systems. Florida Extension programs must educate Florida's diverse audiences about ways to address environmental impacts and assist local communities in improving environmental quality.

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### PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Improve community decision-making relative to natural and coastal resources and policies by providing scientific and economic information on the consequences of various options and by fostering effective community decision-making that results in sustainable, resilient communities regarding issues such as water, energy, biodiversity, quality of life, ecosystem services, and hazard resilience.

#### Target Audiences:

Regulators- Elected officials, policy makers, agencies

Regulated-Developers, consultants, large landowners, commercial agriculture, large business, NGOs (non-government organizations)

Public-citizens, small businesses, HOA (home owners associations)

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### EDUCATIONAL METHODS

#### Phase I - Needs Assessment (State Level)

##### Proposed actions/strategies:

- Identify stakeholders. Engage Stakeholders in Advisory Groups, Public Meetings, Listening Sessions, Issue Identification, Gateway Meetings (County Administrators)
- Show up to community meetings and just listen, looking for emerging issues and places where IFAS can step up and help
- Go to meetings, conferences, etc to meet other experts
- ID similar programs in other states for collaboration/cooperation Examples: NOAA Coastal Services Center-conflict resolution courses, NERR's, cooperate with other institutions in the state
- Each agent should list local topics they could help resolve
- ID issues that embody conflict that, if resolved, would significantly improve the longterm sustainability and resilience of ecosystem services that support biodiversity and humankind
- "Gateway" assessment w/county administrators
- Review past "comings and goings" and ID regional NR projects that are successful
- Conduct Science cafes, informal, gatherings with citizens and stakeholders (information available at <http://www.sciencecafes.org/>)
- Conduct community meetings, listening sessions to understand public concerns/understanding of complex issues
- Count the cost before you start; can an individual make a multiyear commitment that may become all-consuming? Evaluate your personal life situation, professional, career status, availability of collaborators, DED/CED support, etc
- Go out of state to ID different function paradigms

#### Phase II - Build Partnerships

##### Proposed actions/strategies:

- Explore alliances with NOAA Coastal Services Center and others to support agent needs

- Link through NRLI-ish program decision makers or their expert staff with UF IFAS staff to ID ways to impart UF science in decision making process
- Increase networks with stakeholders
- Exhibit booth at FL association of cities/counties promoting IFAS facilitation & science based information
- Collaborate with Public Issues Education (PIE) Center at UF
- Establish partnerships with other disciplines and out of state collaborations
- Collaborate and develop programs with other community resource organizations
- Increase target audiences, FL Association of counties, legislators/aides, commissioners, regional planning councils
- Develop communications messaging to increase program visibility to stakeholders

#### **Phase IV - Regional/Local Implementation**

- Organize regional or topical groups w/NRLI alums to address specific issues
- Develop protocol for Science Café or Coffee Shop or Science Pub events (scientist walks into bar (NY model) learn and discussion event
- Science café listserve, public media (PSA, radio, Facebook)
- County by county, identify local planners and developers that want to do a green community (new or retrofit), organize a workshop and bring in PREC, facilitators
- Utilize local Extension Advisory committee to decide what issues are prospective for an Extension-led, facilitated conflict resolution process, with a potential community benefit that exceeds the potential political cost to Extension AND then use Advisory committee to take the proposal forward

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## **NEEDS**

### **Build Internal Capacity (mainly training)**

#### **Proposed actions/strategies:**

- Provide training in facilitative approaches to IFAS administrators
- Train >2 agents in each district in facilitation that would be available to all counties within their district
- Establish a Facilitator School: develop toolbox of skills with help from mediation professionals (internal or external); training/role playing/rea life issues practice
- Provide tools for conflict resolution and decision making
- Collect, synthesize, and disseminate research info to facilitate decision making
- Develop evaluation tools to measure success
- Provide training (IST's) in science communications
- Develop affordable NRLI type short course for faculty, agents, and other potential stakeholders
- Learn how to use graphics to illustrate complex issues
- Use NOAA Coastal Services Center and other agencies, tools and meetings
- Collect/disseminate case students of collaborative approaches and success stories
- Faculty/specialists to assist agents with evaluation
- Produce scholarship of success stories, best practices, outcome measures
- Increase collaboration and cooperation of agents between counties and regions
- Create roving support teams that provide training, advice, or mentoring in participatory processes
- Increase agent skill set regarding conflict resolution, stakeholder engagement and collaborative decision making
- Develop database of specialist/agents with decision-making skill sets.
- Engage and collaborate with existing NRLI alumni network
- Develop reporting guidelines for agents so they can get credit for facilitation and community engagement
- IFAS administration should encourage regional/multicounty extension working groups
- Promulgate EDIS fact sheets
  - What is community engagement
  - What tools/skills are needed
  - What tools and resources exist for training, mentoring, assistance

## Staffing Needs

### Proposed actions/strategies:

- Hire Coordinator for State Level Signature Program
- Regional or statewide specialists in facilitative approaches created as formal position
- Inventory NRRI Alumni list and identify NRRI Alumni working in UF/IFAS Extension
  - Create List Serve
  - Create State Map to identify regional gaps in NRRI Alumni
- Hire two people to identify and create a web based clearinghouse for “model” examples that successfully addressed natural resource conservation. Note: these people would try to establish a pilot project where they take an example from one county and apply it in another county by coordinating people that have the working example with people that are interested in adopting it
- Support NRRI as a vehicle for training agents in all counties. IFAS could support 2-3 NLI fellows per year at county level

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## SUPER ISSUE

- ❖ Resource sustainability and conservation in Florida communities.