

FEATURE Story

Artificial Reefs in Taylor County

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Artificial reefs play a key role in marine conservation, especially in Florida State and Taylor County. Recreational fishing and diving come together to support local economy around this marine ecosystem. Taylor County, located in the primarily undeveloped Big Bend of Florida, has some of Florida's most untouched and beautiful marine, estuarine and freshwater resources.

Taylor County's first artificial reef was deployed in 1965 (Steinhatchee Reef). The Buckeye reef and the Steinhatchee Fisheries Management Area (SFMA) are the two main artificial reefs in Taylor County. The sites contain scrap metal,

culverts, concrete tubes, artificial reef modules and reef balls.

Some important facts about the Taylor County Artificial Reef program are:

- Since 1990 the total investment in the Artificial Reef Program in Taylor County was \$579,212 (88% State and 12% Local Funding), with 1,354 Ton of deployed material.
- Currently 2 Permitted sites (SFMA for UF and Buckeye Reef for TCBOCC) valid until 2019 and 2020, respectively.
- Average depth of Artificial Reefs is 35.15 ft (Range: 4 to 51 ft).
- Artificial Reef sites located from 17.5 to 20.5 nautical miles from shoreline.
- In the last 5 years had been deployed 467 fish cubes, 120 Tetrahedrone style material, and 61 Tons of scrap metal and concrete culverts.
- 2,550 ft² of sea floor covered by Artificial Reefs in 2016 only.



The 2018 North Central Artificial Reef Workshop was held in April in Cedar Key, with the collaboration of UF/IFAS Extension Taylor County, UF/IFAS Nature Coast Biological Station and FWC.

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From the DISTRICT DIRECTOR



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I am so busy.... (my mouth said "yes" and my brain meant "no!")

In the last three months, agents in the district have shared with me their amazing accomplishments, their goals for next year, and their ambitions for their careers in Extension. As always, it is a humbling and uplifting experience. Agent's response to "how are you doing?" is invariably "I am so busy". In some cases, this statement is just a way to start the discussion. In other cases, it is an emergency signal stating "I have way too much stuff to do and I am drowning". Yes, this is another reminder that time management is more and more at the center of our professional successes. (In the worse

situations, we do not have enough time for time management...)

The recently released "UF/IFAS Extension Professional Scheduling Policy" document goes a long way into managing the "I am so busy" syndrome. Within reasonable limits, it empowers agents to manage their time - and increase their chances at reaching the elusive happy balance between work and personal life. Yet, this well-come policy does not address two essential points. First, we as professional are responsible for how we commit our time - and to what activity. Indeed, the professional scheduling policy does not tell us specifically what to do and what not to do. This decision remains the agent's responsibility. Second, the professional scheduling policy does not provide any strength or inspiration to say "no!" - when "no" is the appropriate response to a request.

Saying "no!" can be strong - as it rejects the message together with the messenger. We don't like to hear "no!", so we do not like to say it. Using the Spanish "no!", the French "non!", the

Arabic "la!", or the Russian "niet!" are poor choices too. More engaging alternatives are "Thank you; not now", "Interesting: I am not sure how this fits my program", or "Well, I do not see how this fits Extension's mission". These responses do not say "no!", and do not say yes either! They briefly keep your options open. Another approach to avoid the "no!" is to invite the author of the request to help with its implementation: "Let's see: how are **we** going to do this?", "do **you** have a plan for this?" or "how can I help **you implement your great idea?**". This shifts the question from a "yes/no" response to a "how" response. If the author of the request is serious, he/she will start the discussion. If he/she were bluffing, this will put an elegant end to the discussion. Of course, in last resort, quote Captain Jack Sparrow from the Pirates of the Caribbean film series and instead of "no!" respond "I'm disinclined to acquiesce to your request."

I hope your answer to "did you like this article?" is "no!". This will make for a great start to practice your time management strategy!



