



## School of Forest, Fisheries, & Geomatics Sciences

**September 2025**



LAKWATCH Extension Manager Dr. Liz Duermit Moreau speaks to a young visitor about water quality monitoring at an outreach event on Sept. 3.

## News & Updates

### New citizen science effort to fight invasive species

The Florida Invasive Species Survey Group, a new Extension program from SFFGS, launched this summer. The program, led by Christian Wanamaker (pictured at right), recruits and trains citizen scientists to identify and survey for invasive species in North Central Florida. The effort supports invasive species monitoring on private and public lands. To learn more, or [request a survey of your land](#), please [visit our website](#).



Christian Wanamaker, volunteer coordinator for the Invasive Species Citizen Science Project, conducts an onsite training.

### A scholarship to honor Dr. David Fox

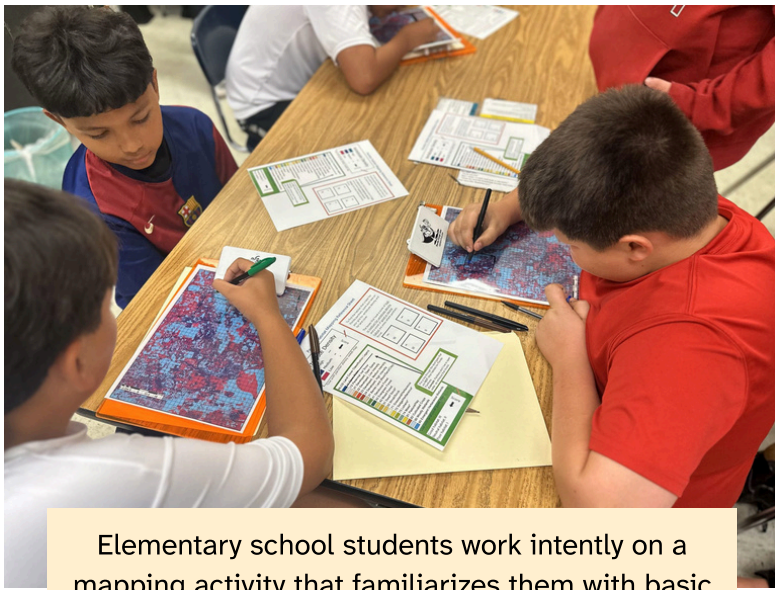
The Dr. David A. Fox Memorial Scholarship will support forestry and geomatics students. It honors the legacy of urban forestry specialist and adjunct professor Dr. David Fox, who passed away in June. Dr. Fox earned his PhD from our School in 2015, after a distinguished career in forestry. He then taught and mentored students, helping them on their way to careers in forestry, conservation and natural resources management. To donate to the scholarship fund, please visit [UFGive.to/FoxScholars](https://UFGive.to/FoxScholars).

## SFFGS welcomes Dr. Michelle Jusino, Assistant Professor of Forest Pathology

Our Forest Resources and Conservation program is pleased to welcome Dr. Michelle Jusino, our new Assistant Professor of Forest Pathology. Dr. Jusino joined our staff in August. She comes from Michigan, where she was Supervisory Research Biologist with the USDA Forest Service at the Northern Research Station's Center for Forest Mycology Research. She was formerly a postdoctoral associate with the UF/IFAS Plant Pathology department from 2017 to 2020. Dr. Jusino holds a B.S. in Biological Sciences and Anthropology from Florida State University and a Ph.D. in Biological Sciences from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.



Dr. Michelle Jusino joins SFFGS as Assistant Professor of Forest Pathology.



Elementary school students work intently on a mapping activity that familiarizes them with basic geomatics principles.

## Geomatics Extension program receives grant for K-12 surveying 'kits'

Our Geomatics Extension program received \$28,000 in support from the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) Foundation to develop learning kits that help school-age children develop surveying and mapping skills. The kits will be available to youth groups and K-12 educators throughout Florida, with the goal of raising awareness among youth about surveying careers.

