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Crash course on “Water in Florida”

Posted [March 15, 2012](#) at 9:59 am by [Andy Fairbanks '12](#)



Louies Lake - Watercolor by Mary Fairbanks

The idea of this “crash course” occurred to me for several reasons, not least of which is that my advisor (Chris Meindl) is moderating an upcoming conference at USFSP, “Water in Florida: Environmental Humanities Meet Public Policy.” (Join us! It’s free and open to the public, starting at 6:30pm on March 30, 2012.)

I’ve been delighted to help plan the event and meet so many brilliant artists, intellectuals, and policymakers who are also steeped in Florida’s water. But until very recently, I’ve been more of a “garbage geek” (the topic of my Master’s thesis) than a “water wonk.” I also figured that many of you are like me: deeply appreciative of the state’s amazing water resources, but maybe not as well versed in its issues as I ought to be.

I grew up in Florida and my fondest memories all involve water. Swimming in “gin-clear” springs, canoeing down mystical rivers and camping on their banks, catching bluegills and other fish, launching off rope-swings and watching out for gators. I could go on and on, but I hope you have your own memories of Florida’s water.

Perhaps we have taken Florida’s abundant fresh water for granted. My first recollection of a problem is from visiting my grandparents in Tampa, being told not to let the tap run because it would eventually run out. (What’s a kid from the east coast going to know about this region’s water wars?) Pappy and Grammy also used to wax nostalgic about a place they called “The Snapper Hole,” near Aripeka, where they used to take my dad fishing when he was growing up. Oh, how they wished to take my brother and me there, too, but it was filled in by someone who had a different kind of appreciation for Florida.

Fast forward a couple of decades: there are still many fantastic places to explore Florida's amazing nature, but there are less of them. There's less water, too, and some of it isn't as fresh as it used to be. You don't need to be a scientist to know that or an artist to appreciate it, but those folks do help us understand the state's water resources more *deeply*, if you'll pardon the pun. *Water in Florida: Environmental Humanities Meet Public Policy* is meant to harness their wisdom and whimsy (and to engage yours and mine, too) and use it to make better decisions that will conserve what we all love, and indeed—what we cannot live without.

I hope you'll follow along as I embark on this "Crash Course on Water in Florida." I have a reading list, but I look forward to your suggestions. (Articles are better than books at this point—29 days away from the event, and counting down!) And of course, I hope to see you at USFSP's Harbor Hall on March 30.

About the blogger



I just graduated (May 2012) with an MLA from the Florida Studies Program. Perhaps I'm biased, but I think it's the most interesting graduate program in the state. My thesis is titled "The Good, the Bad, and the Garbage: The Making of Modern Florida Solid Waste Policy." Before I commit to a job or further study, I am taking a gap year to explore places around the world that have long captivated my imagination.