PROFESSIONAL Development

Mindfulness...Putting it into Practice

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There is no doubt about it, today's business is a round-the-clock atmosphere. We are hounded with external pressures, overwhelmed with information overload, asked to deliver more with less, work longer hours, and have less personal time for renewal activities. What is the result? Self-inflicted attention deficit disorder, exhaustion, lack of focus, reduced health, and burnout. This leads to lower job satisfaction, morale, and productivity. Hardly the results we want.

Did you know that over 50 percent of the workforce in the US says Job Stress is a major problem in life? This is twice as much as ten years ago. We also have 50 percent greater healthcare expenditures and corporations are losing over \$300 Billion annually because of work-related stress! What's going on here? We are stressed and overwhelmed and if we continue going down this road, the end results will not be good.

Mindfulness is a practice that has been around for a long time but has been in the forefront here more recently because of all the stressors in society as a whole. This simple practice is something that might help you, like it has me, to slow down a little and enjoy the everyday moments we take for granted and reduce your stress.

In practicing mindfulness we learn to become aware of our thoughts, emotions, feelings, and behavior so we can interrupt stress cycles before they increase out of control. Try this: Sitting where you are right now, close your eyes and just begin to notice if the mind is busy or calm, what emotion is there if any, and if the body feels tense or loose. Then bring your attention to



Source: International Coach Academy

your breathing, in your belly. Simply say to yourself, rising when the belly rises, and falling when the belly falls. Do this for 3 minutes. When the mind wanders off into thinking "how is this ever going to work" or "this is silly" or "what do I have to do later" or "what was I doing earlier", just notice what the mind is thinking about without getting too caught up in the content and bring your attention back to the breath. When done, notice if the mind is busy or calm (most people notice how busy their mind actually is) and if the body seems more tense, more loose or about the same. You can do this any time while sitting at your desk.

Here are some more tips on how to practice at work:

- As the workday begins, slightly slow down as you walk to the car, check in with your body and notice any tension. Try and soften it.
- Try driving to work a little slower today and let red lights be reminders to just notice your breathing.

- As you walk to the office, breathe in and out with every three steps. Notice the sensation of walking, it took you over a year to learn how to do this.
- If you sit at a desk, take a few breaths before checking the computer for emails or updates
- If possible, maybe once a week, eat by yourself in silence, eat slightly slower and really tune into the sense of taste while eating.
- Take a mindful walk break outdoors and notice all the sounds and smells. Taking it all in and clearing your mind.
- When walking back to the car from work, practice the same way you walked to your car.
- No need to 'rush' home to 'relax', drive slightly slower and experiment with new radio stations, maybe reflect on what you actually did that day. What was positive, what was stuff you would like to do better?

May we all be a little healthier and happier and slow down and take the time to smell the roses.

Resources: <https://www.mindful.org/>

DISTRICT Life

County Events... The Road to Success

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Youth and adults can experience anxiety and fear towards public presentations. According to Forbes magazine, the number one fear for the average person is public speaking. When you narrow, the fear down it can relate to fear of doubt, fear of nervousness, fear of forgetting, fear of technology, fear of a tough audience, fear of time, and the fear of the unexpected. Many 4-H youth spoke one on one to me expressing many of the fears listed above. The fear of County Events, the unknown, nervousness, and the unexpected brought about many conversations with both 4-H parents and youth alike. One conversation in particular comes to mind: Mrs. Abbey, "Can I give my demonstration in front of the judges, only with no one else in the room?" My response to her, "Hannah Claire would you feel comfortable asking every other participant to leave the room?" Through our dialogue, Hannah Claire and some of the other participants recognized why I could not make this exception. Hannah Claire decided she would present in front of a small audience. When closing ceremonies ended and all participants were awarded ribbons, Hannah Claire and her mother came to me stating, "I know you will not believe this, but Hannah Claire wants to compete at District Events". As a 4-H Agent, all of the time, energy, and hours expended planning for County Events was worth it to hear these words. Hannah Claire along with many other 4-H youth defeated their fears of public

presentations and speaking in front of an audience because of 4-H County Events.

