

WFREC Summer Newsletter

Volume 5, Issue 1

Inside:

- Page 2. From the Director
- Page 3. Student Graduation 2013
- Page 4. End of Semester Trip
- Page 5. New Small Farms/Alternative Enterprises Initiative
- Page 6. Dr. Bohn's Research: Spring 2013
- Page 7. The 6th Annual IFAS Awards
- Page 8. 2013 Calendar of Events
- Page 9. Meet Neeta Soni
- Page 10. Meet Dr. Ajay Sharma
- Page 11. Meet Ryan Adams
- Page 12. 2+2 Scholarship Winners

From the Interim Director

Since the December Newsletter we have had several visitors from the UF/IFAS administrative community. In January, Dr. John Hayes, Dean for Research, met with WFREC faculty to discuss current issues in the Dean for Research Office. Dr. Hayes discussed ways in which his office could help faculty with their research programs and ways that the WFREC research programs could be enhanced to increase their impact.

In February, Dr. Al Wysocki, Associate Dean for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) spent a day at WFREC observing classes taught by WFREC faculty as well as distance education courses received here. He also met with faculty to discuss challenges facing the satellite teaching program at Milton and with students about their educational needs and desires. During his visit, Dr. Wysocki mentioned some internal grant opportunities for funding to upgrade the teaching facilities at Milton. Following his suggestion a proposal was submitted for an Instructional Improvement Grant and we were awarded nearly \$28,000 to upgrade the video conferencing capabilities used for the UF/Milton teaching program. Those upgrades are now being installed and will be ready in time for fall classes.

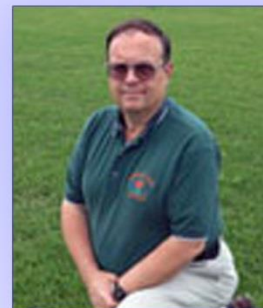
Dr. Nick Place, recently appointed Dean for Extension, also visited WFREC during February to discuss his plans for Extension. The faculty presented information about the various Extension programs at WFREC and described how these programs meet the needs of the various WFREC clientele groups.

In late May the Directors for the Research and Education Centers located throughout Florida from the western panhandle to the southern peninsula met at WFREC for their annual retreat. This meeting provided faculty and staff an opportunity to showcase the teaching, research and extension programs at WFREC. During an evening cookout the center directors had an opportunity to interact with WFREC stakeholders and further discuss the impact of our programs in the region.

On May 3 the Spring Graduation Ceremony for UF/Milton graduates was held. The six graduates along with 50 to 60 family and friends participated in the event. We wish all the graduates the best in their future endeavors. Student enrollment for next fall and spring appears to be strong due the continuing recruiting and advising efforts by WFREC staff and faculty.

The search for a new Center Director was officially begun in May. Applications will be accepted through early July with interviews anticipated during late July and early August. We are soliciting nominations for the Center Director position so if you have someone in mind that you believe would make a good Center Director please forward their contact information to one of the WFREC faculty or staff.

Justin Hudson was recently hired as Heavy Equipment Operator at WFREC, the position vacated when Tommy Salter retired. Justin is responsible for assisting with the programs at WFREC including operation of small and large equipment, assisting with basic equipment maintenance and with land preparation, planting, maintenance and harvest of field studies. We welcome Justin to the WFREC family.



Barry Brecke
Interim Director
bjbe@ufl.edu

Student Graduation 2013

University of Florida's West Florida Research and Education Center graduated 6 students on May 3rd 2013. It was an exciting night at the Milton Campus for our 3 Environmental Horticulture and 3 Natural Resource Conservation graduates. We had a light fare for the students and their guests and then it was on to the graduation. We had one student, Gina Duke, who graduated Summa Cum Laude with a degree in Natural Resource Conservation and a minor Wildlife Ecology and Conservation. Jesse Goyer and Jennifer Pugh also received a degree in Natural Resource Conservation and both minored in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation. Elisha "Kaylen" Rowland graduated Cum Laude with a degree in Environmental Horticulture. Samuel Mize also received his degree in Environmental Horticulture and minored in Management and Sales in Agribusiness. Our final graduate was Joseph James with a degree in Environmental Horticulture. After the ceremony the graduates celebrated with cake and some time with Faculty, fellow students, and guests. Congratulations graduates, Go Gators!



