

Managing Stormwater in a Changing Florida Panhandle

The Florida Panhandle has the highest average total rainfall in the state (65”), with rain levels increasing in recent years. Limited and aging stormwater infrastructure has led to legacy water quality and flooding problems across the region. Local leaders and stakeholders need to better understand how development occurs, its impact on hydrology and water quality, and available solutions to mitigate impacts. UF IFAS Extension agents and specialists developed a regional stormwater education program for building technical capacity among stakeholders to incorporate sustainable stormwater management practices in their communities. Our audience included municipal employees, extension colleagues, professional engineers, landscape architects, and residents.

Programs included an in-person stormwater management workshop in 2019 (22 attendees) and a 2-part webinar series in 2020 (83 attendees) and 2021 (136 attendees). In 2021, 24 attendees received professional CEU’s for attending.

Topics included hydrology and pollutant load dynamics, green infrastructure (GI) and low impact development (LID), local case studies, and funding opportunities, with stormwater infrastructure maintenance, permitting requirements, and planning tools added in 2020-2021. Workshops scheduled for May 2022 will include CEU credits and a collaborative design charrette.

Post-workshop surveys indicate that participants gained knowledge in one or more topics taught by attending our programs. A 5-month follow-up survey indicated that respondents valued the information they received, used the information in their line of work, and modified decisions related to stormwater management based on information presented.

The annual increase in participation and enthusiasm from stormwater professionals, along with innovative projects designed by those professionals in local municipalities, has shown that these workshops have achieved our objectives.



Carrie Stevenson

Carrie Stevenson is the Coastal Sustainability Agent for the UF/IFAS Escambia County Extension Office and has been with the organization for 19 years. Her educational outreach programs focus on living sustainably within a vulnerable coastal ecosystem. She helps clientele better understand how to protect and preserve local habitats and water resources, wisely use our abundant rainfall and sunlight, and prepare and mitigate for flooding, coastal storms, and climate impacts.

A lifelong outdoors enthusiast, she enjoys biking, paddling, and traveling to national parks with her family. Carrie is the proud mom of an Eagle Scout and leads her daughter’s Girl Scout troop. She holds a master’s degree in Biology/Coastal Zone Studies from the University of West Florida in Pensacola and an undergraduate degree in Marine Science from Samford University (Birmingham, Alabama).

Additional presenters

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