County Events is one of the many 4-H programs that supports the 5 Cs: Competence, Confidence, Character, Connection, and Caring. Successfully developing these attributes ultimately leads to the 6th C or Contribution as well as the likelihood that youth will avoid certain risky behaviors

associated with negative outcomes. Youth who are actively and deeply engaged in the 4-H program are most likely to benefit from the positive outcomes associated with a positive youth development participation. 4-H County Events is an excellent example of an event that provide the opportunity for deeper engagement and development of two important Cs: Competence and Confidence.



What's WORKING?

Pond Water Problem Solved

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February 2018

The focal point of Dan's serenity garden, a large and carefully planned fishpond, had been taken over by a mystery weed that covered the entire surface. Unable to identify the plant in question and not wanting to harm the current bass and bream population, Dan called Jane Griffin at the Suwannee County Extension Office for assistance. The Agent was happy to make a site visit to assist the client and was able to accurately identify the aquatic plant as *Azolla filiculoides*, a native (though aggressive) floating plant that can quickly cover the surface of water bodies, making ponds difficult to fish, boat, or simply enjoy.

The Agent provided an herbicide recommendation that cleared the pond in a matter of days with no injury to the established aquatic vertebrate population and assisted Dan with obtaining permitting for grass carp to ensure against any future unwanted aquatic weed issues. As a result of the ongoing relationship with Extension, Dan and his family now enjoy bass fishing in and spending quality time around their strategically and sustainably managed pond.

Before



After



SUCCESS Stories

“Improving soil health, water quality and economic sustainability of the Suwannee Basin through cover crop adoption”

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Land grant research in other states has shown that cover cropping leads to higher yields and profitability over time while reducing disease and nematode populations. Little is known in Florida about cover crops' impact on soil health and cash crop productivity.

Soil health and cover cropping go hand-in-hand. As erosion, tillage and inorganic fertilizers put downward pressure on farm productivity, a resurgence of interest in rotations and conservation practices has come about.

Target Audience

Area farmers, UF/IFAS Extension Agricultural Agents, local seed and fertilizer dealers.

Issues Addressed

Water quality goals for the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) have fostered an increased awareness of, and action by, farmers to improve their agricultural production efficiency, especially as related to use of irrigation and fertilizers. High concentrations of nitrate in groundwater/springs have put a strong emphasis on adoption of Best Management Practices (BMPs) that will reduce potential harm to the general population.

Methods Used

With the cooperation of 12 local farmers, UF/IFAS Extension along with the Florida Department of Consumer Service and the Suwannee Soil Conservation District have begun a 5 year cover crop project to demonstrate the value of cover crops and improvement to soil health in meeting conservation goals and targets (BMAPS, MFL's). An informal survey was conducted with 13 row crop grower collaborators who agreed to plant new and diverse mixes of winter cover crop species. Agents from 4 counties took soil/biomass samples to evaluate physical, biological and chemical properties of the soil (via the only national commercial Soil Health Laboratory). For outreach and education, an agent IST, and a field day provided opportunity for

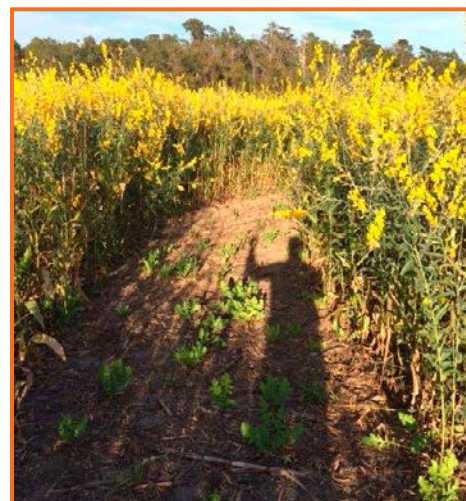
interaction and understanding of cover crop benefits and /or challenges.