Erin Tinney
Academic Recruiter



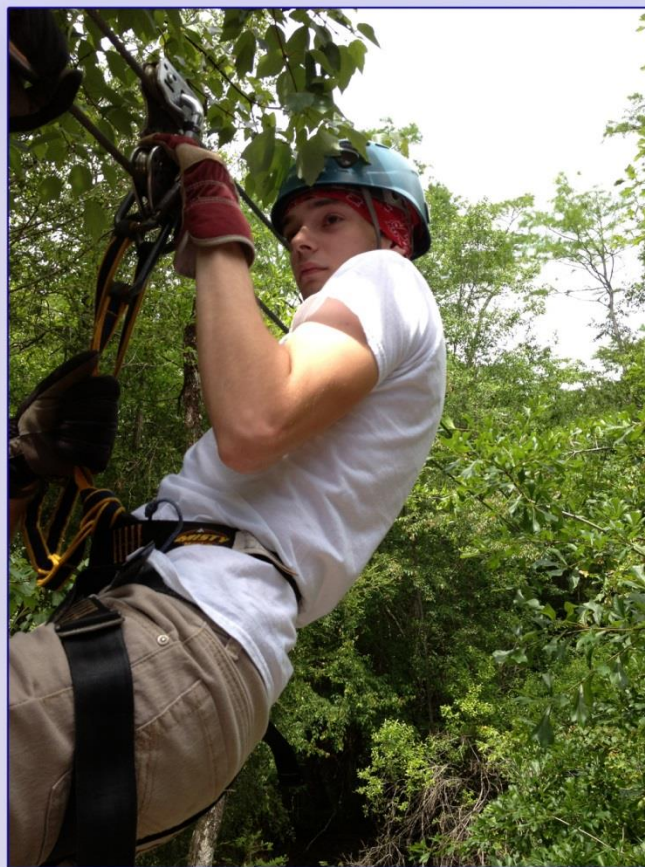
(from left to right) Samuel Mize, Joseph James, Jesse Goyer, Kaylen Rowland, Gina Duke, Jennifer Pugh

End of Semester Trip



Erin Tinney
Academic Recruiter

After graduation the student club sponsored an end of the semester trip to Adventures Unlimited for the weekend of May 11-12. The graduates and current students camped all weekend. They also canoed, kayaked, tubed, fished, and zip lined along the Blackwater River. It was a beautiful weekend and a wonderful time relaxing after the Spring Semester was over. The student club plans on sponsoring a Welcome Back BBQ when the Fall Semester starts. The Student Club recently elected new leaders: Kevin Smith (NRC) – President, Micah Byars (NRC) – Vice President, Courtney Culler (NRC) – Treasurer, and Julie Wood (NRC) – Secretary.



WFREC Launches New Small Farms/Alternative Enterprises Initiative

Building on the momentum of the specialty crop program launched by former Center Director, Dr. Jeff Mullahey, the WFREC faculty and staff met with County Extension Faculty from the first seven northwestern counties of Florida. The primary goal of this faculty driven initiative is to solidify and build upon the partnership between the WFREC and the counties to better meet the current and growing demands of the regional grower clientele – those who are currently engaged in production and those who are considering diversifying their interests and engaging in this aspect of agriculture. Blake Thaxton, Santa Rosa County Extension Agent and J. Bryan Unruh, Professor and Associate Center Director will co-lead this effort.

At the inaugural meeting, time was spent identifying what this partnership should look like. All of the faculty who attended are engaged in some aspect of “specialty crops,” “food safety,” or “small farms/alternative enterprises” but little strategic programming has been conducted to date. Our aim is to capitalize on faculty expertise while minimizing redundancy. We will leverage the human capital with land and equipment resources at the WFREC to implement demonstration projects, field days, etc.

Since the first meeting, we have started to:

- Develop an overarching situation statement, objectives, and educational methods;
- Develop a seven county grower survey to better identify their needs that we should address;
- Centralize and update our shared growers list to improve the marketing of our program; and
- Identify key Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agents to partner with.

Additionally, the team wrote and submitted a proposal to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for the 2013 Specialty Crop Block Grant program and we are working with industry partners to obtain in-kind and financial support for demonstration projects.

Our first “big event” was our Small Farms/Alternative Enterprises Field Day held at the WFREC on May 10th. We hoped for 40 to attend; planned for 60; and were surprise to have nearly 90 people show up. When asked, nearly two-thirds of the attendees were first time guests to the WFREC!



Dr. J Bryan Unruh
Profesor and
Associate Director

Contact Info:
jbu@ufl.edu
(850)-982-7951



Planning Meeting



Libbie Johnson, Escambia County Extension Agent and William Wendt, Specialty Crop Program Manager, planting a sweet corn variety trial.

