

Reconnecting with Nature Through Podcasting

Faculty were seeking new and innovative ways to reach Extension clientele when webinars were saturating the internet during COVID. In Florida, residents are dependent on natural resources, but many are unfamiliar with the state's ecology and ecosystems. "Naturally Florida" was designed to reach these people through short, research-based, and environmentally focused podcast episodes. Faculty record, edit, and release episodes monthly with a total of 5,345 plays since launching on June 21, 2021. Topics covered to date include native and invasive species, stormwater, urban forestry, and fire ecology. The last five podcast episodes have an average download rate of 46 within seven days of release indicating performance better than 50% of podcasts on the market

(<https://www.thepodcasthost.com/planning/whats-a-good-number-of-downloads-for-a-podcast/>).

Furthermore, faculty are reaching a more diverse audience than traditional natural resource Extension programs with greater reach among younger and more male audiences. The 23-44 age group and males make up 67% and 44% of listeners respectively. Podcasts are accessible via the computer or smartphone on a variety of free platforms. While challenging to evaluate, faculty released a special episode with a call for listeners to respond to a brief survey. This episode was listened to by 272 people and faculty received 19 responses for a 7% response rate with 95% of respondents implementing at least one behavior change to support local natural resources. As faculty continue to market and promote the podcast, more listeners will be reached with critical natural resource information, ultimately protecting, and enhancing the local environment. Learn more at www.naturallyfloridapodcast.com

Lara Milligan

Lara Milligan is the Natural Resources Agent for UF/IFAS Extension Pinellas County. Her work focuses on wildlife, water, and general environmental education. Lara earned her Bachelors and Masters degree in Natural Resource Conservation from the University of Florida and is a graduate of the Natural Resources Leadership Institute.

Shannon Carnevale

Shannon Carnevale is the Natural Resources & Conservation Agent with UF/IFAS Extension Polk County. Her work addresses issues related to watershed ecology & restoration, invasive plant management, and wildlife ecology. Shannon earned her M.S. in Agricultural Education and Communication and B.S. in Forest Resources Management from the University of Florida, and is a graduate of the Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute.