



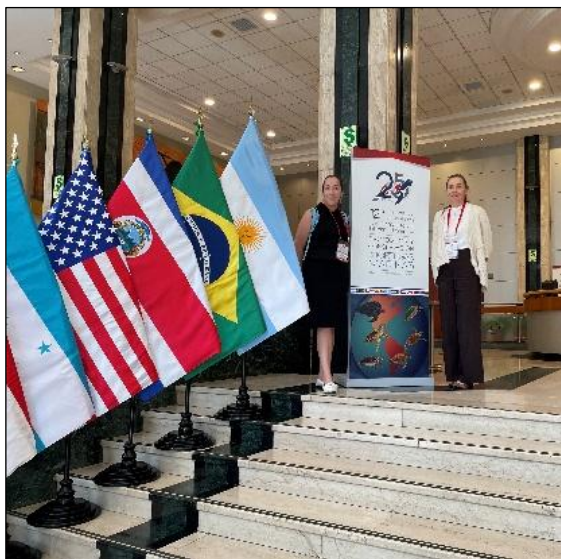
Institute for Biodiversity Law and Policy 2025–2026 Annual Report

Stetson University College of Law provides environmental law education, research, and service at the international, national, and local levels. The [Institute for Biodiversity Law and Policy](#) is Stetson Law’s interdisciplinary focal point for environmental law programs and initiatives and is a past recipient of the **Distinguished Achievement in Environmental Law and Policy Award** from the **American Bar Association’s Section of Environment, Energy, and Resources (ABA SEER)**. This report describes some of the Biodiversity Institute’s activities during academic year 2025–2026.



Stetson Law in Peru at the 12th Conference of the Parties of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles

The Institute for Biodiversity Law and Policy supported the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC) at its 12th Conference of the Parties (COP12), held in Lima, Peru, from June 30–July 3, 2026. Katherine Pratt, Biodiversity Fellow, presented a policy brief she prepared with Stetson students Noah Peretz, Anabella Garcia, and Maria Assimakopoulis titled, *Safeguarding Sea Turtles Through Regional Cooperation: The Indispensable Role of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles*. The brief highlighted the IAC’s contributions to protecting sea turtles and their habitats throughout the Western Hemisphere. Jacobs Law Clinic Fellow Alyssa Huffman and 3L student Erika Leeper also attended COP12, assisting the Secretariat during the meeting. Earlier in the year, IAC Secretary General Verónica Cáceres guest lectured in our International Environmental Law class.



Alyssa and Katherine at COP12 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lima, Peru.



A rapt audience during Katherine’s presentation.

30 Years of the Annual Stetson International Environmental Moot Court Competition!

Founded by Stetson Law in 1996, the [Stetson International Environmental Moot Court Competition](#) (IEMCC) is the world's largest moot court competition devoted exclusively to international environmental issues. Each spring, students travel from all over the world to Stetson to compete in the International Finals. Last year's theme centered on prior informed consent and benefit sharing in the context of de-extinction.

Over 150 student teams competed in national and regional rounds on five continents between November 2025 and February 2026. The top teams were invited to compete at the International Finals at Stetson Law's Gulfport campus in April.

Twenty-two teams from Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Colombia, India, Ireland, Kenya, Pakistan, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, and the United States participated in the International Finals. The championship round judges were Cristiane Derani, Professor of International Law and former Dean of Graduate Programs at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (Brazil), David Wirth, Professor of Law and Dean's Distinguished Scholar at Boston College Law School (USA), and Dr. Wil Burns, Visiting Professor at Northwestern University and Co-Founding Director of the Institute for Carbon Removal Law and Policy at American University (USA).



Prof. Gardner with the champions.

The championship team was the Ateneo de Manila University School of Law (Philippines), with the West Visayas State University College of Law as the runner-up. Semifinalists were the Peking University School of Transnational Law and Singapore Management University, Yong Pung How School of Law. Javeriana University (Colombia) received the award for the best written memorial, and Mackenzie Presbyterian University (Brazil) received the Spirit of Stetson Award, which recognizes the team that best exemplifies civility, justice, and fair play during the competition.



The traditional group shot at the International Finals of the Stetson IEMCC, with the elusive royal panther, front and center.

We would like to extend our thanks to the **Environmental and Land Use Law Section of The Florida Bar** for providing us with a grant to support the competition again this year. The 31st edition of the Stetson IEMCC in 2027 will focus on transboundary waters and evolving environmental principles. To register a team or volunteer as a memorial or oral round judge, please visit www.stetson.edu/law/international/iemcc/ or email Professor Gardner at gardner@law.stetson.edu or Katherine Pratt at kpratt2@law.stetson.edu.

