Florida’s Living Shorelines Training Course for Marine Contractors

Fara Ilami¹, Jessy Wayles², Annie Roddenberry¹, Jennie Miller¹
¹Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, ²Marine Discovery Center

**Purpose:**
To increase the number of marine contractors who can assess dynamic eroding shorelines and provide solutions featuring living shorelines where feasible, to make living shorelines a more accessible option to the public for shoreline stabilization.

**Introduction:**
Failing seawalls, exacerbated by storms, sea level rise, and erosion have left property owners looking for alternatives to shoreline hardening. In recent years, living shorelines have become a feasible and attractive option for more people. As more property owners in Florida learn about living shorelines, the demand has grown for professionals capable of installing them. However, there remains a lack of contractors with this expertise. Although there are a few related courses available, no training currently exists specifically for marine contractors in Florida that includes a focus on local aspects of living shorelines. Multiple state agencies and other partners have come together to fill this need.

**Methods:**
- A needs assessment was conducted at the 2017 Florida Marine Contractors Association (FMCA) Annual Expo to determine interest in a training and identify knowledge gaps.
- A diverse working group of partners was assembled to guide course development and implementation.
- Course outline was completed, resources compiled, and delivery materials drafted and reviewed.
- Application was submitted to Florida’s Construction Industry Licensing Board to offer 6 hours of Continuing Education credits.
- A 2-hour course preview was presented at the 2018 FMCA Expo, and contractors provided feedback to guide course development.
- Target cities for the course were determined by analyzing a suite of factors, including shoreline characterization, concentration of marine contractors, potential field trip sites, and available venues for classroom instruction.

**Results:**
A 2-day, interactive course was developed to be delivered in locations with the greatest interest and suitability. After completing the course, participants will be able to:
1) Communicate to homeowners the benefits and relative costs of shoreline stabilization options.
2) Confidently perform a site assessment, evaluate design options, and navigate the permitting process.
3) Implement a living shoreline project with vegetation and/or breakwater materials.
4) Follow up and provide homeowners with maintenance information.

The course includes lecture material, a workbook, videos, group exercises, field trips, and a test. Instructors include living shorelines practitioners and environmental educators. Certification and continuing education credit will be offered to contractors who complete the training.

**Discussion:**
The collaborative process by multiple partners yielded robust course content and delivery methods which address the needs and knowledge gaps indicated by marine contractors. The course preview at the FMCA generated interest and discussion. This project is the first statewide approach of its kind in the U.S. and may be used as a model for other locales with similar goals. The course is scalable in length, content, or geographical reach, depending on local needs. As the demand for living shorelines among property owners continues to grow, this course will prepare the market to meet the need.

Future plans are to:
1) Finalize all materials and delivery methods.
2) Finalize the roster of instructors.
3) Develop a state certification procedure.
4) Pilot the course in an area of high need.
5) Deliver the course in each region of Florida.
6) Implement a mentoring program for course graduates.
7) Provide a list of trained contractors to property owners.

**Citations:**
http://floridalivingshoreslines.com

**Acknowledgements:**