

# Florida Master Naturalist Program: Promoting Sustainable Ecotourism through Innovative Guide Training

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**UF | IFAS**  
UNIVERSITY *of* FLORIDA



An underwater scene featuring a school of striped fish swimming in clear, turquoise water. The fish are the central focus, with their bodies showing distinct dark vertical stripes against a lighter background. The water is bright and clear, suggesting a healthy marine environment.

# FLORIDA SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL ECOTOURISM

***“Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.”***

## **Main principles:**

- Minimize impact.
- Build environmental & cultural awareness and respect.
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.
- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate.

**SKILLS  
TRAINING?**

WHY IS NATURAL HISTORY AND  
CONSERVATION TRAINING FOR  
GUIDES IMPORTANT?

—

WHO PROVIDES NATURE-BASED  
TOURISM SKILLS TRAINING?

A photograph showing a person's arm reaching out from a boat to hold a large, dark-colored fish by its mouth. The fish is suspended vertically, with its head pointing upwards. The background is a body of water. The entire scene is framed by a white, torn-paper-like border. Overlaid on the right side of the image is the text "DISCOURAGE INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

DISCOURAGE  
INAPPROPRIATE  
BEHAVIORS



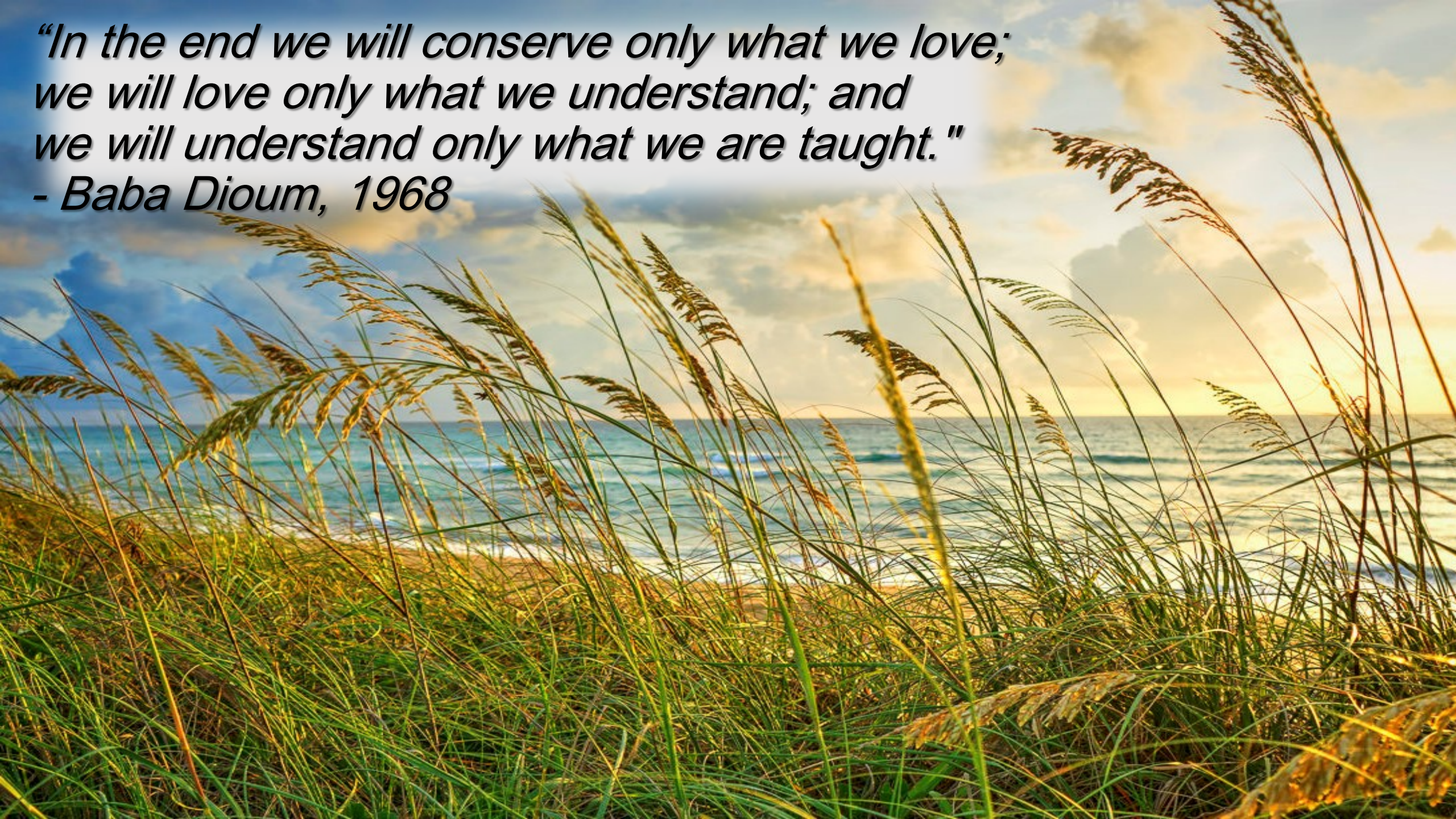
DISCOURAGE  
DESTRUCTIVE  
BEHAVIORS

