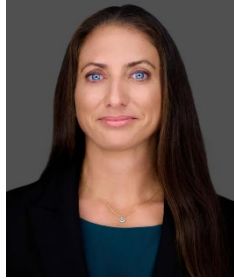


FLORIDA BEACON

From the President's Desk Gina Chiello



Hello FAEP Members,

Florida Association of
Environmental Professionals
Spring 2025



As I begin my tenure as FAEP President, I want to take a moment to reflect on my 14-year journey with this incredible organization. When I first joined the Treasure Coast Chapter (TCC) of FAEP as a new environmental professional, I quickly recognized the unique value FAEP offers—bringing together a diverse group of environmental professionals in a welcoming and engaging environment. Over the years, I have had the privilege of serving in various board positions within TCC, most recently as President in 2023 and 2024. I also had the honor of helping plan and execute the last two conferences hosted by TCC in 2015 and 2021.

One of the most consistent pieces of feedback I've received over the years is how inviting and supportive our FAEP community is. For me, FAEP has been more than just a professional network - it has been a source of invaluable training opportunities, mentorship and lifelong friendships. A sincere thank you to those who have mentored me along the way!

I am truly excited and honored to step into the role of FAEP President and am committed to enhancing the value we provide to our local chapters and members. As part of this effort, we have identified several key initiatives to be completed over the next two years. Here are a few I'd like to highlight:

1. **Webinar Series Launch** – To keep our members informed about the latest developments in the environmental field, we are launching a webinar series! The first session, co-hosted with the Environmental and Land Use Law Section of the Florida Bar, is scheduled for April 17th and will cover the New Stormwater Rules and Alternatives to Comply with Nutrient Reduction Requirements. A legislative update will follow on June 12th.
2. **New Chapter Development** – We are exploring opportunities to revitalize a Space Coast Chapter, covering Brevard and Indian River Counties, in an effort to close membership gaps due to geographies. TCC and the Central Chapter of FAEP co-hosted a kickoff event in September 2024 in Melbourne. The event was well attended further supporting this initiative.
3. **FAEP Supported Trainings** – Many of you have participated in wetland delineation or soils training through your local chapters. FAEP is working to develop standardized guidelines to more effectively support and expand these training opportunities.

Cont.

FAEP Board of Directors

Gina Chiello – President & TC Chapter

Elva Peppers – Past President

Joshua Hirten – Vice Pres. & CN Chapter

Kelley Samuels – Treasurer

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Amy Guilfoyle – At Large Member

Niki Desjardin – At Large Member

Don Medellin – At Large Member

Tim Perry – At Large Member

Courtney Arena – NAEP Rep.

Check the last page of our newsletter to determine if you qualify for a discount on your FAEP membership!

New FAEP membership rate for Retirees offered!

These initiatives rely on the dedication of our volunteers. FAEP is a volunteer-driven organization, and we have established committees to help implement these efforts. You don't need to be a board member to get involved! If you are interested in volunteering or have ideas on how FAEP can better support our chapters and members, please reach out to me or Andee, our FAEP Administrator.

Coming up quickly is the **National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP) Conference** in Charleston, SC on April 28 – May 1. Learn more about the conference and register [HERE](#).

Lastly, hats off to the Tampa Bay Chapter for hosting an outstanding conference this past March! Your hard work and dedication truly shone through. Be sure to check out more details as you continue scrolling. I look forward to an exciting year ahead and am grateful for the opportunity to serve as your FAEP President.