## LAKEWATCH celebrates 40 years

Earlier this month the LAKEWATCH team drew more than 100 guests to Heartwood Soundstage in downtown Gainesville to learn about its efforts to monitor and improve freshwater quality across Florida. The “Science on Tap” event emphasized the role LAKEWATCH volunteers play not only in keeping the program running, but turning it into one of the largest citizen science projects in the country.

## My Florida Forest film series offers helpful tips for landowners

Faculty at SFFGS collaborated with the Florida Forest Service, the Florida Forestry Association, Southern Forestry Consultants and filmmakers from Untamed Science to produce a series of films for landowners (and suburbanites) about conserving Florida's working and natural forests.

## Employee of the Month

Congratulations Sarah Rushing for being named September's Employee of the Month!



## Geomatics student wins UF Big Idea Competition

Senior Abdurrahman Bejjaj won first place – and \$25,000 in seed funding – for his proposal to develop sustainable packaging materials on a scale large enough to reduce commercial reliance on plastic. Abdu is the founder of Ignition Packaging, a company that is currently researching biodegradable materials that can be cost-competitive with plastic.

Pictured at left is Senior Abdurrahman Bejjaj posing with his \$25,000 prize as winner of the Big Idea Competition, which helps students grow their business ideas.

## Introducing the University of Florida Tree Tour

SFFGS students, faculty and staff worked together to create a new self-guided tour of some of the many beautiful trees located on the Gainesville campus. The tour highlights 34 different species, most of which are native to Florida. Each tree bears a sign displaying its scientific name, common name, and a QR code that links to more information about the species. The work was led by former undergraduate student Thaleia Roda and Dr. Michael Andreu. For an interactive map of the Tree Tour, [please visit our website](#).



Former student Thaleia Roda (class of 2025) installs signs on trees selected to be part of the self-guided campus “tree tour.”



## The ‘dock for Dan’ is completed

Many SFFGS faculty, staff and students came together this past year to fund, build and dedicate a dock to the memory of Dr. Dan Canfield, a faculty member in the Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences program and founder of LAKEWATCH. The dock will be used in research and Extension efforts taking place at the Millhopper facility in Northwest Gainesville.

Pictured at left is Dr. Chuck Cichra on the newly completed dock. Thanks to Dr. Cichra for volunteering his time and skills to the project!

# Recently-started grants

“New Pest Response Guidelines for Asian Insects Threatening American Trees” -- \$158,832 awarded to Dr. Jiri Hulcr from the U.S. Department of Agriculture

“Digital Infrastructure for Genomics Research on Forest Pests” -- \$100,000 awarded to Dr. Jiri Hulcr from the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

“IFAS Native Plant Materials Development Proposal” -- \$115,808 awarded to Dr. Michael Andreu from the Florida Wildflower Foundation

“Exploring Strategies to Optimize Larval Feeding and Broodstock Nutrition” -- \$80,683 awarded to Dr. Matt DiMaggio and Dr. Casey Murray from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

“DWH Gulf of America Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Community Restoration: Husbandry Protocol Development in Support of the Coral Propagation” -- \$202,642 awarded to Dr. Josh Patterson from the U.S. Geological Survey

“Improving Early Life Survival of Priority Grazers - Phase II” -- \$188,529 awarded to Dr. Josh Patterson from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

“Assessment of Panhandle Refugia Artificial Reefs” -- \$59,987 awarded to Dr. Will Patterson by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

“Quantifying Trends in Tree Mortality and Recruitment to Inform Management of U.S. Forests” -- \$19,929 awarded to Dr. Jeremy Lichstein and Dr. Dan Johnson

“Fisheries on the Move” -- \$1,641,905 awarded to Dr. Deb Murie from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration

“Fisheries on the Move” -- \$571,607 awarded to Dr. Zach Siders from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration

“Fisheries on the Move” -- \$581,048 awarded to Dr. Ed Camp from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration

“Fisheries on the Move” -- \$139,211 awarded to Dr. Angela Collins from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration

“South Florida Geographic Initiatives Program: Expanding Florida Keys Sponge Restoration Research to Improve Outcomes at the Local and Regional Scale” -- \$24,883 awarded to Dr. Josh Patterson by the U.S. Department of Environmental Protection

Pictured left to right: SFFGS Students  
at the 2025 Fall Social

