



Minorities In Natural Resources Conservation
www.minrc.org

**70h Annual SEAFWA Conference
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
October 15 – 19, 2016
After-Action Report**

This year the MINRC program selected nineteen students representing six different SEAFWA states. The group included seven graduate students, eight seniors, two juniors, one sophomore and one freshman. The students and their universities are pictured below.



Danielle Aguilar (TX), Alisha Bailey (AL), Steven Beza (MO), Hailey Boeck (TX), Andrea Carpenter (AR), Shirley Fritzsching (TX), Hailey Hester (TX), Brynn Huzzen (FL), Karshanna Johnson (MS), Meagan Kerr (AR), Javion Lee (AL), Melissa Moreno (FL), Rosmery Nerey Rodriguez (FL), LaDestiny Nichols (TX), Gabriella Placido (FL), ANA Quevedo (TX), Pearla Romero (TX), Precious Taylor (AR), Shawn Williams (TX)

Academic majors included:

Plant and Soil Science
Agricultural Science
Regulatory Science
Marine Biology
Biology
Forest Wildlife Management
Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
Natural Resources in Environmental Science
Environmental Toxicology

Universities represented were:

Texas A&M
Alabama A&M

Lincoln University
University of Arkansas Pine Bluff
Prairie View A&M
Alcorn State
University of Florida
Stephen F. Austin State University
St. Edward's University
University of Texas at San Antonio
Texas Southern University
Samford University

Saturday, October 15th. The students were welcomed as they arrived at the Baton Rouge conference site by Betty Bryant, MINRC Chair; Eric Zendt, Human Resources Committee Chairperson; Paul Clemons, Vice Chair of the Human Resources Committee, and MINRC committee members. Students were distributed room assignments, welcome packets, and received a brief orientation on the conference events.

Student Orientation topics included:

- Overview of Conference activities and expectations, including conference attire, time management, behavior and introduction elevator speech presentations.
- Discussion of the importance of connecting to mentors and information on networking.
- The importance of distributing resumes to directors, human resource personnel, federal agencies and non-government agencies (NGO's) attending the conference.



Sharon Fuller Barnes conducting icebreaker with MINRC students and professionals

Sunday, October 16th. We began with a welcome from Betty Bryant, MINRC Chairperson and followed by an Ice Breaker Activity facilitated by Sharon Fuller-Barnes with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. MINRC activities are open to all students who attend the conference. There was approximately thirty students total present throughout the workshops sessions.

There were three student workshops sessions. The first was on “Intergenerational Awareness in the Workforce” facilitated by Mr. Greg McGinty, US Fish and Wildlife Service. This workshop focused on understanding the four different generations in the in the workforce.



The second workshop was a panel discussion “Careers in Conservation” facilitated by Jimmy Laurent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Students were able to hear about the professional work experience and employment tips from the panel. Students asked engaging questions from the panel members. Panel members; Catherine Phillips USFWS, Lieutenant Kevin Malonson, Texas Parks and Wildlife; and Terry Whittaker USFWS.



Panel members Catherine Phillips USFWS;
Lieutenant Kevin Malonson, TPW and Terry Whittaker USFWS

Jimmy Laurent, USFWS conducting student workshop

The third workshop was titled “How to Use Social Media Appropriately” facilitated by former MINRC Student Ms. Catherine Phillips with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The workshop focused on career building, networking tips, job boards, how to market oneself appropriately through social media, research journal boards, etc. It was great to hear all of the different perspectives and experiences from MINRC students, other student participants and the MINRC professionals present during the workshop.



Catherine Phillips, USFWS conducting workshop to MINRC students



Following the workshop, MINRC students participated in the student field trip to Wall's Alligator Farm in Springfield, LA. This excursion to the alligator farm was coordinated to introduce students to this aspect of wildlife management. Students viewed recently hatched alligators, yearlings, and larger juvenile alligators in a captive setting.



Andrea Carpenter, AR posing at Wall's Alligator Farm

While the students were participating in the field trip, the MINRC Committee held its annual meeting. There were seventeen members in attendance. After introductions the committee discussed the highlights of the student workshops. Members are encouraged to continue to recruit students from their home state. The meeting convened at 2:00 pm.

On Sunday evening, the MINRC students attended the SEAFWA Welcome to Baton Rouge reception and the Student/Mentor meet and Greet where they were given the opportunity to interact in a social setting with state directors, human resources personnel at the state and federal level, presenters and NGO's.

Monday October 17th. All students and professional members attended the Plenary Session during the morning period. The main theme was Conserving Vital Habitats keynote speakers were Jim Caldwell, U.S. Forest Service; Dr. Rex Caffey, Louisiana State University; Jessica Graham, Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership; Paul Rauch, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration; Eddie Taylor, US Forest Service; Mary Werner, Sweet Lake Land and Oil Company and Randy Wilson, US Fish and Wildlife Service.

After the plenary session there was a Student/Mentor lunch sponsored by Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society. Students were given the opportunity to interact with professionals in their disciplines in an informal setting. Students were then given the opportunity to visit poster sessions and attend seminars in their individual disciplines.

Tuesday, October 18th. The day began with breakfast with the exhibitors then the students attended technical sessions and symposiums of their related interest.

The afternoon session began with awarding the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Award. This year's winner was Melissa Moreno a junior student at the University of Florida. The essay topic was "As a Minority pursuing a career in conservation, explain how conserving vital habitats are important to our changing society? The award was presented by Jimmy Laurent, Courtney Williams and Terry Whittaker of USFWS.



Jimmy Laurent- USFWS, Betty Bryant- MINRC Chair, Melissa Moreno-Award Winner, Terry Whittaker-USFWS and Courtney Williams -USFWS.

We concluded the student activities with a wrap-up with the MINRC professionals and issued certificates of appreciation to all attendees.

Later in the evening MINRC members (professionals and students) attended the SEAFWA banquet where they were again given the opportunity to interact in a social setting with state directors, human resources personnel at the state and federal level, presenters and NGO's in a formal setting.

Wednesday, October 19th. The final Technical Session concluded, followed by travel home.

Betty Bryant is reviewing the student evaluation questionnaires that were completed by the students after the conference. The questionnaires consist of evaluations of the MINRC activities, SEAFWA activities, technical presentations and poster sessions. This information will be used to prepare future students attendees.

In conclusion, the 2016 SEAFWA Conference was a successful endeavor.

Prepared by:
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