Sincerely,



Gina Chiello
FAEP President 2025-2026

**Find out more about FAEP
Member's Benefits at our
website:**

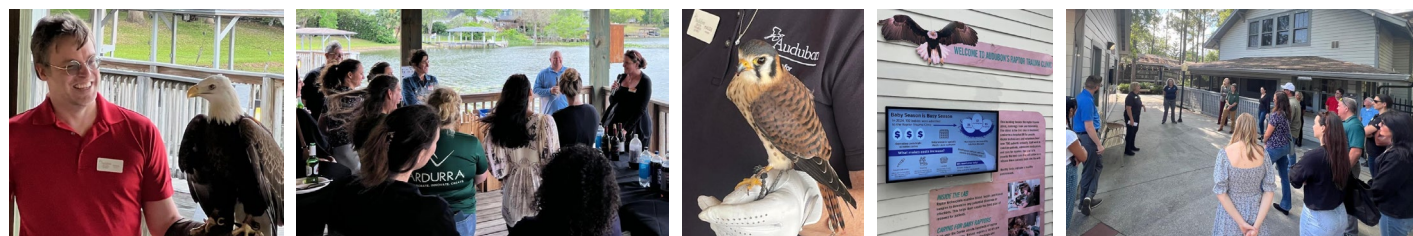
WWW.FAEP-FL.ORG

Thanks for reading our newsletter!

Central Florida Association of Environmental Professionals (CFAEP)

The Central Florida Association of Environmental Professionals (CFAEP) hosted a social event at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland, FL in March 2025. Our members enjoyed guided tours of the Raptor Trauma Clinic, learned about the EagleWatch and various conservation programs, followed by a reception at the Center's gazebo. Special thanks Shawnlei Breeding for helping organize this successful gathering and being a CFAEP member.

The Audubon Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland, FL, is a sanctuary dedicated to the conservation, rehabilitation, and education of Florida's raptors. Located along Lake Sybelia, the center focuses on rescuing, medically treating, and rehabilitating birds of prey, with the goal of releasing them back into the wild. Audubon Center for Birds of Prey is home to over 50 non-releasable raptors. Each is an ambassador for their species and has a unique story of why they are here. Most of Florida's raptors are found in our state year-round, however there are always exceptions (Kites, Merlin Falcons and Peregrine Falcons migrate through Florida).



[Donate to the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey.](#)

Upcoming Conferences and Workshops

Event	Date	Place
Clean Waterways 2025	April 23 – 25, 2025	Denver, CO
National Association of Environmental Professionals	April 28 – May 1, 2025	Charleston, NC
Florida Association for Water Quality Control	June 4 – 6, 2025	Naples, FL
AWWA 2025 Annual Conference & Expo	June 8 – 11, 2025	Denver, CO
A&WMA 118th Annual Conference and Expo	June 9 – 12, 2025	Raleigh, NC
Florida Stormwater Association Conference	June 11 – 13, 2025	Ft. Myers, FL
2025 Georgia Association of Water Professionals Industrial Conference	July 13 – 16, 2025	Savannah, GA
Annual Environmental Permitting Summer School	July 15 – 18, 2025	Marco Island, FL
Annual Georgia Environmental Conference	August 19 – 22, 2025	Jekyll Island, GA
StormCon 2025 Surface Water Quality Conference	August 26 – 28, 2025	Orlando, FL
American Institute of Professional Geologists National Conference	October 4 – 7, 2025	St. Louis, MO
AEHS Foundation, Annual East Coast Conference on Soil, Water, Energy, & Air	October 20 – 23, 2025	Amherst, MA
Association of Water Technologies Annual Convention & Expo	November 12 – 15, 2025	Colorado Spring, CO

NAEP

CALL FOR ARTICLES FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICE BULLETIN

The NAEP Environmental Practice Bulletin is published four times a year and emailed to all NAEP members. The newsletter is published in mid-February, May, August and November. Deadline for submissions is the end of the month prior to publication. NAEP is always looking for articles for this great practitioner-based publication. Consider providing NAEP's nationwide audience a bit of your professional experience and insight. For more information about publishing in the Environmental Practice Bulletin visit: <https://www.naep.org/publications>.



National
Association of
Environmental
Professionals

Be Connected

Science Shorts ~NPR Short Wave~ The Science Behind the Headlines

How the Santa Ana winds helped fuel the Los Angeles wildfires



We dig into the Santa Ana winds: What they are and how they combined with other factors to create conditions for the most destructive fire in Los Angeles' history.

What's a weather forecast worth?