Dr. Bohn's Research: Spring 2013

Dr. Kimberly Bohn and her research staff conduct forest management and forest health research on public and private lands in the Florida panhandle. One of their primary interests is the biology and control of the invasive Japanese climbing fern, which poses a threat to the pine straw raking industry and out-competes native plant species. Currently, they are exploring the effects of herbicide control on the reproductive mechanisms in the plant. This species reproduces by spores and also spreads by way of rhizome. Dr. Bohn's studies are to determine if the herbicides can reduce spore viability or kill the underground rhizome.

Dr. Bohn's team is also involved in several forest management projects including a multiple year project on the Tate's Hell State Forest near Carrabelle, FL. The intentions of the study are to determine the most effective ways to naturally regenerate slash pines. The study is composed of several mature forests where different thinning and regeneration harvest methods have been used to promote seed production and seedling growth. These regeneration methods are commonly used with other species of trees but have yet to be evaluated in slash pine forests. Public and private land managers have shown considerable interest in this project because slash pine forests are so abundant in Florida.



Justin McKeithen
Senior Lab Technician
Phone: 850-995-3720
ext. 136
Mobile: 850-776-7009
justmck@ufl.edu



Japanese climbing fern competes with native ground cover and threatens the pine straw industry in Florida.

The 6th Annual IFAS Awards

The 6th Annual IFAS Awards program was held Thursday evening, April 25, in Gainesville. Dr. Bryan Unruh is the co-author of an article "Nitrate leaching and turf quality in established 'Floritam' St. Augustinegrass and 'Empire' zoysiagrass" published in the Journal of Environmental Quality that was selected for special recognition as a High Impact Research Publication. Congratulations to Bryan along with the other authors Laurie Trenholm and Jerry Sartain.



2013 Calendar of Events

June 19 Gulf Coast Turfgrass Expo & Field Day
July 8 Field Corn Variety Tour
July 18 Santa Rosa County Farm Tour
August 20 Extension Farm Field Day



Robin Vickers
Events Coordinator
rvickers@ufl.edu
50-983-5216 X 113
Fax: 850-983-5774
Cell: 850-393-7334

August 20 Fall Semester Begins
August 23-27 Registration For Non-Degree Seeking Students
September 15 Application Deadline To Attend In Spring 2014
November 8-9 Homecoming
November 25 Last Day To Withdrawal

If you are interested in any of our programs; Natural Resource Conservation, Environmental Horticulture, or Golf and Sports Turf Management, please email me, Erin Tinney, etinney@ufl.edu or call 850-983-5216. A list of our classes for the coming semester is listed on our website at miltongators.com. Even if you don't need your degree but want to take a refresher course, non-degree seeking students can take up to 9 credits at the Milton Campus.



Erin Tinney
Academic Recruiter
etinney@ufl.edu

Meet Neeta Soni

Neta Soni is a Research Assistant and a Graduate Student of Agronomy at the University of Florida. Neeta is from Costa Rica and finished her undergraduate in Agronomy at Earth University in 2009. She had the opportunity to do a six month post internship working on energy cane and other research projects. In addition, she worked with coffee farmers promoting sustainable agriculture through farm certification programs at the main coffee areas in Costa Rica. Neeta decided to join the graduate school program to generate professional criteria, improve professional skills, research field work, and contribute to the improvement of efficient agriculture productive systems. "I strongly believe in the importance of research to improve and create technologies to make farmers more competitive in the long term," she says. Neeta is currently working on a project with the USDA and this is her explanation about the project:

I am developing my research and assistantship in a project sponsored by USDA about the impact of changing conventional cropping system to biofuel crop production on the ecosystems services. For my research I am focusing on the impact of the use of byproducts from biofuel production (i.e. vinasse and biochar) on weed populations. Vinasse is the leftover material after ethanol distillation. Biochar is carbon combusted biomass under very low oxygen conditions and high temperature. The main issue with these leftover materials is the large amounts that are produced and normally returned to the field for nutrient cycling. Currently there is not much information about what could be the effect of vinasse and biochar after being incorporated to the soil on weed populations. The objective of this research is to determine the effect of vinasse and biochar on the germination and growth of Palmer Amaranth, Sicklepot, and Smooth Crabgrass, which are three important noxious weeds in the Southeastern United States. In addition, weed control efficacy of preemergence applications of atrazine and pendimethalin after soil incorporation of vinasse and biochar will be evaluated. Hopefully this research project will help to give a better understanding about the impact that biofuel byproducts can bring to weed communities.



