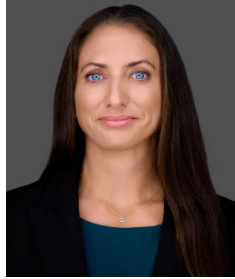


# FLORIDA BEACON

## From the President's Desk Gina Chiello



## Florida Association of Environmental Professionals Summer 2025



Dear FAEP Members,

I hope this message finds you well and enjoying a productive and inspiring summer. As we move into the second half of the year, I want to take a moment to highlight some of the exciting initiatives the Florida Association of Environmental Professionals (FAEP) has been advancing on behalf of our members.

One of our newest and most well-received efforts is the launch of the **FAEP Quarterly Webinar Series**. We kicked things off in June with an outstanding session that drew more than 150 attendees from across the state. The webinar was expertly moderated by Susan Martin (Nason Yeager), and featured distinguished speakers Larry Sellers (Holland & Knight) and Janet Bowman (The Nature Conservancy). They offered a timely and in-depth look at the 2025 Legislative Session — what passed, what didn't, what may resurface, and insights into the outlook for 2026. The feedback from members has been overwhelmingly positive, and we're already planning our next webinar for October 2025.

This June, FAEP was proud to participate in the **Corridor Connect Conference**, which brought together over 700 attendees from across 80+ partner organizations, including the NAEP. This powerful biennial summit convenes leaders from the business and conservation communities to explore solutions that balance Florida's rapid growth with the protection of the **Florida Wildlife Corridor**. The 2025 conference showcased unprecedented collaboration and momentum across a wide range of stakeholders — conservation nonprofits, government agencies, planners, developers, Tribal nations, landowners, scientists, artists, and more. FAEP was honored to be part of this collective effort to permanently connect, protect, and restore the Corridor.

Looking ahead, FAEP will once again have a presence at the **Environmental Permitting Summer School Conference** on July 15-18 in Marco Island. This premier event offers a unique platform for knowledge sharing, networking, and professional development. Stay tuned as we try to gather our members for a planned photo opportunity!

Speaking of conferences — save the date for the next **FAEP Conference**, hosted by the **Treasure Coast Chapter** at the Marriott Hutchinson Island Beach Resort on **April 29 – May 1, 2026**.

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**Check the last page of our newsletter to determine if you qualify for a discount on your FAEP membership!**

**New FAEP membership rate for Retirees offered!**

Thank you to all our members and chapter leaders who continue to contribute their time and expertise to making FAEP such a strong and connected community. I look forward to continuing our momentum and building on the incredible work we've accomplished together. It's an honor to serve as your FAEP President.

Warm Regards,



Gina Chiello  
FAEP President 2025-2026

Find out more about FAEP  
Member's Benefits at our  
website:

[WWW.FAEP-FL.ORG](http://WWW.FAEP-FL.ORG)

Thanks for reading our newsletter!

## Northeast Chapter Florida Association of Environmental Professionals (NEFAEP)

April 26, 2025 was a day for saving turtles...and drinking beer of course... First Magnitude Brewing in Gainesville, Florida hosted the Turtle Survival Alliance for a **"Drink Beer Save Turtles"** fundraising event to help raise money for freshwater turtle and tortoise conservation all over the world. The Northeast Chapter of FAEP was on-site as one of several tabling partners to help spread the gospel about how cool, and how threatened, freshwater turtles and tortoises are while also introducing folks to who we are how they can get involved. Members that graciously gave up time on their Saturday to hang out at a brewery and talk about the coolest group of animals on the planet include Ethan Vroonland, Mary Szoka, Caitlin Baker, Danielle D'Amato, Brett Bartek, and Beyonce, the Gulf Coast box turtle.



For more information on the Turtle Survival Alliance, please visit: [www.turtlesurvival.org](http://www.turtlesurvival.org).

## Upcoming Conferences and Workshops

Event	Date	Place
2025 Georgia Association of Water Professionals Industrial Conference	July 13 – 16, 2025	Savannah, GA
Annual Environmental Permitting Summer School	July 15 – 18, 2025	Marco Island, FL
Annual Georgia Environmental Conference	August 19 – 22, 2025	Jekyll Island, GA
StormCon 2025 Surface Water Quality Conference	August 26 – 28, 2025	Orlando, FL
American Institute of Professional Geologists National Conference	October 4 – 7, 2025	St. Louis, MO
AEHS Foundation, Annual East Coast Conference on Soil, Water, Energy, & Air	October 20 – 23, 2025	Amherst, MA
Association of Water Technologies Annual Convention & Expo	November 12 – 15, 2025	Colorado Spring, CO

## NAEP

### **CALL FOR ARTICLES FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICE BULLETIN**

The NAEP Environmental Practice Bulletin is published four times a year and emailed to all NAEP members. The newsletter is published in mid-February, May, August and November. Deadline for submissions is the end of the month prior to publication. NAEP is always looking for articles for this great practitioner-based publication. Consider providing NAEP's nationwide audience a bit of your professional experience and insight. For more information about publishing in the Environmental Practice Bulletin visit: <https://www.naep.org/publications>.