The federal government has been tracking the weather for more than 150 years. Yet over the last few decades, the rise of the Internet and big tech have made weather forecasting a more crowded space. NPR reports on the value of an accurate forecast and the debate over who should control weather data.

Narwhal sightings are rare. Scientists just saw them use their tusks in new ways.



What are the narwhals up to? Generally, we don't really know! They are mysterious creatures. NPR science correspondent Nell Greenfieldboyce talks about new, rare drone footage scientists captured of arctic narwhals. The video sparked new ideas for how they use their tusks.

Central Florida Association of Environmental Professionals (CFAEP)

On March 13, 2025, the CFAEP hosted a career panel for the UCF Student Chapter, providing students with valuable insights into various environmental career paths. The panel featured industry professionals who discussed a range of fields, including environmental consulting, solid waste engineering, and pollution prevention. This event aimed to help students explore the diverse opportunities available in the environmental sector, allowing them to gain a better understanding of the skills and knowledge required for each career path and how they can contribute to sustainability and environmental protection. The CFAEP Board of Directors would like to thank everyone involved in planning this event, including our panel of speakers including Jada Barhorst, Monica Hool, and Aimee Krivan.



South Florida Association of Environmental Professionals (SFAEP)

South Florida Oyster Project Update & New River Water Quality and Microbiome Assessment

Author: Stacy Brown

Since 2022 the South Florida Association of Environmental Professionals has been cultivating an oyster restoration and shell recovery project. Phase I included mapping and conducting baseline water quality assessments at sites reported to have oyster populations along the New River, intracoastal and Pompano Beach in Broward and in East Greynolds Park in Miami. A previously unreported population within Mayan Lake was documented as having a healthy oyster population during this project.

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Sample Sites: Project Microbiome and Water Chemistry

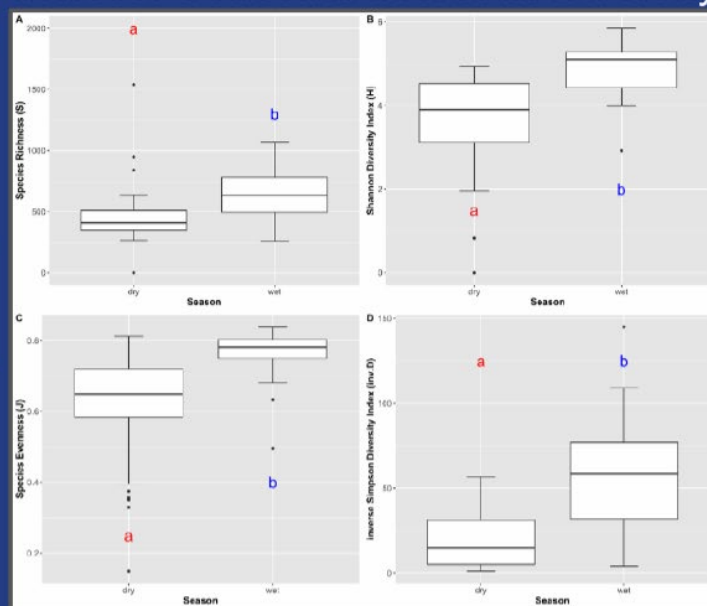


Water Quality and Microbiome Project Collection Sites

In 2023, the project expanded to include a new project partner, the Global Invertebrate Genomics Alliance (GIGA), www.gigacos.org. With funding from Burroughs Wellcome Fund, research was conducted to study wet and dry seasonal shifts in the water microbiome and water chemistry along the Sistrunk Corridor of the New River and along the reported oyster populations in South Florida. Results from the study included significant seasonal shifts within the microbiome biodiversity among the sites across the alpha diversity indices. More significant microbial diversity was documented during the wet season than the dry season (Fig. 4).

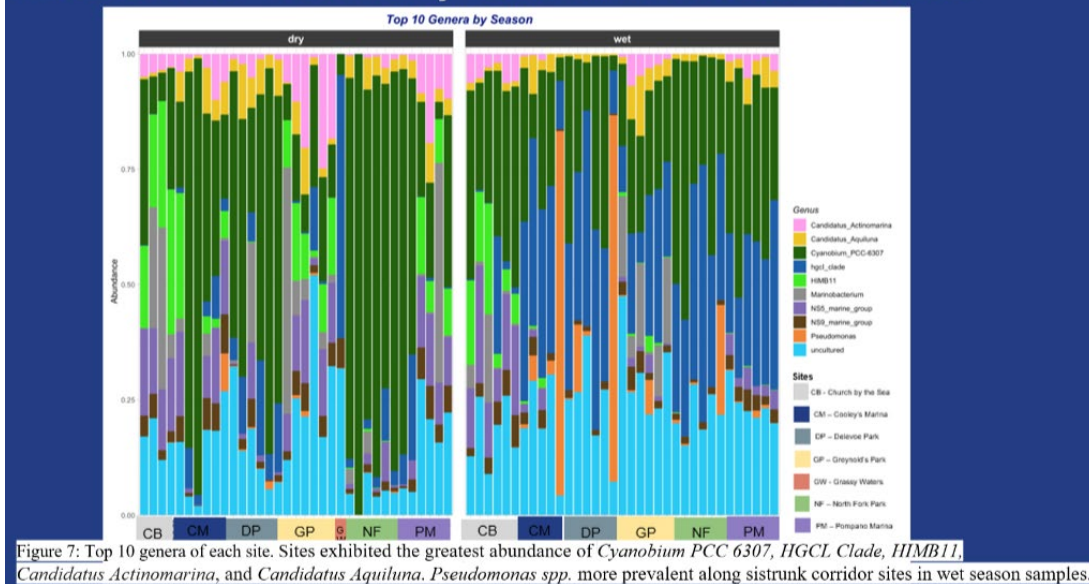
Significant Biodiversity Indices: Seasonal Microbial Diversity (Wet Vs. Dry Season)

Figure 4: All four alpha diversity indices showed significant differences between wet and dry season. The greatest microbiome diversity was found in the wet season.



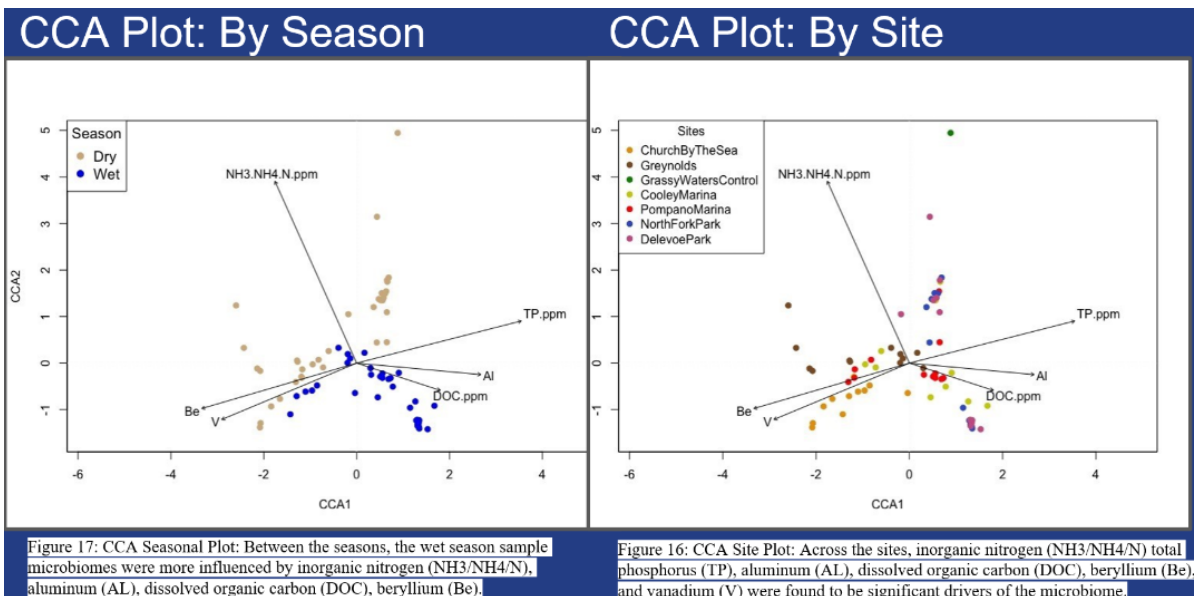
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Microbiome Taxonomy Seasonal Results: Genus