PROMOTE ETHICAL BEHAVIORS



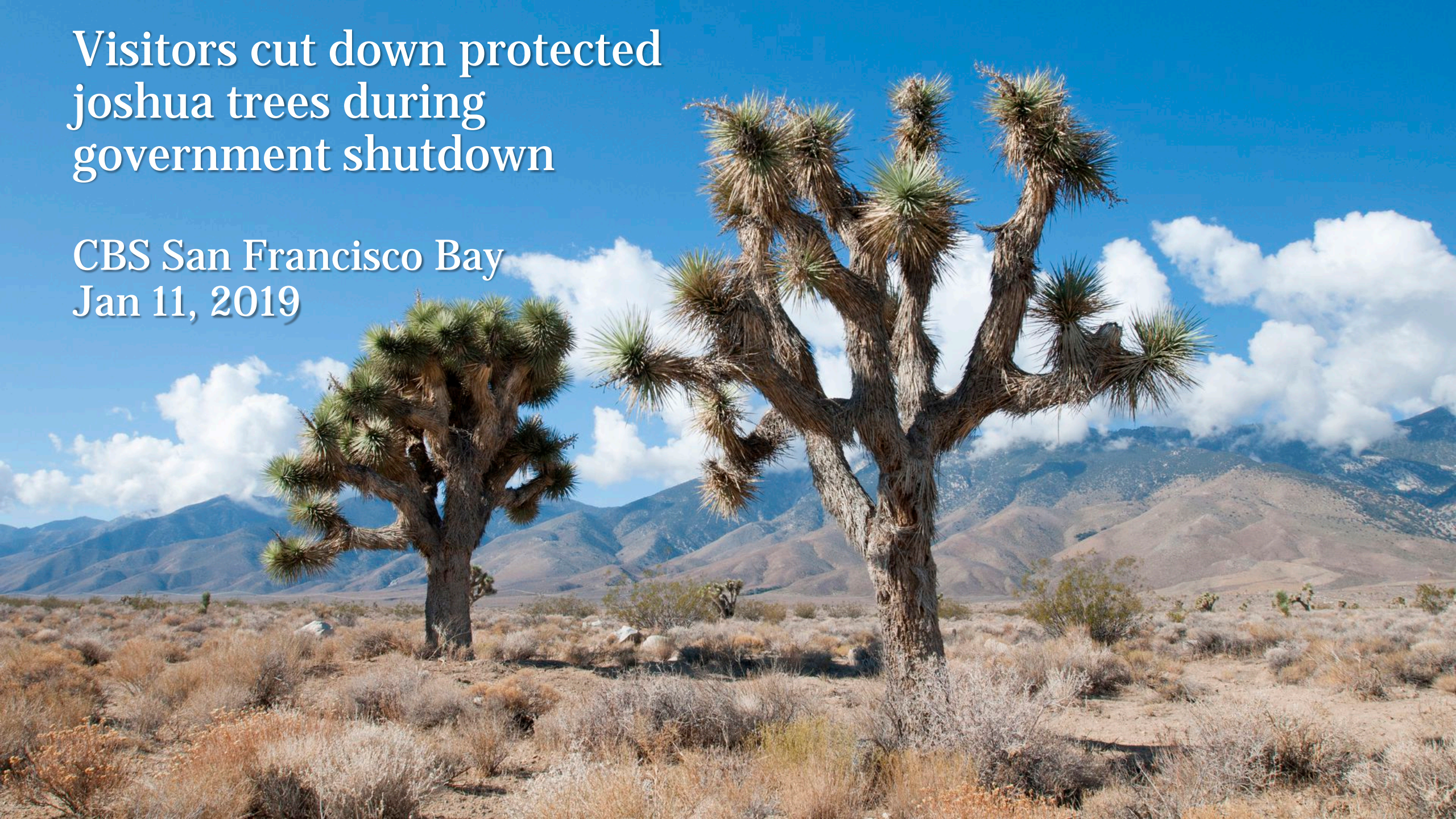
CULTIVATE APPRECIATION AND RESPECT

*"In the end we will conserve only what we love;  
we will love only what we understand; and  
we will understand only what we are taught."  
- Baba Dioum, 1968*



# Visitors cut down protected joshua trees during government shutdown

CBS San Francisco Bay  
Jan 11, 2019





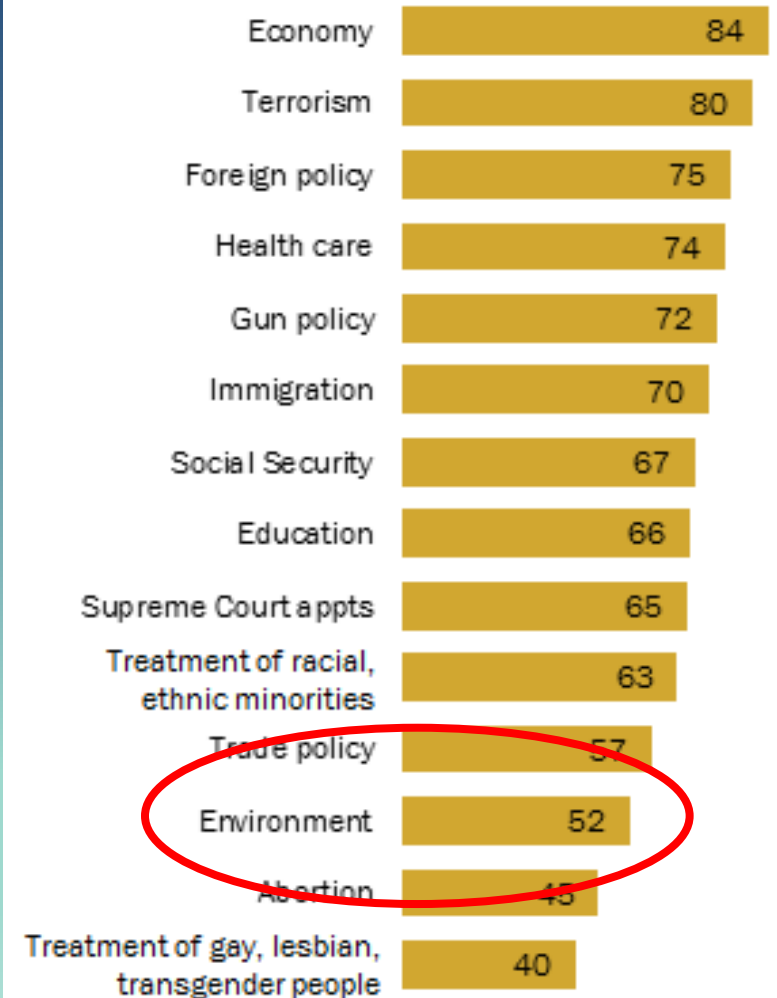
# The environment is not a top issue among most voters

PEW Research Center  
July 7, 2016



## Economy and terrorism are top issues for voters in 2016

*% of registered voters saying each is "very important" to their vote in 2016 ...*



Note: Based on registered voters. Q40.  
Source: Survey conducted June 15-26, 2016.

