

## **MARY LUCIER OAKLEY**

Research Associate and Watershed Coordinator  
Center for Landscape Conservation Planning  
University of Florida

### **CURRENT PROJECTS**

Mary Oakley has been with the University of Florida Center for Landscape Conservation Planning since its official inception in 2010. Through the UF Center and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), Mary is currently working in the role of Watershed Coordinator on a demonstration project in the St. Lucie River Watershed to field test the concept of “Water Farming,” or retaining large volumes of water on fallow citrus groves to help meet established goals for increasing surface water storage and reducing nutrient runoff in this east coast watershed located in Martin and St. Lucie Counties, which is part of the greater Northern Everglades region of Florida.

The SFWMD was awarded a Section 319 (EPA/Clean Water Act) matching grant through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for this three-year, three million dollar (total) project in which three water farming pilot projects will retain an estimated 15,000+ acre-feet of surface water per year that would otherwise contribute to the harmful stormwater discharges into the St. Lucie River, a major tributary of the Indian River Lagoon. Additionally, the three projects will collectively reduce nutrient discharges each year by an estimated 27,822 pounds of nitrogen, 6,641 pounds of phosphorous and 245,024 pounds of suspended solids. The water farming pilot sites range in size from 60 to 900 acres. The sites are managed and continuously monitored for water storage and water quality performance.

Partners in the demonstration project include the Indian River Citrus League, the Florida Farm Bureau Federation and the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program. Mary’s watershed coordinator role involves developing scenarios with partners for a potential regional expansion of water farming and exploring possible funding opportunities, including water quality credit trading with agriculture and other stakeholders in the context of the St. Lucie River and Estuary Basin Management Action Plan.

### **PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND SUMMARY**

Mary Lucier Oakley has over twenty years of experience in research & policy and project management in Florida, including designing, conducting and directing different types of often fast-paced studies needed to fill information gaps to better inform state and regional level public policy decisions. Mary has staffed three state commissions in Florida for policy-applied research, including serving as Director of Research and Assistant Director of the Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida (2006-2008), which launched as the Commission’s flagship project the statewide Critical Lands & Waters Identification Project (CLIP) and partnered with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint (CCB) initiative. Both CLIP and the CCB continued to develop beyond the Century Commission.

Mary has applied her research and policy analysis skills to two broad fields: land and water conservation and long term care for elders and disabled adults. She was Research and Policy Coordinator in the Office of the Secretary of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs (2008 through 2009) before joining the UF

Center for Landscape Conservation Planning in 2010 to manage a refocused CCB Regional Pilot Project. Mary began her career in research and policy as Assistant Director of the Florida Policy Center on Aging (1992-2000) at the University of South Florida, where she also earned a Masters degree in Gerontology.

Additionally, Mary is a Fellow of the Florida Natural Resources Leadership Institute (2004), a published author and an intermittent (but devoted) university instructor. She most recently taught the graduate course at the University of Florida: Ecological and Environmental Policy Seminar (2013). Mary lives and works in the Treasure Coast area of Florida, although she returns to Gainesville for visits on a regular basis.