

Natural Area Teaching Laboratory

Graduate Assistant

Made possible by your direct or indirect support, NATL's growing use and maintenance needs, as well as desired improvements, will now be supported by a Graduate Assistantship dedicated specifically to NATL. Responsibilities of the TA are divided into two main categories; 1) maintenance and improvements, and 2) increased awareness and use facilitation.

As part of the first responsibility, the TA will establish a trail in NATL-east to facilitate access to the 5 acre natural wetland. This trail will then loop around to NATL-west near the surge area sinkhole and pond providing access to an area that was previously relatively isolated in NATL-west. Implementation of a long planned self guided natural trail will also be initiated and hopefully completed by next summer. Signage, kiosk interpretive information, and maintenance of previous improvements to NATL-west and NATL-east will be conducted by the TA.

The second focus of the TA position will be to facilitate faculty awareness and use of the outdoor laboratory. New faculty or faculty wanting to include a field component to their course can easily access NATL without lengthy travel off campus. However, some faculty may not be aware of what NATL has to offer. To facilitate this awareness the TA will be available to give tours to interested faculty and answer questions related to vegetative communities, management variables and environmental gradients that occur at NATL. In addition, the TA may be available on a limited basis to assist faculty during class visits. If you feel there are members of your department faculty that may be interested in learning more about NATL, please refer them to NATL's website <http://natl.ifas.ufl.edu/> and have them contact the TA directly (Kevin Ratkus) at 392-1804 ex 336.

We anticipate the TA will increase the visibility of NATL to campus faculty and thereby NATL's utilization to support a wide range of academic disciplines. We also hope that this addition to NATL will assist your departments program needs and promote effective use of NATL as an important academic resource on the UF campus.

Mark Clark
Chair, Natural Area Advisory Committee
17 October 2005