# Teach a conservation ethic



Eastern Tiger Salamander



# Florida Master Naturalist Program

**A natural history  
and conservation  
education program**

**TEACH THOSE WHO  
TEACH OTHERS**





**The mission of the  
Florida Master Naturalist Program is to  
promote awareness, understanding, and respect  
of Florida's natural world  
among Florida's citizens and visitors**

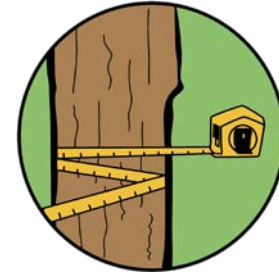
***- Create a stronger conservation ethic -***

# Goals of the FMNP

- Train ecotour guides and educators
- Expand environmental education and awareness in Florida
- Increase volunteerism and community engagement



# Florida Master Naturalist Program Course Offerings



1999

2001

2003

2005

2009

2010

2011

2012

2017

Freshwater Systems

Coastal Systems

Upland Systems

Conservation Science

Interpretation

Wildlife Monitoring

Habitat Evaluation

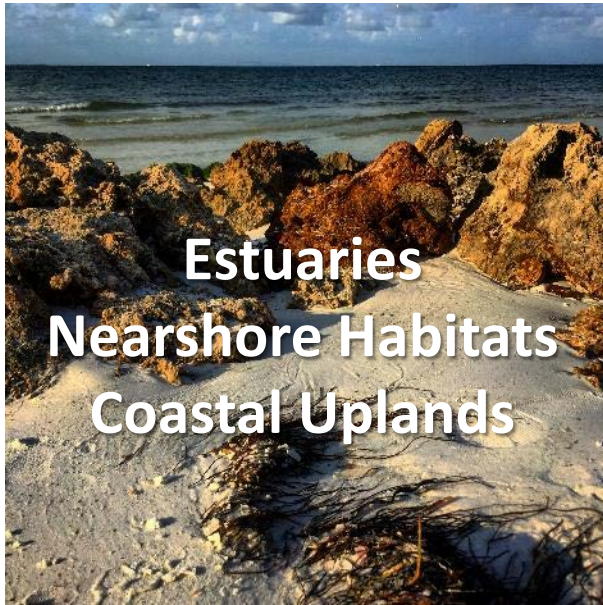
Coastal Shoreline  
Restoration

[www.MasterNaturalist.org](http://www.MasterNaturalist.org)