Neeta researching the effects of Ethanol By-Products(in this case, activated coal) on wheat crops.

Meet Dr. Ajay Sharma

Dr. Ajay Sharma joined the University of Florida as a Ph.D. student in the School of Forest Resources and Conservation in 2008. After receiving his Ph.D. in August 2012, he joined the West Florida Research and Education Center as a Post-Doctoral Research Associate in Forest Ecology and Silviculture. Prior to joining the Ph.D. program at the University of Florida in 2008, he worked as a professional forester and a research fellow at the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, Dehradun, and the Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine, Jammu, in India. He has his B.S and M.S. degrees also in forestry from India.

Dr. Sharma's research is broadly based on understanding the effects of silvicultural treatments on stand structure, composition, and development over time, particularly for stands with multiple-use or restoration management objectives. Most of his current research has focused in the southeastern United States, mainly on managed pine flatwoods ecosystems. He is one of the lead researchers in a long-term project in the Florida panhandle that is evaluating even- and uneven-aged management alternatives in longleaf pine-slash pine ecosystems. In this CFEOR (a cooperative for Conserved Forest Ecosystems–Outreach and Research) funded project, he has led in the development of experimental designs, tree marking strategies and establishment of permanent plots with experimentally created variable-size canopy gaps focused on understanding biological and physical processes governing regeneration, productivity, diversity, and carbon sequestration.

Dr. Sharma strongly believes in Land Grant mission and understands that outreach and extension go hand in hand with applied research. He regularly participates in landowners meetings and gives presentations and conducts field trips and demonstration workshops related to forest health and management issues for several state and federal land-owning agencies. He also co-taught Silviculture to undergraduate students in Spring 2013, at the West Florida Research and Education Center.



Meet Ryan Adams

Ryan Adams, Graduate Student of Environmental Horticulture at the University of Florida. Mr. Adams is currently working on his M.S. degree under the direction of Dr. J. Bryan Unruh and Dr. Jason Kruse. His work focuses on nutrient management of bermudagrass fairways surrounding environmentally sensitive areas. Mr. Adams received his B.S degree in 2010 from Iowa State University, Ames, IA. During his tenure at Iowa State University, Ryan interned at Pinehurst Resort in Pinehurst, NC, Shoal Creek Country Club in Shoal Creek, Alabama and with the USGA Green Section. He has also worked at the Iowa State University Research Farm, Ames, IA and at Charlotte Country Club in Charlotte, NC. Ryan is currently working at the Jay Research Farm and this is a portion of the project he is conducting for his graduate thesis.

HOW CLOSE CAN YOU GET??

3 feet? 10 feet? 20 feet? With the current focus in Florida on implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs), there is a need to develop a better understanding of nonpoint source pollution. These can include restrictions placed on the distance from the edge of a body of water that must be left unfertilized. However, the optimal unfertilized width that will minimize movement of fertilizers and nutrients to nearby bodies of water has not been determined.

A forced runoff field study was conducted to quantify nitrogen transport and evaluate the effective size of an untreated buffer strip or ring of responsibility located adjacent to a body of water. Three nitrogen fertilizers were evaluated and included: 1.) ammonium sulfate; 2.) polymer coated urea; and 3.) ureaformaldehyde. Each 1 lb/1000 fertilizer treatment was placed on a 7% slope of a hybrid bermudagrass fairway at four separate upslope locations.

Runoff samples were collected systematically after treatment and analyzed for total soluble nitrogen (TSN) concentrations. TSN loads were evaluated to determine the best combination of fertilizer source and unfertilized buffer strip sizing.



Ryan Adams
rsadams@ufl.edu



2 + 2 Scholarship Winners



Erin Tinney
Academic Recruiter

Every year Pensacola State College and University of Florida gives two 2 + 2 scholarships. The scholarships are given to students who want to pursue a degree in one of the programs offered at the Milton campus. Pensacola State College pays a portion of the student's tuition for the students to attend PSC the first two years and University of Florida pays a portion of the tuition while attending UF. The total award per scholarship winner is approximately \$5000. The two scholarship winners are John Doyle "JD" Atkins, Jr. from Jay High School in Jay, FL and Jessica Marie Baldwin from Northview High School in Century, FL. "JD" Atkins' future plan when he graduates from UF is to become a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Law Enforcement Officer, and Jessica Baldwin plans to become an Environmental Scientist for Environmental Protection Agency.





2013, WFREC Milton Campus