National  
Association of  
Environmental  
Professionals  
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Purple Swamphen – Largo Center Park Nature Preserve

## Science Shorts ~NPR Short Wave~ The Science Behind the Headlines

**This scientist is on a quest... to salvage whale brains.**



Neuroscientist Kamilla Souza says there's very little known about the brains of whales and dolphins living in the waters off Central and South America. But studying them can teach scientists about the inner workings of these animals — about their behavior and how they're adapted to living underwater.

**New in Peru: 27 species previously undiscovered by science.**



For 38 days, Trond Larsen, an ecologist at Conservation International, led a team of 12 Peruvian scientists with the help of expert guides from the local indigenous tribe, the Awajún. Over the course of the trip, they found 27 species previously unknown science.

**The colorful community of microbes hiding in Yellowstone's hot springs.**



Carnegie Science researcher Devaki Bhaya wants to study the microbial "village" in the hot springs... to discover how microbes behave within their communities, as well as what genes and functions they might exchange.

**After land abandonment, should we tend nature or set it free?**



Ecologist Gergana Daskalova moved back to the small Bulgarian town of her childhood. It's a place many people have abandoned — and that's the very reason she returned. At the same time as land is being cleared around the world to make room for agriculture, elsewhere farmland is being abandoned for nature to reclaim. But what happens when people let the land return to nature? Science reporter Dan Charles explains why abandoned land has conservationists and researchers asking: If we love nature, do we tend it or set it free?

# Southwest Chapter of the Association of Environmental Professionals (SWFAEP)

On May 18, 2025, 16 adults, two youth, and a guide embarked on an exciting adventure along the Peace River in Southwest Florida. This expedition, organized by the SW Chapter and led by Fred Mazza, President of Paleo Discoveries® aimed to uncover the hidden treasures buried under the river's gravel bed.

The Peace River, renowned for its rich deposits of prehistoric fossils, provided the perfect backdrop for our quest. As we waded through the shallow waters, equipped with sifters, shovels, and a keen eye, we began our search for remnants of ancient life.

Our efforts were soon rewarded. Among the first discoveries were shark teeth, ranging from small and delicate to impressively large. These teeth, some millions of years old, offered a glimpse into the river's ancient marine past. The excitement grew as we unearthed fragments of mammoth bones, evidence of the colossal creatures that once roamed this region.

One of the highlights of the day was the discovery of a nearly intact mastodon tooth. This remarkable find, with its intricate ridges and grooves, was a testament to the diverse and abundant life that once thrived here. The thrill of holding such a significant piece of history in our hands was indescribable.

Throughout the day, the camaraderie among the participants was evident. We shared stories, compared finds, and marveled at the wonders of the past. The Peace River, with its serene beauty and rich fossil deposits, provided not only a treasure trove of discoveries but also a sense of connection to the ancient world.

As the sun began to set, we gathered our finds and reflected on the day's adventure. The fossils we uncovered were more than just remnants of the past; they were tangible links to a time long gone, sparking our imaginations and deepening our appreciation for the natural history of Southwest Florida.

This fossil hunting expedition on the Peace River was a memorable experience, one that will be cherished by all who participated. It served as a reminder of the incredible history hidden beneath our feet and the joy of uncovering the secrets of the past.

The SW Chapter is planning our 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Fossil Hunting expedition. Watch for our event in the Spring of 2026.



**"Enthusiastic hunters on the Peace River dig for prehistoric fossils."** Photo credit: G. Sprehn, 2025.

# Treasure Coast Chapter of the Florida Association of Environmental Professionals (TCCFAEP)

## TCCFAEP Tour of Bluefield Ranch Mitigation Bank

This past April, the Treasure Coast Chapter of the Florida Association of Environmental Professionals (TCCFAEP) had the honor of touring one of the most ecologically diverse and significant mitigation banks in Florida: Bluefield Ranch Mitigation Bank (BRMB) hosted by its steward, Resource Environmental Solutions (RES).

Before we dive into our event experience, what is a mitigation bank?

*Mitigation banks are regionally significant mitigation alternatives where a developer can offset wetland impacts associated with a development by purchasing credits that correspond to the type of habitat affected (e.g., freshwater marsh, forested wetlands). Developers pay for the number of mitigation credits to fully offset any proposed impacts. The mitigation banker assumes all risk associated with acquisition, restoration, long-term management, and success of the purchased mitigation credits. This “pay” and “go” mitigation alternative has become extremely popular in the past few decades, especially in rapidly growing areas.*

RES is one of the nation’s largest organizations that provides nature restoration services of various ecosystems including wetlands, prairies, and species-specific habitats. Their projects strengthen nature’s resilience in response to critical environmental challenges and are intended to be self-sustaining and permanently protected. RES team members live and work in every major ecoregion across the country, bringing deep local knowledge and a shared commitment to building thriving, high-functioning ecosystems.