# Core courses

Specific to the predominant environmental systems in Florida

## *Coastal*



Estuaries  
Nearshore Habitats  
Coastal Uplands

## *Freshwater*



Marshes  
Swamps  
Lakes, Rivers,  
& Springs

## *Upland*



Pinelands  
Hardwoods  
Scrub, Prairie,  
& Range

Each course is 40 contact hours & includes multiple field trips

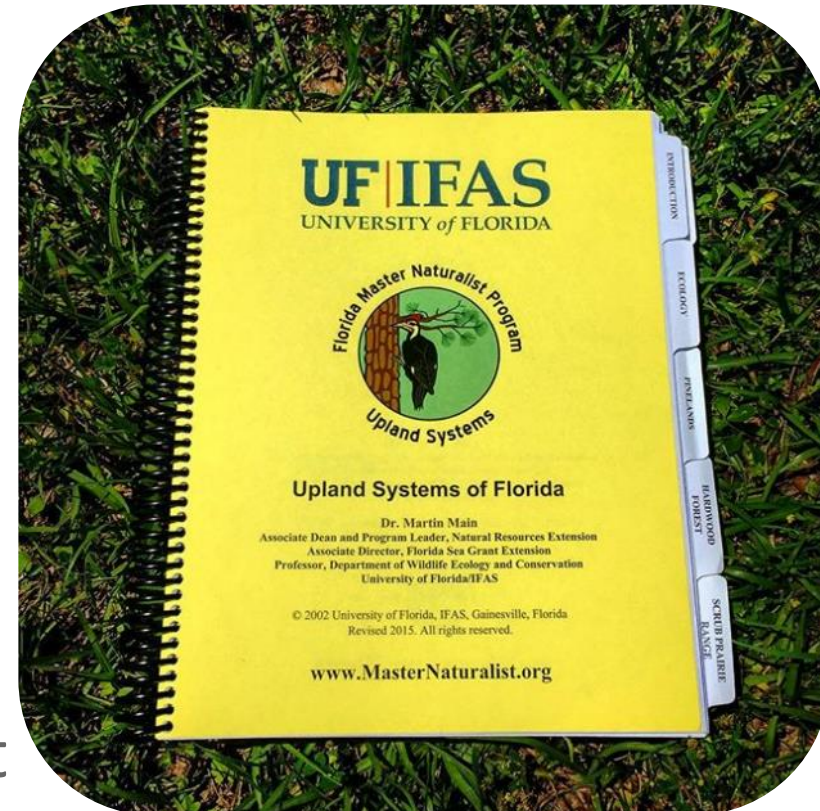
# A fit for all learning styles

## CLASSROOM LEARNING:

- Notebooks and Resources
- Presentations
- Videos and Worksheets
- Discussion

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING:

- Field Trips
- Interpretation Skills
- Final Project Development





# Special topic courses

More skills based & field-oriented - 24 contact hours



## Conservation Science

- Biodiversity
- Ecosystem Integrity
- Conservation Strategies



## Environmental Interpretation

- Interpretive Presentations
- Guided Programs
- Displays

## Habitat Evaluation

- Large-Scale
- Local-Scale
- Evaluating Water Quality



## Wildlife Monitoring

- Mammals
- Birds
- Herpetofauna



# NEW restoration series



## *Coastal Shoreline Restoration*



Living Shorelines:  
Oyster Reef  
Mangroves  
Salt Marshes

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**Sea Grant**  
Florida

This course is 24 contact hours &  
includes multiple field trips

# Restoration series

Special topics format - 24 contact hours



## Coastal shoreline

- Oyster reefs
- Mangroves
- Salt marsh



## Marine habitat

- Seagrasses
- Hard bottom
- Artificial reef

## Freshwater habitat

- TBD
- TBD
- TBD



## Upland habitat

- TBD
- TBD
- TBD



# FMNP Instructor Network

- ~175 Certified Instructors
- 65 organizations
- Vetted, trained, certified
  - Distinction
  - Responsibility
  - Pride



# Centralized registration and revenue sharing

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**THE FLORIDA MASTER  
NATURALIST PROGRAM**  
*A Natural History Training Program*

