

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY
PUBLIC INTEREST ENVIRONMENTAL
CONFERENCE:***

**“Shaping Florida’s Future: A Decade of Protecting an
Eternity”**

The University of Florida Fredric G. Levin College of Law celebrated its 10th annual student-run Public Interest Environmental Conference February 19th through February 21st, 2004. Over 300 attendees, including students, attorneys, senators, scientists, citizens from around the state, conference alumni, and representatives from non-governmental and governmental agencies participated in the three days of events that focused on some of Florida’s most pressing environmental issues.

The conference events kicked off Thursday evening with an inspiring speech by Ollie Houck, preeminent environmental law scholar from Tulane University School of Law. Mr Houck returned to the conference in commemoration of its 10 years of success, as he was the keynote speaker at the first-ever PIEC. Houck told an attentive audience about his experiences with the natural beauty of Florida and how he has seen it change over the years.

Concurrent panel discussions ran throughout the day on Friday and Saturday, organized into four main tracks: Florida’s Waters, Land & Development, Marine & Coastal, and Cutting Edge. On Friday morning, the tracks were introduced by leading experts in each area: Sonny Vergara, former Director of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, introduced the Florida’s Waters track, followed by Michael Bean, Ecosystem Restoration Chair of the Wildlife Program at Environmental Defense, who spoke to the Land & Development topic. The Marine & Coastal track was introduced by Dr. David Guggenheim, Vice-President for Conservation Policy at the Ocean Conservancy. Eric Dannenmaier, Director of the Tulane Institute for Environmental Law and Policy, represented the Cutting Edge track by introducing conference attendees to the ideas of environmental democracy and environmental security and their important role in a post 9/11 society.

Throughout both days, panel discussions were lively and brought together experts to discuss the current state of these hot issues. The Florida’s Waters track explored topics of water supply, water funding sources, springs protection, and water quality. During the

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Land & Development track, panels focused on population carrying capacities, the Florida Home Town Democracy amendment, and code enforcement. Topics of ocean governance, working waterfronts, aquaculture, and the legal issues of living on Florida's coast were explored in the Marine & Coastal track. The Cutting Edge panels addressed at the conference spanned topics including indoor air pollution and toxic molds, genetically modified organisms and agriculture, clean energy, and green design.

On Saturday, there were also two special sessions. In the first, the important subject of Environmental Justice and bringing citizens' claims was addressed, including perspectives from both an attorney and an academic working in the field, as well as a citizen who is actually fighting such injustices through organizing with his community to form Citizens Against Toxic Exposure. In the afternoon, a workshop familiarized attendees with the process for citizen initiatives to amend the constitution and updates on reforms of the process.

The highlight of the conference was the keynote address at the Friday evening banquet by best-selling author and columnist, Carl Hiaasen. His unique blend of humor and passion for Florida's environment was the perfect compliment to three days devoted to Florida's environmental future. Hiaasen spoke to a packed house of 220 conference attendees and praised the important work of all those present who he recognized as the ones committed to preserving the natural beauty of Florida.

The following articles are contributions by several conference presenters as well as University of Florida students who worked on organizing the panel discussions.

The 11th Annual PIEC is scheduled to take place February 24th through February 26th, 2005. We hope that you will be able to attend. For more information about the conference, please visit our website at <http://grove.ufl.edu/~els>.

Erika Zimmerman & Ryan Osborne,
10th PIEC Conference Co-Chairs