



Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Landscaper-Training Program

Accomplishments Report

October 2006 - September 2011

During the past five years, the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (RBNERR) Coastal Training Program (CTP) has trained professional landscapers to conduct operations safely and effectively, comply with new local and statewide regulatory requirements and adequately maintain urban green spaces.

Urban green spaces, which include parks, greenways, medians, gardens, yards and all other green areas, are integrated into urban environments and are important elements of our communities because they protect water quality by reducing erosion, runoff and leaching of contaminants. They also reduce dust, glare, greenhouse and toxic gasses, dissipate heat, abate noise, provide wildlife habitat, and provide a series of recreational, aesthetic and psychological benefits too.

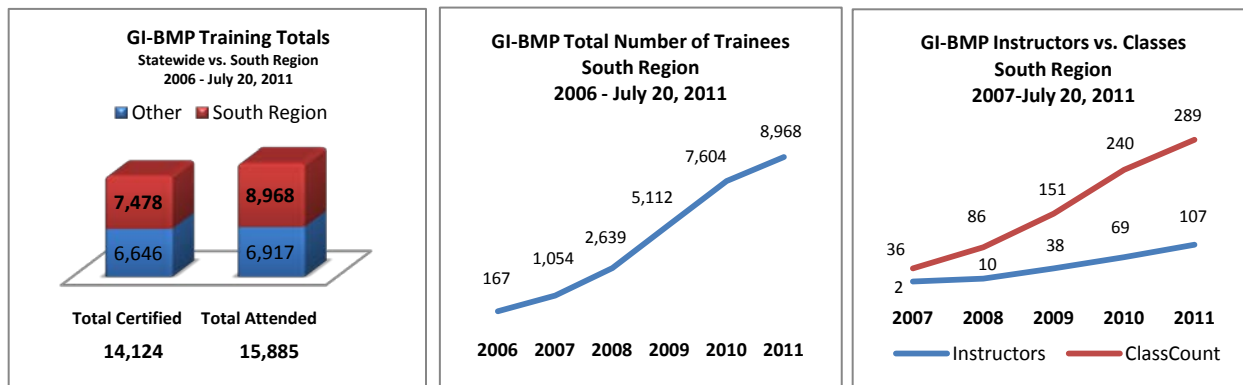


Landscape professionals are primarily responsible for caring for these treasured green spaces. They ensure the economic, health and environmental benefits through proper mowing, pruning, mulching, plant selection, fertilization, irrigation, and pesticide application. At the same time, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in May 2011 that Florida is one of the top five States with the highest employment level in the landscaping occupation, and that the Naples-Marco Island metropolitan area has one of the highest concentrations of jobs and location quotients in this occupation.

The following report contains the most important accomplishments of the RBNERR/CTP Landscaper-Training Program during this time.

GI-BMP South Region

RBNERR/CTP oversees the south region of the “Green Industries” Best Management Practices (GI-BMP) Program¹. This region encompasses 16 counties: Dade, Broward, Monroe, Collier, Lee, Charlotte, Sarasota, Henry, Glades, Manatee, Pinellas, Hillsborough, Hardee, Desoto, Highlands and Palm Beach. Within this region, 19 municipalities have an ordinance requiring the GI-BMP training. From October 2006 to September 2011, 107 instructors delivered 289 classes, providing training to 8,968 individuals, which represent 56% of the total statewide trainings.



Assisting the Legislative Fertilizer Task Force

In 2008, RBNERR/CTP prepared a training report based on 800 training evaluations, demonstrating the effectiveness of the GI-BMP training. This report was presented to the Legislative Fertilizer Task Force by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), ultimately resulting in sections 403.3996-8 of the Florida Statutes (F.S.).

Seamless Training Network

RBNERR/CTP created the GI-BMP Instructor Program in 2008, to develop a statewide seamless training network of certified education professionals, government employees, industry professionals, and citizen volunteers. RBNERR also assisted with training and hiring two additional regional coordinators and worked with UF/IFAS to include Extension instructors in the program. So far, the program has 250 instructors statewide, who have delivered 577 classes, resulting in 15,800 individuals trained.

¹ The Florida-Friendly Best Management Practices for the Protection of Water Quality by the Green Industries program, commonly known as the “Green Industries Best Management Practices” (GI-BMP), was designed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in partnership with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) and the Green Industries, to provide landscaping professionals with knowledge, skills and tools to minimize the impacts of nonpoint sources of pollution related to their business practices.

GI-BMP Instructor Manual

RBNERR/CTP developed the GI-BMP Instructor Manual to train new instructors. The instructor manual contains the program's directives, guidelines and standards for instructors.



Delivering Trainings in Spanish

Since a large percentage of the landscapers in South Florida speak Spanish, RBNERR/CTP pioneered delivering trainings in this language. In 2007, RBNEER translated and adapted the GI-BMP program to Spanish and trained instructors to deliver it appropriately, including teaching tips that assist instructors in working with this very different population. Since then, this version of the Spanish GI-BMP class was used statewide to train over 3,000 individuals, up until the current version was released three years later. RBNERR/CTP developed two additional three-hour classes in Spanish and has been offering them during the past four years.