Home

About FMNP

Current Courses

Course FAQs

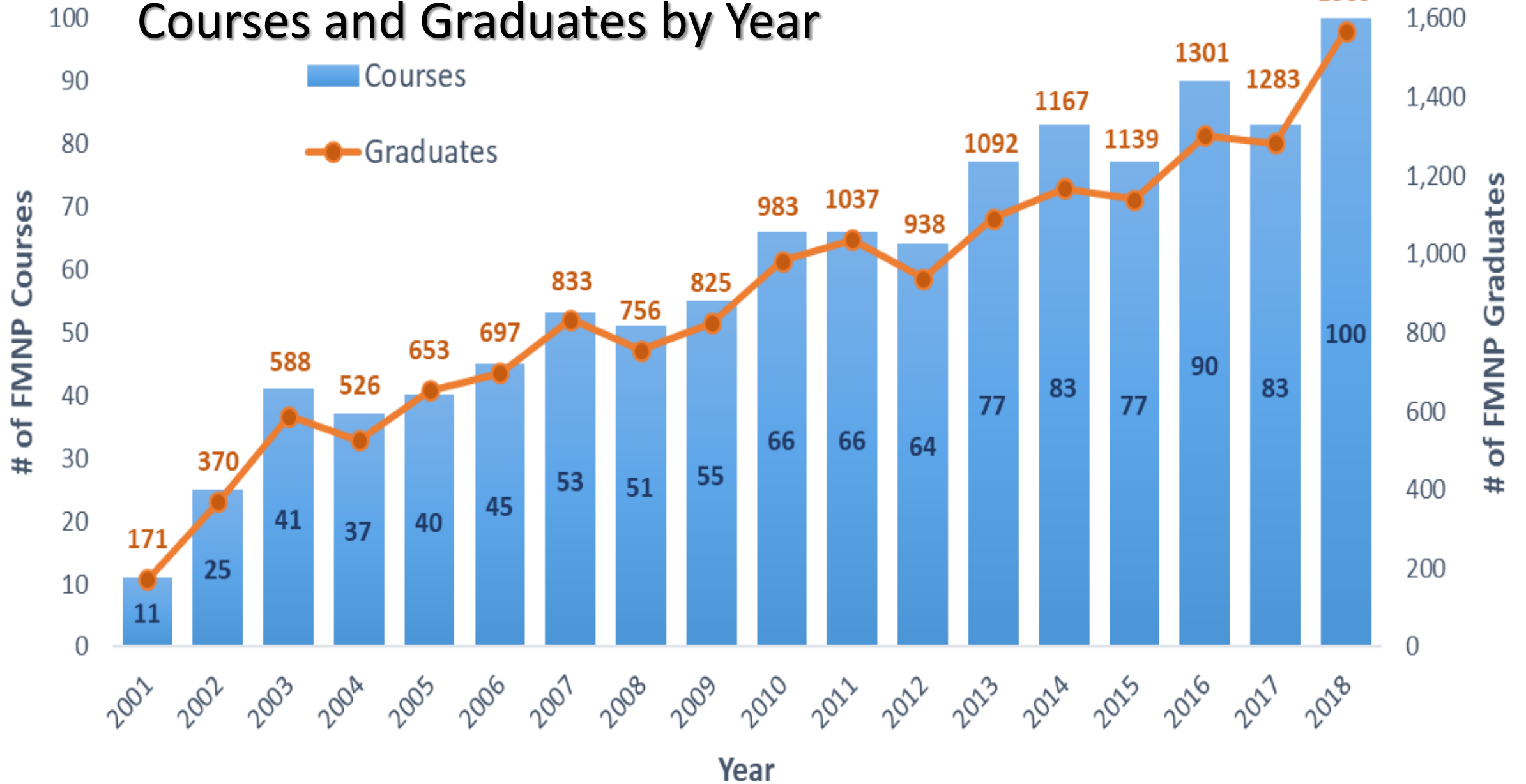
Contact Us

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[www.MasterNaturalist.org](http://www.MasterNaturalist.org) – Current Courses

# Florida Master Naturalist Program Courses and Graduates by Year



# Who are our FMNP graduates?

- Ecotour Guides
- Employees & Volunteers of Parks and Nature Centers
- K-12 Teachers
- Natural Resource Professionals
- College Students
- Interested Citizens



# Benefits of FMNP training

- Recognized expertise
- Volunteer and job opportunities
- Earn in-service credits/CEUs
- Gain interpretive skills
- Community involvement & networking
- Personal fulfillment





Florida Master Naturalists are recognized for their expertise



Effect Ecotours Kayak/Naturalist Guides

our kayak and naturalist guides show you the wonder of Northeast Florida

our exclusive guides. They are certified Florida Master Naturalist Instructors through  
University of Florida and the reason we can offer the in-depth, wide array of kayak program


Florida  
Master  
Naturalist  
training  
promotes  
credibility



# TropicBird Ecotour

Private, naturalist-led ecotours of the 10,000 Islands u

The Captain    The Vessel    Th



Your host will be Patrick Higgins. He's a NAI Certified Interpretive Guide, USCG licensed Captain and University of Florida accredited Master Naturalist with a combined degree in Biology & Environmental Science and over 27,000 miles sea experience, including 4 years sailing around the world with his then young family as crew aboard Skyboat.