RES acquired BRMB in 2023, assuming the long-term management of a key geographical area in South Florida. The 2,695-acre property spans across the “South Florida continental divide,” providing fundamental ecological benefits to the Greater Everglades Ecosystem/Watershed and St. Lucie River-Eastern Flatwoods/Indian River Lagoon Ecosystem/Watershed. BRMB’s Perpetual Adaptive Management Program, executed entirely in-house, features an industry-leading Fire Ecology Plan which ensures that the entirety of the bank’s acreage experiences the numerous optimal benefits of prescribed burns while the Program’s Exotic Plant and Animal Control Plan, Climate Change Adaptive Response Plan, Listed Species Management Plan and Native Wildlife Comprehensive Plan guarantees that all of the bank’s ecosystem services and structures continue to prosper in perpetuity. This land stewardship plan provides an abundant quantity of state and federal credits, along with listed species mitigation (Wood Stork, Caracara and other species on a case-by-case basis) for development impacts in St. Lucie, Martin, Okeechobee, Glades, Indian River, Palm Beach and Broward Counties. Additionally, for the history buffs, BRMB is home to one of the State’s most important Seminole Wars Historic Sites – Fort Van Swearingen - which is protected by the Bank’s Historic Preservation Plan.



The April tour was the first of its kind at BRMB, quite the honor! The event began with a pick-up truck tour (a la Jurassic Park) with one RES team member assigned to a truck as acting tour guide and driver. As we drove through a portion of BRMB, that included uplands, wetlands, and creeks, we were able to observe listed plant species, fox squirrels, deer and one very fast turkey! Post-tour, the RES crew treated us to a warm bonfire BBQ where we enjoyed Potjiekos, a South African hodgepodge stew, (prepared by Desmond Duke himself!), ribs, veggies and ended, as every bonfire should, with smores. As we reluctantly left the Ranch, we were able to enjoy an epic view of the April full moonrise known as the 'Pink Moon'. We can't thank RES, Desmond Duke and the rest of the BRMB Crew enough for allowing the tour and hosting in such an exceptional manner, it was truly a magical experience.



On June 12, 2025, the Florida Association of Environmental Professionals (FAEP) held its second free webinar on the Legislative Update hosted by Holland & Knight law firm. Part of this legislative update included recent changes to the mitigation bank framework. Below are some key points of the Senate Bill SB 492 and its companion HB 1175, due to take effect July 1, 2025.

- **Standardized Credit Release Schedule:**
  - Credits are released in four stages (30% at conservation easement, 30% after construction, 20% after monitoring, and 20% upon meeting success criteria), ensuring ecological benchmarks are met over time.
- **Rules for Out-of-Service-Area Credits:**
  - Developers may only use credits from outside the impacted watershed if no local credits are available. A "proximity multiplier" increases the number of credits required the farther away the mitigation site is, helping to account for ecological differences.
- **Annual Transparency Requirements:**
  - Mitigation banks must report credit availability yearly, and the DEP will publish an annual statewide assessment to improve oversight and accountability.

The legislation is meant to bring needed clarity, standardization, and transparency to mitigation banking.

For more information on Bluefield Ranch Mitigation Bank, Resource Environmental Solutions and Florida Legislature on mitigation banks, click on the links below:

[Bluefield Ranch Mitigation Bank](#)

[Resource Environmental Solutions \(RES\)](#)

[New Florida legislation/Mitigation Banks](#)

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# ABCEP



The Academy of Board Certified Environmental Professionals (ABCEP) is the certifying body for NAEP and the lead organization certifying environmental professionals; maintaining exemplary standards of ethics and technical practice; and supporting individuals, our profession, and the public relying upon our services. It is a board-certified recognition. Beyond the acknowledgement by your peers, earning and maintaining the Certified Environmental Professional (CEP) designation is beneficial as a key differentiator when bidding on projects. It also opens new doors personally and professionally.

ABCEP would like to enhance the CEP (and CEP-IT) by growing our numbers and raising the awareness and value of the credential. If interested, you can find more details about the CEP and the application process on our website <https://www.abcep.org>. If you email the office (office@abcep.org), our Administrator will follow up to see if you have additional questions about the application process and offer to assign a mentor to help guide you through it.

The initial CEP application fee is typically \$200. ABCEP is offering a 10% discount through the end of 2020 reducing the initial CEP application fee to \$180. This is a great time to submit your application! We also have a CEP-IT application for those that don't quite meet the CEP requirements.

Making the decision to pursue a certification can feel like a daunting task, but in this climate, having the designation after your name can prove that crucial differentiator. Please share this with anyone in your office that might be interested.

**The FAEP Board of Directors would like to extend a big  
THANK-YOU  
to the organizations who continue to support FAEP  
with group memberships for five or more of their employees.**

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\*GROUP MEMBERSHIP Each group membership will be for a minimum of 5 qualified employees.

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