

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE 9TH ANNUAL PUBLIC
INTEREST ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE:
“FLORIDA’S FINAL FRONTIERS: SAVING WHAT’S
LEFT”¹**

The 9th Annual Public Interest Environmental Conference (PIEC 9) was held from February 28 through March 1, 2003 at the University of Florida and included more than 200 attendees from academia, the legal profession, science, non-governmental and governmental agencies and the public. These Proceedings include articles related to issues discussed at PIEC 9.

The first day of panels was structured around four tracks: Land & Development; Water; Wildlife & Habitat; and Policy & Procedure. The panel sessions, held in the J. Wayne Reitz Union, began with an “Introduction to the Conference Tracks” plenary, wherein experts at the top of each field represented set the tone for the respective tracks. Dr. John DeGrove spoke for Land & Development; Richard Hamann for Water; Laurie MacDonald for Wildlife & Habitat; and Clay Henderson for Policy & Procedure.

The Land and Development track featured panels entitled “Do We Have the Right Stuff to Save What's Left? Protecting Florida's Green Infrastructure Through Large Scale Planning”; “Area-Wide Planning Strategies: Case Studies”; and “Grow Trees, Not Houses: Protecting Private Forestry Lands From Sprawl.” The Water track included panels on “Navigating the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Through Uncharted Waters”; “Reserving Water for Natural Systems in Florida”; and “Total Maximum Daily Loads and Florida's Impaired Waters Rule.” The Wildlife & Habitat track tackled the hot-button issues in natural resource protection with such panels as “Strategies for Identifying and Recovering Endangered Species”; “Protecting Florida's Rare Plants and Their Habitats”; and “There are Aliens in Our Backyard ... and We Invited 'Em! Intentional Introduction of Exotics Into the State of Florida.” Finally, the Policy & Procedure track included a “2003 Legislative Update”; a panel called “SLAPP Suits: Developers are Turning Up the Heat!”; as well as a “Workshop on Public Commenting: A Missing Link in Florida.”

The second day of sessions included: “Toxic Torts & Public Interest Lawyers: Potential Avenues for Achieving Environmental Justice”; “Citizen's Training: The Planning Short Course”; “Sustainable Energy: The Future of Florida”; “Is the Legislative

1. The individual authors of the articles in these proceedings accept responsibility for the accuracy of their information, quotations, and citations.

Process Broken?: A Discussion About Legislative Reform”; and “The Land Use Amendment Process: A Public Hearing Simulation.”

But even before the first panel session, reception speaker Dr. Bron Taylor, a professor in the University of Florida’s Department of Religion and renowned scholar on religion and nature, spoke at the Harn Museum of Natural History. His speech, entitled “Eco-Anarchy or Eco-Law? Sustainability Politics and Spirituality from Radical Environmentalism to the World Summit on Sustainability,” examined the evolution of environmentalism, religion’s relationship to the environment, environmental philosophy, and environmental law.

Keynote speaker Wes Skiles’s film, “Water’s Journey,” was shown to a sold-out audience at the University of Florida Hotel and Conference Center Doubletree on the evening of Friday, February 28. There is no doubt that his cinematic depiction of Florida’s aquifer and springs inspired many to renew their resolve to protect the state’s priceless water resources.

Saturday, March 1st brought a special bonus. Jan Schlichtmann, the civil litigator whose crusade for the families of Woburn, MA was documented in the book by Jonathan Harr, *A Civil Action* (and later depicted on the silver screen by John Travolta in the movie of the same name) spoke of coming to terms with his famous case against the corporations of Beatrice Foods and the W.R. Grace.

The articles on the following pages represent contributions by several of the conference’s presenters as well as by students who worked to put together the many successful sessions.

We hope that you will attend the 10th Annual Public Interest Environmental Conference, scheduled for February 19 – 21, 2004. Please see the conference website for details at <http://grove.ufl.edu/~els>.

Kelly Martinson

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PIEC 9 Conference Co-Chairs