Health concerns are voiced by residents who use the waterways frequently, this study indicated higher abundance of pseudomonas and the HGCL clade of the Actinobacteria group during the wet season and higher abundance of cyanobacteria during the dry season (Fig. 7). As oysters are filter feeders, an increase in oyster populations within South Florida could help to reduce the abundance of algal species within the waterways. This study supports that oyster populations are low within the regions studied and oyster restoration in South Florida could be considered as part of a natural solution implemented within local water quality improvement projects.

Figure 16 - 18, show seasonal and site-specific environmental variables driving the microbiome at the study sites. Significant differences are shown with greater clustering of samples during the wet season (in blue) and dry season (in tan) within Fig. 17. Significant seasonal environmental drivers include inorganic nitrogen, dissolved organic carbon and total phosphorus and metals beryllium (Be), aluminum (AL) and vanadium (V). Additional research is needed to determine the impact on fish and invertebrate species due to the metals found within the sampled sites.



Cont.

CCA Plot: Environmental Variable Influence by Site Type - Oyster Versus Non-Oyster

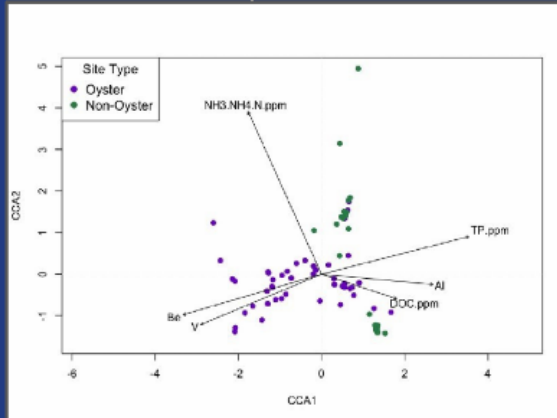


Figure 18: CCA Site Type Plot – Oyster versus Non-Oyster. The non-oyster sites were more influenced by inorganic nitrogen (NH₃/NH₄/N) and dissolved organic carbon (DOC) while the oyster sites were more influenced by dissolved organic carbon (DOC), beryllium (Be) and vanadium (V).



Community Event Outreach & Survey Collection conducted by GIGA Project Co-PI Dr. Tara Chadwick

Citizen science, community input and community education intersect with the more research driven components of this study such as the microbial and water quality analysis. Over time, as oysters and other filter feeding species have been removed from the habitat with greater frequency, water quality has suffered. The community of focus in the New River: Our Home project, Sistrunk, has experienced water quality issues that have impacted the community's ability to swim, fish and utilize the New River corridor. The study sites of Delevoe Park, North Fork River Park, Cooley's Marina are no exception with residents reporting fewer days with clear waterways, increased pollution and decreased fish and invertebrate biodiversity.

Several meetings were held to discuss the results of this study with the community to gather information as to how they, as citizen scientists, would like to contribute to future restoration of the Sistrunk sites. Surveys were collected at (2) public outreach days, January 2023 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Sistrunk Parade and Delevoe Park Waterway Clean-up. Per Tara Chadwick, community member and project consultant, "Over the first 6 months of the project, 300 community members were educated on the links between environmental and human health. Of these, 40 completed a brief survey indicating an interest in addressing local water quality, biodiversity and health issues." (New River Project Website Link). A diverse segment of the population was reached which included various age demographics. Survey questions included a range of environmental knowledge to use impact related. Residents were interested and engaged in the efforts. Input from residents, businesses and government officials was considered and included in this study.

Cont.