Evaluations

Of 17 farmers attending the field day, 88% intend to plant again next year, while 59% said information was the main barrier to adoption. Agents similarly said the IST was worthwhile (83%). Also, as a result of their participation in the on-farm demonstrations, many more farmers have come forward asking for help this next fall. Based on projected cover crop winter plantings on 12% of SRWMD irrigated acreage, cover crops could reduce N leaching to groundwater by 700,000 lbs of Nitrogen/year (@41#/ac). Other benefits may include improved farm profitability, improvement in soil health scores, potential development of local cover crop seed industry, and greater local industry support for seed blend development, packaging, fertilization and planting of cover crops.

Conclusions

Strong feedback in this pilot program has made this a priority program for the agent. With more trials and collaboration with state specialists on new mixes and management, we expect to see improved cash crop production and long-term soil benefits mentioned nationally.



SUCCESS Stories...continued

4-H/Military Partnership trains staff in Europe

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Military families and youth face unique circumstances and challenges associated with lengthy and multiple deployments; shorter home stays between deployments; and greater risks of death, injury, and psychological problems among service members (Park, 2011). Youth in military families face relocations, separations and risks of parental injury. Most youth are resilient and adapt to the military lifestyle but some youth experience intensive stressors due to multiple deployments or a parent being wounded or dying. These experiences can erode the families' coping skills. All of these factors can have a detrimental impact on youth's social-emotional and educational development. 4-H youth development programs provide a support network and interpersonal growth opportunities that help youth develop skills to make them become more resilient in the face of change and adaptive in navigating everyday life and the issues of growing up. The goal in developing and strengthening resiliency in youth and families is to identify key skills that enable them to increase coping skills, adapt effectively, and emerge stronger from crises and persistent stressors.

The 4-H Military Partnerships bring the resources of the 4-H youth development professionals, research-based curricula, and high quality training and technical assistance to the youth programs of the military. As Military Families move frequently (Permanent Change of Station or PCS) and experience the difficulties surrounding



lengthy and frequent deployments, 4-H provides predictable programming across bases and a safe and nurturing environment for military youth and their families.

The objective of the military partnership is to train military youth program staff on 4-H Youth Development experiential learning model and life skill development curriculum and activities that will lead to military youth's ability to demonstrate the following life skills: problem-solving, decision-making, communication, teamwork, and leadership.

Several delivery methods are utilized to train military youth program staff. These delivery methods include: group trainings, conference calls, and electronic communications. The 4-H faculty is able to use "train the trainer" methodology to deliver the 4-H Youth Development Program to the military youth. Using military youth program staff in this way, it is imperative that they are trained on how to appropriately and effectively use 4-H curriculum, targeting life skills and experiential learning principles to deliver positive youth development programming. On-site group training of military youth program staff is the most



impactful and productive of the delivery methods utilized. These trainings provide interaction between staff members and their 4-H faculty point of contact (POC), opportunities to share ideas and experiences, and to ask questions on how 4-H programs can be utilized in the military youth programs unique operating structure that vary in each country based on the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that is in effect.

This past March, our two-person training team funded through the Florida 4-H Military Partnership Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS)

continued on next page

4-H/Military Partnership trains staff in Europe...continued from previous page

support, traveled to the United Kingdom and Germany to provide educational trainings to the U.S Air Force (USAF) staff from the following bases: RAF Lakenheath, RAF Alconbury, RAF Mildenhall, Ramstein AFB, Kapaun AFB, and Vogelweh AFB. Eighty U.S. Air Force

staff at six installations took part in group teaching events that covered topics such as turning 4-H activities into youth development programs, healthy relationships, STEM in 4-H projects, Healthy Lifestyles in 4-H projects, and hosting 4-H community events. These

topics reinforce the 4-H and USAF mission mandates. To conclude the trip, we presented at the AYC-E Youth Development Conference as part of a 4-H military families track.

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