The 22nd International Wildlife Law Conference



Some of the IWLC speakers and attendees.

Stetson Law hosted legal scholars, practitioners, and students on campus for the 22nd [International Wildlife Law Conference](#) (IWLC-22). Held in conjunction with the 30th Annual Stetson International Environmental Moot Court Competition, the conference centered on the theme of de-extinction, rewilding, and reintroduction. Speakers from five countries discussed topics from the ethics of genetic manipulation to international legal frameworks to address the environmental impacts of species reintroduction.

A wildlife boat tour hosted by Tampa Bay Watch at the St. Pete Pier kicked off the conference. Guests learned about local conservation efforts while watching manatees and dolphins swimming in the Bay. The keynote lecture was given by Dr. Alex Erwin, biologist and Associate Professor of Law at the University of Florida Levin College of Law, where he discussed potential legal frameworks to address the ecological consequences of rewilding and de-extinction. Stetson environmental law concentration students moderated the panels. The conference concluded with a Biodiversity Lecture and a lively reception to open the IEMCC. The 23rd International Wildlife Law Conference will take place at Stetson in April 2027.



IWLC-22 speaker Dr. Natalia Subbotina discusses the reintroduction of the European Bison in Ukraine.



3L environmental law concentration student Noah Peretz moderates the IWLC-22 panel on the legal implications of rewilding.

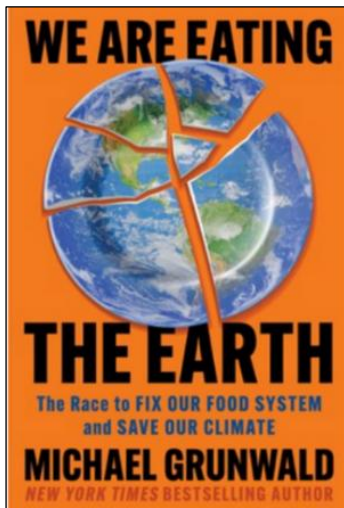


Foreman Biodiversity Lecture Series Brings Leading Voices to Campus

The Foreman Biodiversity Lecture Series kicked off in September 2025 with a talk by Casey Darling-Kniffin, who, as the Conservation Policy Director for the Florida Wildlife Federation, led an effort to prevent commercial development project on state park land. Her lecture, titled *Keeping State Parks Wild: Florida's Movement to Defend Public Lands*, told the story of the grassroots effort to inform the public about these development plans and organize an effective campaign to stop them.



Casey Darling-Kniffin illustrated the power of public engagement to influence decision-makers.



AP Follow

State parks in Florida appear off-limits to development as lawmakers react to outcry

In November of 2025, the Institute hosted author Michael Grunwald for a lecture and book signing. Mr. Grunwald's lecture was a summary of his recent book, *We Are Eating the Earth*, exploring the climate consequences of a meat-focused food system.

Dr. Christina Leb escaped Washington DC in February to speak at Stetson about her work with the World Bank on managing global water resources. Her lecture, *The Role of Multilateral Development Banks in Supporting the Implementation of International Water Law and Sustainable Water Resources*, provided insight into some of the successful management projects undertaken by the World Bank and its partners.



Dr. Leb shared some positive outcomes from international investments in natural resources.



Professor Alta Charo led an engaging discussion on how ethical decisions around extinction have evolved.

In April, the final Biodiversity Lecture of the year closed out the International Wildlife Law Conference and opened the IEMCC. Alta Charo, head of bioethics at Colossal Laboratories & Bioscience gave a fascinating presentation on the ethics of resurrecting extinct species in her talk, *If We Could Turn Back Time*.

SCIENCE

Is this really a dire wolf? Here's how the 'de-extinct' pups compare to the real thing.

Genetics and behavior complicate efforts to bring back extinct species.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Faculty Highlights: 2025–2026 Academic Year



Silvia Secchi, left, and author Royal C. Gardner discuss Gardner's book "Waters of the United States" during the Iowa City Book Festival Oct. 9, 2025, at Prairie Lights bookstore in downtown Iowa City, Iowa.