Project information sharing included water chemistry data publication on publicly available websites and the inclusion of raw data in genetic databases such as NCBI and <http://www.gigacos.org/index.php/2025/03/31/new-river-biodiversity-and-water-quality-conserving-our-home-in-south-florida/>



Jan. 2025 Oyster Rope Creation Event at Urban Farming Institute (L) and Water Microbiome Filtration Set-Up at Nova Southeastern University's Microbiology and Genomics Laboratory, Dr. Jose Lopez Co-PI GIGA Project (R).

Project collaboration with Urban Farming Institute, Coastal Conservation Association, Port Everglades and Tiki Tiki of Hollywood continued to work project goals established in 2022 including shell collection, submerged aquatic vegetation surveys, oyster population mapping. Community events included conducting interest surveys and building oyster ropes as part of the vertical oyster garden (VOG) development. In 2024 & 2025, over 150 ropes have been created to date and are set to be deployed along the New River in Spring 2025. Oyster spat recruitment studies after deployment along with additional water quality analysis is slated with major community involvement anticipated. Oyster restoration sites are projected to be reviewed in the upcoming months as Phase II of the project.



Oyster Ropes Created Urban Farming Institute, January 2025.

Cont.



(Left) September 2022 Port Everglades Oyster Shell Collection, Approx. 800 Buckets. (Right) March 2025 Port Everglades Oyster Shell Collection, Approx. 3,220 Buckets Collected.

FAEP Annual Conference 2025

This year's annual conference, hosted by the Tampa Bay Chapter, was held in St. Petersburg March 12 th – 14 th and was well attended by more than 300 people including 46 government employees and nine students. Sponsorships are critical to keeping conference fees low and a big thanks goes to the Gold Sponsors: Port Tampa Bay, HDR, Nason Yeager, and AquaTech Consultants. We had a total of 45 sponsors who set up exhibits with many of their services and new toys on display.

A full day of Advanced NEPA Training by twelve experts was offered on Wednesday and was attended by 37 people. Thanks to Courtney Arena, FAEP's NAEP rep, for coordinating that valuable training.

Two field trips were held at Weedon Island Preserve including a Guided Kayaking Tour and a Guided Walking Tour. New experiences such as kayaking through mangrove tunnels and walking through salterns were enjoyed by 37 people. Transportation was provided by Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority on one of their new hybrid buses.

The Opening Social was held outdoors on the pool deck that evening and was well attended by many people. Positive comments were made about the excellent food and lots of people were observed enjoying their beverages and catching up with old friends and making new ones.

Thursday morning kicked off with welcoming addresses provided by **Gabriella Balsam**, **Gina Chiello**, and **Mike Mayer** the respective presidents for TBAEP, FAEP, and NAEP. TBAEP provided a \$3000 check to the USF Oceanography Camp, Especially for Girls. A presentation was given about the camp by one of their counselors who was previously a camp attendee. **Adam Forkner** of S&ME and **Naomi Castillo** of HDR were introduced as the conference co-chairs. The amount of effort they donated to making this year's conference a huge success was monumental. Many thanks to them and the rest of the committee.

Three Sessions were held concurrently throughout the conference and included topics on wildlife, permitting/new regulations, living shorelines, assessment and remediation, complex infrastructure projects, and GIS tools among other interesting topics.

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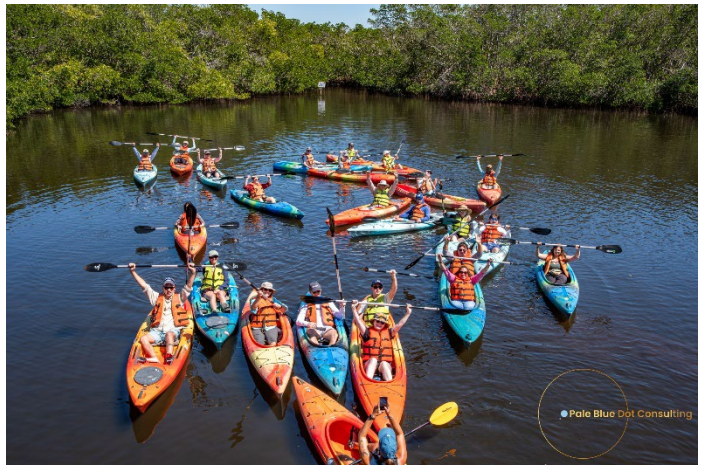
The luncheon was an excellent buffet followed by our keynote speaker, Lisa Shipley from Live Wildly, a Florida-based organization focused on wildlife connectivity and preserving corridors and unique habitat. Four local students presented their posters to a panel of judges.

