

THE SLICE

SPRING 2026

EDEN Spring Training
2026 State of the Science
Conference Spotlight - NACS





2026 State of the Science Meeting

The UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education (PIE Center), departments of Agricultural Education and Communication and Family, Youth and Community Services faculty attended the eighth annual State of the Science (SOS) Meeting, held March 2–3, 2026, in Charleston, South Carolina. This year's theme, "Change Among Our Working Waterfronts," focused on the evolving challenges facing coastal communities and the fishery workers who depend on them.

Hosted by the Southeastern Coastal Center for Agricultural Health and Safety (SCCAHS), the conference brought together community leaders, researchers and industry partners from across the East Coast and Puerto Rico. Throughout the two-day event, speakers explored how environmental, economic and social changes are reshaping working waterfronts, and how these shifts impact the well-being and safety of those in the fishing industry.

Photo: Oyster farmer reaching for oysters during 2026 SOS tour. Photo credit: Brianne Lehan

Extension Disaster Education Network Spring Training in Tampa

The National Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) held its 2026 Spring Training Conference in Tampa from Feb. 24-26, bringing together Extension professionals, researchers and emergency management partners for three days of disaster management education and training.

Marshal Sewell from Mind your Melon delivered the keynote address focusing on mental health after natural disasters. Angie Lindsey, Florida EDEN Point of Contact and immediate past chair of the National EDEN Executive Committee said additional presentations from the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, the Florida State Fair and TECO Energy offered attendees perspectives from law enforcement, large-scale event management and critical infrastructure sectors.

The conference program featured Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Incident Command System training, train-the-trainer sessions and discussions focused on mental health and recovery resources. Attendees also participated in a pre-training workshop and an off-site excursion.

Lindsey, Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources affiliate faculty



Spring conference attendees discussing training topics in-between sessions. Photo credit: Mackenzie Atkins

and UF/IFAS department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences associate professor, said the EDEN Spring Training provided a platform for Extension professionals to share innovative programs, build inter-agency partnerships and advance disaster education curriculum at local, state and national levels.

Poster presentations highlighted current research and practice in disaster education, preparedness, mitigation, response, recovery and resilience. Submissions came from EDEN Points of Contact and Delegates, Extension professionals and EDEN partners across the country.

Attendees had the opportunity to tour an oyster farm, allowing participants to see fishery operations local to Charleston.

“One of the most valuable aspects of the State of the Science Meeting is the opportunity to bring people together across disciplines and organizations,” said Ashley McLeod-Morin, PIE Center extension specialist and SCCAHS associate director of communication. “Those conversations spark new ideas and partnerships that ultimately strengthen how we protect and support fishery workers.”

By participating in SOS, attendees gained insight into current research and contributed to conversations that help guide future outreach and programming. The experience highlighted the importance of



Those conversations spark new ideas and partnerships that ultimately strengthen how we protect and support fishery workers.

- Ashley McLeod-Morin

PIE Center, Extension Scientist

SCCAHS, Associate Director of Communication



Ashley McLeod-Morin talking to a group of attendees at the 2026 State of the Science meeting.

collaboration in addressing complex, current, real-world challenges that coastal communities face. Events like these continue to play a role in advancing knowledge and building connections that support healthier, more resilient coastal communities.

For more information regarding the 2026 State of the Science Meeting, visit sccaahs.org/state-of-science/.

Conference spotlight

Faculty, staff and students from the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources and the department of agricultural education and communication (AEC) attended the National Agricultural Communications Symposium on Feb. 1-2 in Louisville, Kentucky, presenting research and networking with peers nationwide. AEC professor and PIE Center affiliate faculty Lauri Baker contributed to a first runner-up poster for Outstanding Innovative Poster, “Clicking with Alumni: Audience Personalization Through Dynamic Content,” which explored whether personalized alumni e-newsletter content, tailored by academic program, could boost engagement across a large, diverse alumni base.



Dorcas Sunday (AEC graduate student) and Lauri Baker (AEC professor and PIE Center affiliate faculty) presenting research on ticks at NACS.

PhotoVoice Traveling Exhibit

The Florida Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) and the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (PIE Center) created a traveling exhibit based on recent research on a photo voice research project.

Research participants shared photos of how they define recovery after hurricanes; the photos were displayed on the exhibit. If you are interested in displaying these cubes at an exhibit, event or office, please contact Annabel Henson at annabelhenson@ufl.edu.



Traveling exhibit at the 2026 Florida State Fair (FSF). Photo credit: Michael Rogalsky, Chief Operating Officer, FSF.

student spotlight



KAYLA BRAGGS

MAJOR

Doctoral Candidate
Agricultural Communication

HOMETOWN

Atlanta, GA

FAVORITE PROJECT

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
Task Force/Working Group
Communications Materials



The PIE Center has been my home away from home since coming to the University of Florida. I am so grateful to be in an environment that is not only encouraging novel research ideas and methods but also finding new ways to impact the people of Florida agriculture and related industries.

- Kayla Braggs

oh the Places PIE has Gone



In 2026, the PIE Center has traveled to over 16 cities. Check out the cities below:

Fort Collins, CO
Woodward, OK
Kansas City, MO
Louisville, KY
Indianapolis, IN
Portland, ME
Washington, DC
Charleston, SC

FLORIDA:
Apalachicola
Tallahassee
Perry
Cedar Key
Micanopy
Daytona Beach
Tampa
Bartow

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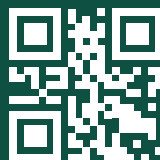
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visit piecenter.com or scan the QR code for more information.

Media Contact: Annabel Henson

Photo credit: Brianne Lehan, Mackenzie Atkins and Michael Rogalsky

Cover Photo: Shot of oyster being harvested during the 2026 State of the Science Oyster Farm Tour. Photo credit: Brianne Lehan