

Preface

The “Natural Resources Forum ’98: Linkages in Ecosystem Science, Management, and Restoration” was organized to facilitate a gathering of diverse groups of scientists, managers, policy makers, and educators who are all involved in management of ecosystems in Florida. Our goal in doing so was to provide an opportunity for a comprehensive and holistic discussion of: (1) the state of ecosystem science which is being used in support of natural resources policy, regulations, and management; and (2) the status of various educational and outreach efforts to disseminate critical information regarding current or impending ecosystem management issues.

With the help of the Steering Committee we developed an ambitious and unique format for the Forum ’98. Each day, two keynote speakers opened the meeting and provided overviews to set the stage for the oral presentations in the succeeding concurrent Theme Sessions. In several Discussion Sessions, we asked panelists to debate policy, science, education, and management issues related to land and water management. We also organized a Poster Session and sought assistance from colleagues who served as “guides” to translate the authors’ findings. Finally, in a concluding Discussion Session, several colleagues provided Theme Session summaries and critical overviews of information presented at the Forum ’98.

At the conference, the participants received a compilation of the abstracts for all the oral presentations and the poster papers included in the two-day program. This companion document contains summaries of the four Keynote Talks, all of the Panel Presentations, and the Discussion Sessions. We hope that these two reports will together not only serve the usual or archival needs, but also as a resource document highlighting important ecosystem issues and the key players in Florida. Videotapes of the Keynote Lectures and the Panel Discussion Sessions were also developed. These are available for general distribution, making the information presented at the Natural Resources Forum ’98 more accessible. Our plan is to organize similar forums in the future on a regular basis, and to facilitate periodic gathering to review major ecosystem issues and to identify the science and outreach needs that would assist natural resources policy development.

We were fortunate to receive guidance from an excellent steering committee, which also provided a post-conference evaluation and assisted in identifying themes for future Forums. We had the cooperation and support of over 100 colleagues from academia, federal and state agencies and non-governmental organizations who presented papers or posters. We were gratified that a total of 225 participants actively contributed to the discussion sessions. Nearly 30 colleagues served as panelists and discussion leaders. To all of these colleagues, we offer our sincere appreciation and thanks.

We are also extremely grateful for the financial support provided by UF/IFAS administration (Dr. James Davidson, Former Vice President; Dr. Joe Joyce, Interim Vice President; Dr. Richard Jones, Dean for Research; Dr. Christine Waddill, Dean for Extension; Dr. Larry Connor, Dean, College of Agriculture; and Dr. Steve Humphrey, Dean, College of Natural Resources and Environment), UF/IFAS Schools and Centers (Dr. Wayne Smith, Chair for the School of Forest Resources and Conservation and Director for the Center for Biomass Programs; Dr. Bill Seaman, Associate Director of the Florida Sea Grant College; and Dr. Randall Stocker, Director for the Center of Aquatic and Invasive Plants), and collaborating institutions and agencies (Dr. Leonard Berry, Director for the Center for Environmental Studies, Florida Atlantic University; and Jerry Scarborough, Executive Director for the Suwannee River Water Management District).

A number of students and others pitched in to help compile the documents and run the conference. In particular, Ms. Paula Posas reviewed all of the videotapes and worked with the authors in developing this summary document. We appreciate her diligent efforts in this regard. The UF Department of Continuing Education, Office of Conferences provided essential administrative and organizational support. Our own

efforts were enhanced because of the dedicated help of many individuals. We thank them for their contributions. We look forward to continued dialog and collaboration with the agencies and individuals involved in the first Forum.

Suresh Rao

Director, UF/IFAS/CNR

Wally Milon

Assistant Director, UF/IFAS/CNR

Joe Schaefer

Assistant Director, UF/IFAS/CNR

Nancy Peterson

Coordinator, UF/IFAS/CNR