The afternoon sessions were followed by the Evening Social held in the exhibit hall. Once again, many people made positive comments about the quality of the food. Traffic was heavy at each of the booths as the vendors had many things to talk about or opportunities for raffle prizes. Candy, pens, and other give-away items were in abundance. A great time was had by all as evidenced by the amount of laughter and many smiles.

Friday morning was kicked off with a live broadcast by Environmental Professional Radio hosts Laura Thorne and Nic Frederick. They interviewed our very own Elva Peppers who was later recognized for her three years as FAEP President and several years on the Board. Other awards were presented to Teri Hasbrouck who recently retired after 16 years as FAEP administrator, the Northeast Chapter as the Chapter of the Year, and Tim Perry as the Hasbrouck Award recipient for his many years volunteering for FAEP. Tim is a past President of FAEP and served as NAEP rep as well as many other positions within FAEP and the Tallahassee Chapter. The conference committee was recognized for their most excellent efforts.

Friday morning sessions were well attended, with many attendees staying for the numerous raffles from the exhibitors that were held at the mid-morning break. In the afternoon there was a wildlife Boat Tour of Tampa Bay offered by Tampa Bay Watch, a local non-profit dedicated to educating people. Forty of the conference attendees went on a perfect day for a boat ride.

Many thanks to all who attended, especially the sponsors and presenters. And thanks to the Conference Committee for a well-organized event. **The 2026 conference will be hosted by the Treasure Coast Chapter and will be held in the West Palm Beach area.**



NWFAEP Conservation Walk at UWF

NWFAEP Hosts Guided Conservation Walk at UWF's First Prescribed Burn Site

The Northwest Chapter of the Florida Association of Environmental Professionals (NWFAEP) recently hosted an educational **Guided Conservation Walk** at the University of West Florida's (UWF) first prescribed burn site. This insightful event, held on **March 28, 2025**, brought together students, faculty, and community members to learn about the ecological benefits of controlled burns.

Led by **Chasidy Hobbs**, UWF Director of Conservation and former NWFAEP President, attendees explored the burn site and gained a deeper understanding of how prescribed fires play a critical role in maintaining healthy ecosystems. Discussions covered how controlled burns reduce wildfire risk, promote native plant species, and enhance biodiversity.

This hands-on experience reinforced NWFAEP's commitment to environmental education and sustainable land management. By engaging the community in conservation efforts, the event underscored the importance of active participation in preserving Florida's natural landscapes.

Check out this recent article, [Florida Forest Service Conducts Prescribed Burn](#), for more information and impact.



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ABCEP



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ABCEP would like to enhance the CEP (and CEP-IT) by growing our numbers and raising the awareness and value of the credential. If interested, you can find more details about the CEP and the application process on our website <https://www.abcep.org>. If you email the office (office@abcep.org), our Administrator will follow up to see if you have additional questions about the application process and offer to assign a mentor to help guide you through it.

The initial CEP application fee is typically \$200. ABCEP is offering a 10% discount through the end of 2020 reducing the initial CEP application fee to \$180. This is a great time to submit your application! We also have a CEP-IT application for those that don't quite meet the CEP requirements.

Making the decision to pursue a certification can feel like a daunting task, but in this climate, having the designation after your name can prove that crucial differentiator. Please share this with anyone in your office that might be interested.

**The FAEP Board of Directors would like to extend a big
THANK-YOU
to the organizations who continue to support FAEP
with group memberships for five or more of their employees.**

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