Highlights from core workshops offered during 2015

*Conservation Site Assessment and Planning* was offered in April 2015 at Ordway-Swisher Biological Station (OSBS). The intent of this workshop is to increase understanding of the purpose of a site assessment, teach skills in obtaining site assessment data both outdoors and in, and increase understanding of how information gained through a site assessment can then be incorporated into a management planning tool to develop an effective management plan. This workshop was offered in a hybrid format, with participants learning at their own pace from material presented online during a 4 week period preceding the 2 days of hands-on learning at OSBS. When we met in person, participants worked in groups to conduct a rapid site assessment, and also learned how to develop a management plan. Thanks to instructors Michael Andreu and Parker Titus.

*Managing Visitors and Volunteers in Natural Areas* was offered in May 2015 at Gold Head Branch State Park. The intent of this workshop is to increase understanding of considerations that must be taken into account when planning recreation opportunities in natural areas, and to increase understanding of the benefits and challenges of using volunteers to manage natural resources. Participants learned how resource-based recreation possibilities within a natural area are influenced by property size, proximity to urban areas, and motor vehicle access; identifying issues that should be considered when planning a trail system; understanding how to make visitor facilities compatible with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) guidelines; learning to create effective interpretive materials to teach visitors; understanding the motivations people have for volunteering; and understanding how to properly recruit, train, and reward volunteers. We offered this workshop in a hybrid format. Many thanks to lead workshop instructors Nels Parson and Taylor Stein.

*Collaborating to Manage Ecosystems* (formerly called *Working Across Boundaries to Manage Ecosystems*) was offered in October 2015 at Wekiwa Springs State Park (WSSP). This workshop seeks to build an understanding of how to manage natural resources that span property boundaries by providing training on how to engage others when an area is affected by threats that occur outside property boundaries. Participants become familiar with many different types of inter-organization collaborations that are being used in natural areas management in Florida, learn which types of situations are most appropriate for each collaborative approach, and get an opportunity to strengthen skills in listening, communicating, and facilitating. This was the second time we’ve offered this workshop in a hybrid format, enabling participants to learn at their own pace from material online during a 4 week period preceding the 2 day hands-on learning session at WSSP. This year we upgraded from our typical modest, small shuttle bus to a large luxury tour bus for the field trip, a change that was greeted with enthusiasm by all. Despite an afternoon rainstorm, we still went on a fantastic canoe tour. Thanks to lead workshop instructors Deborah Shelley and Raphael Montalvo.
Highlights from fire workshops offered during 2015

**S212 – Wildland Fire Chain Saws** was offered by NATA for the first time ever in June at Disney Wilderness Preserve. This workshop trains participants on the safe use of power saws and their tactical application in wildland fire situations. It also provides hands-on experience with chain saw maintenance. The workshop was such a resounding success, that we offered it a second time in December at Ordway-Swisher Biological Station.

**S131/133 – (Firefighter Type 1/Look Up, Look Down, Look Around)** was also offered by NATA for the first time in 2015. We held this workshop in June at Disney Wilderness Preserve. The S131 course is interactive, and makes use of tactical decision games to facilitate learning objectives. The S133 course is designed to train participants to use official fireline reference tools, maintain proper lines of communication with appropriate personnel, apply procedures, and implement the ‘Risk Management Process’.

**S130/190 – Basic Wildland Firefighter Training** was taught at the Doyle Conner Building in Gainesville in August. This workshop provides the basic training and information necessary for participants to become qualified as a Type 2 Wildland Firefighter. Participants learn proper tactics to extinguish fire with or without the use of water; the importance of lookouts, communications, escape routes, and safety zones; the factors that affect the start and spread of wildfire; environmental factors that affect the spread of wildland fire; and how to recognize potentially hazardous situations.

The outdoor fire behavior activity was held at OSBS. Participants dressed in wildland PPE (Nomex pants/shirt, helmet, leather gloves, eye protection, leather boots) to acquire hands-on experience with many of the techniques they had learned about in the classroom.

Thanks to lead workshop instructor Zach Prusak of The Nature Conservancy, the OSBS fire crew, and the many instructors who volunteered their time to classroom instruction.
Certificate in Natural Areas Management

Florida is a unique state. The long peninsula spans both temperate and sub-tropical climates, the state experiences frequent lightning storms that support a fire-based ecosystem management approach, and the state is home to one of the world’s largest freshwater spring systems. This makes Florida a challenging landscape for land managers, who face a variety of complex management issues.

Recognizing these challenges, the curriculum for the Natural Areas Training Academy was designed to convey knowledge amassed by land managers with extensive work experience in the state to those with less. A certificate is offered by the Natural Areas Training Academy to individuals who complete a series of ‘core’ workshops covering the topics identified as most important by practitioners in the field. To earn the Certificate in Natural Areas Management, the series may be completed in any order, and there is no time limit to complete the workshop series.

Six individuals earned the Certificate in Natural Areas Management during 2015. This year’s group represented both federal and county agencies. Graduates included Ray Vinson (Sarasota County), Jerris Foote (Sarasota County), Christal Segura (Collier County), Alex Sulecki (Collier County), Sarah Heath Corbett (National Park Service), and Briana Smreker (National Park Service). The total number of participants who have now earned a Certificate in Natural Areas Management through NATA is 145. Congratulations to all the 2015 graduates!

Thank you NATA Instructors!

All workshops offered through the Natural Areas Training Academy are taught by instructors who volunteer their time. These individuals are recruited based on their valuable expertise and their teaching strengths. This year, a large cadre of experts representing many different organizations helped us deliver 7 workshops that taught 145 individuals. NATA would not exist if it were not for the generous contributions of these experts. THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR INSTRUCTORS: Michael Andreu, Matt Brady, Steve Coates, Barbara Howell, Ryan Kennelly, Chris Kinslow, Chelsea MacKenzie, Raphael Montalvo, Virginia Oros, Nels Parson, Adam Petersen, David Printiss, Zach Prusak, Andrew Rappe, Deborah Shelley, Dan Smith, Taylor Stein, Wayne Taylor, Paker Titus, and Daniel Willis.

Plans for future NATA workshops

- Managing Visitors and Volunteers in Natural Areas - Gold Head Branch State Park in May 2016
- S131/133 (Firefighter Type 1/Look Up, Look Down, Look Around) - Disney Wilderness Preserve in June 2016
- S130/190 (Basic Wildland Firefighter Training) - Wacasassa Forestry Center in August 2016
- Collaborating to Manage Ecosystems - Wekiwa Springs State Park in October 2016
- S212 (Wildland Fire Chain Saws) - Ordway-Swisher Biological Station in December 2016

Please contact Shelly Johnson, the workshop coordinator, with any questions or suggestions you may have about the NATA program. She can be reached at: shelly.johnson@ufl.edu or 850-875-7153.