**FMNP training has resulted in new businesses**

## ***Nature Kayak Tours!***

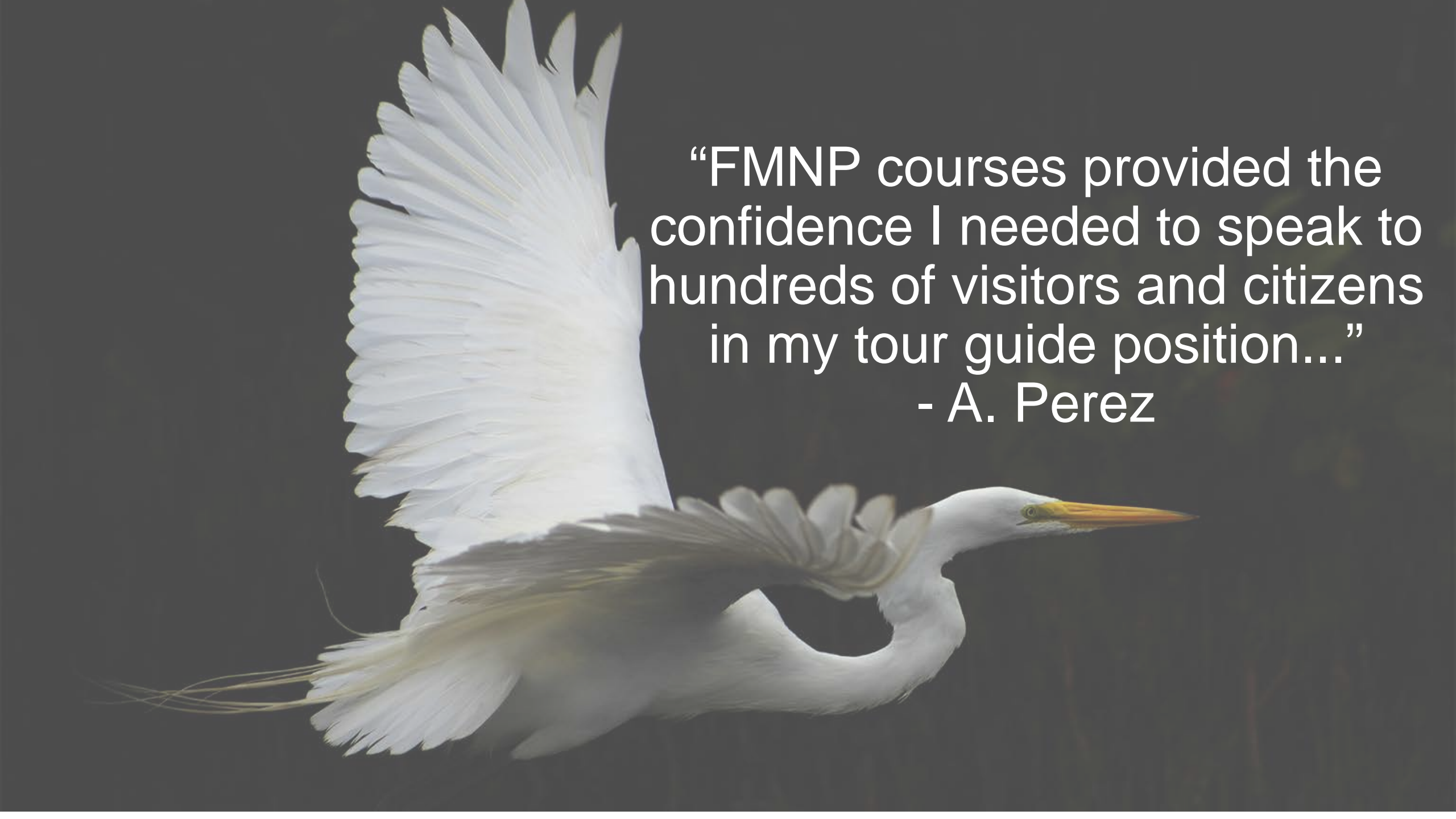
**CERTIFIED FLORIDA MASTER  
NATURALIST GUIDED NATURE  
KAYAK ADVENTURES!**

**BOOK ONLINE OR CALL TODAY!!!**

**S 239-247-4955**

***WWW.MANATEEGUIDES.COM***



A white egret is shown in flight against a dark, solid background. The bird is captured in profile, facing right, with its wings fully extended. The primary feathers on the wings are clearly visible, showing a gradient from white to a light yellowish-brown. The bird's long neck is curved downwards, and its sharp, yellowish-brown beak is pointed forward. The overall composition is clean and focused on the bird's form and movement.

“FMNP courses provided the confidence I needed to speak to hundreds of visitors and citizens in my tour guide position...”

- A. Perez

# FMNP grads benefit in many ways

The time I spent participating in the FMNP has given me the self-confidence to pursue a doctoral degree.

I recently received an appointment to the State Greenways and Trails Council and completion of the FMNP helped with that selection process.

Due to the contacts I made through FMNP, I was offered a job teaching at an environmental science charter school.

My career background is nursing. This course opened a whole new world to me.

**For more information:**

**[www.MasterNaturalist.org](http://www.MasterNaturalist.org)**

**[info@masternaturalist.org](mailto:info@masternaturalist.org)**



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