Translation Services

RBNERR/CTP co-translated the 2010 version of GI-BMP program's materials to Spanish and edited all the translations. This includes the official PowerPoint presentations, the participant manual, test questions and forms.



Opened Nine Spanish GI-BMP Training Hubs

Trained 29 Spanish instructors and set up the Spanish program with the following organizations: Lee Extension, Miami-Dade Extension, Sarasota Extension, Broward Extension, Palm Beach Extension, Pinellas Extension, Hillsborough Extension, ValleyCrest and RBNERR.

GI-BMP PowerPoint Presentations

In 2008, RBNERR/CTP developed a trial version of the GI-BMP PowerPoint presentations, based on the material released by FDEP/NPSMS and UF/IFAS. This trial version was used statewide until UF/IFAS released the new materials in 2010. Formal training concepts and standards were introduced in this trial version to increase the effectiveness of the program, putting greater emphasis on environmental education and formal training standards.

GI-BMP Strategic Plan

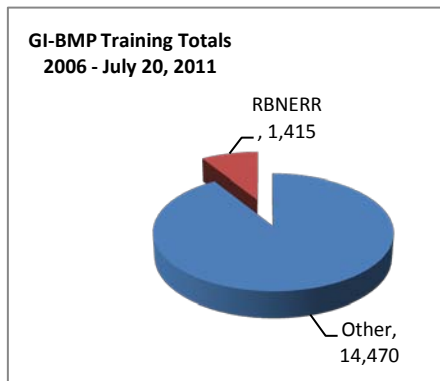
In May 2011, RBNERR/CTP completed the first draft of the GI-BMP Strategic Plan to assist FDEP with managing the partnership and meeting the desired program objectives in a timely manner.

Technical Assistance

RBNERR/CTP recently joined the Florida-Friendly Landscaping (FFL) program advisory committee and attended its first inaugural meeting. RBNERR/CTP also provides ongoing technical assistance on professional training, developing education materials, planning, strategy and project management to the GI-BMP program, UF/IFAS extension staff, instructors and local governments.

Actively Training Landscapers

RBNERR/CTP began training landscapers in 2006, when the City of Naples was getting ready to approve the first fertilizer ordinance in the State directing commercial and institutional fertilizer applicators to obtain the GI-BMP certificate of training. To date, RBNERR/CTP has delivered an average of six hours of training on a wide range of topics, including the GI-BMP training certification, to 2,302 landscaping maintenance professionals at the Environmental Learning Center. Thus, RBNERR is the most senior GI-BMP training hub in the state, responsible for training 9% of the total number of professionals.



Category	Total Certified		Total Attended		Classes	
RBNERR	1,116	8%	1,415	9%	42	7%
Total Statewide	14,124		15,885		577	

NOAA Section 312² Evaluation, July 2005 – January 2011

In this report, the NOAA evaluation team highlighted the RBNERR/CTP landscaper-training program as one of the reserve’s most notable efforts during this period.

Greenscape Alliance

RBNERR/CTP lead the formation of the Greenscape Alliance in 2009, to raise community awareness of Florida-friendly landscaping principles and practices in a unified voice. The alliance mission is to protect natural resources through innovative strategies that promote Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ practices in southwest Florida.

² The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972, established the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS). Sections 315 and 312 of the CZMA require the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to conduct periodic performance reviews or evaluations of all federally approved National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRs). This review examines the operation and management of the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve during a five-year period.

To accomplish this mission the alliance has five goals: 1) increase community awareness of FFL principles and practices; 2) increase knowledge and skills of landowner and managers; 3) increase knowledge and skills of landscapers and green industry professionals; 4) contribute to support efforts to reduce nutrient pollution and protect water quality; and 5) work with local governments to support and promote FFL principles and practices.

Its members are: FDEP; Collier County; UF/IFAS Collier County Extension; Naples Botanical Garden, South Florida Water Management District's Big Cypress Basin; Florida Gulf Coast University Coastal Watershed Institute; Collier County Soil and Water Conservation District; City of Naples; and City of Marco Island.

The Alliance has published a series of articles about Florida-friendly landscaping and the GI-BMP program in the local news.

The RBNERR/CTP Team

Four RBNERR/CTP staff members run the landscaper training program, out of which two are devoted to it full time. Combined the team has over 50 years of international experience managing a wide range of environmental projects and providing environmental education.

The Funding

RBNERR/CTP has kept the landscaper training program funded for five years through developing and managing partnerships proactively. The funding for this program comes from: 1) the National Estuarine Research Reserve operations grant provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; 2) the state grants provided by Section 319 from the Environmental Protection Agency, through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection; 3) Collier County; and 4) City of Naples.

Excellence



In 2010, RBNERR/CTP evidenced that delivering high quality trainings makes a major difference. Various company managers and owners, who participated in the landscaping trainings, voluntarily delivered a series of testimonials, stating that the GI-BMP program is highly beneficial to the industry by maximizing the use of resources, reducing operational costs, reducing turnover, increasing worker morale, and increasing environmental standards. While the

basic goal of landscaper training is to increase knowledge and skills, this is the first evidence that the GI-BMP trainings and other initiatives are going beyond the initial goals and are changing the culture and standards of the landscaping industry.