Julia Hansen/Iowa City Press-Citizen

Royal Gardner, Director of the Biodiversity Institute and Hugh F. Culverhouse Professor of Law, spoke about his book *Waters of the United States: POTUS, SCOTUS, WOTUS, and the Politics of a National Resource* at more than a dozen events, including at Iowa and George Washington Law, multiple meetings of the Society of Wetland Scientists, and the Iowa City Book Festival. Internationally, he presented on wetland-related topics in Brazil and Estonia (in person) and in Poland (online). He also served as a final round judge of the Stetson International Environmental Moot Court Competition for the Southeast Asia Regional Rounds in the Philippines and the Brazilian National Rounds. Closer to home, he delivered a keynote presentation at the Everglades Coalition Conference and serves on the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Everglades, which brought a lawsuit to challenge the operation of the Everglades Detention Center, more commonly known as Alligator Alcatraz.

Professor **Paul Boudreaux** completed three articles on environmental law during the last year: *The Incoherence of Injunctions in Environmental Law*, 55 Environmental Law 471 (2025), *Toward a New Clean Water Act* (forthcoming in 2026 in the Georgetown Environmental Law Journal), and *Congress and the Collapse of Environmental Law* (forthcoming in 2026 in the Rutgers Law Review). In 2026, he also presented on strategies for environmentally sustainable housing development at the American Association of Law Schools Annual Meeting.



Paul, not in Florida.



Jaclyn in her natural habitat.

Professor and Director of the Jacobs Law Clinic for Democracy and the Environment **Jaclyn Lopez** contributed to scholarship, public engagement, and environmental advocacy throughout 2025 and 2026. She presented Supreme Court and legislative updates and moderated a panel on Alligator Alcatraz at the [University of Florida's Public Interest Environmental Law Conference](#). She also moderated a panel on threats to Big Cypress and presented on National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) developments at the 2026 [Everglades Coalition Conference](#). Professor Lopez shared her environmental justice work at the [LatCrit Conference](#) in Denver, Colorado, and the [North Carolina Central Law Review Symposium](#) in Durham, North Carolina. Her scholarly work included the completion of *NEPA's Midlife Crisis* (forthcoming in the Nevada Law Journal), and the article *Ethical Lawyering While Our House Is on Fire*, 40 Maryland Journal of International Law 1 (2025).

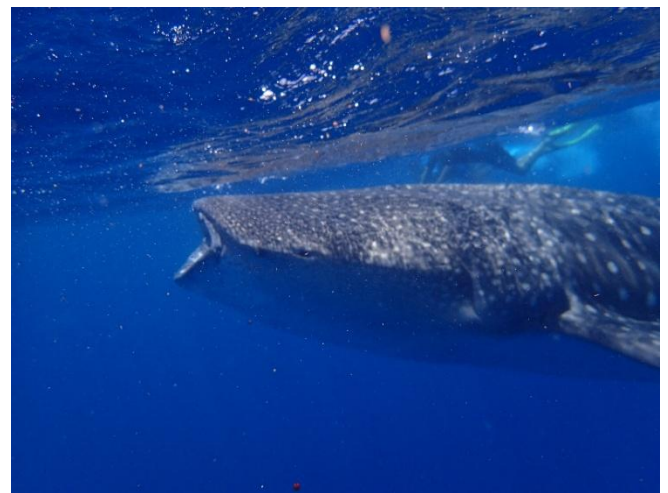
Professor **Erin Okuno** taught Animal Law and Policy and serves as the faculty advisor for the Student Animal Legal Defense Fund. Her recent scholarship includes [*“The Silence of the Farms”: Suppressing Speech and Trampling Transparency to Shield Big Ag*](#), 13 Texas A&M Law Review 951 (2026); [*How Implementing the Rights of Wetlands Provides Benefits to People and Wetlands: Relationships, Rights, Responsibilities, Experiences, and Actions*](#), 46:54 Wetlands (2026) (multiple co-authors); and *You Say “Potato,” and I Say “Burger”: Labeling Laws for Plant-Based Meat Alternatives*, selected for publication in Lewis & Clark Law Review, forthcoming in 2027. In addition, she was the recipient of the Homer and Dolly Hand Award for Excellence in Faculty Research in May 2026.



Erin at IWLC-22.



Lance enjoying his emeritus status in Norway.



Erin snapped this photo of a whale shark while snorkeling in Mexico.

Professor Emeritus **Lance Long** continued his work on significant environmental and public-interest litigation. He served on a legal team in Utah composed of law professors, practitioners, and the Natural Resources Defense Council to challenge the approval and proposed construction of a large AI data center in northern Utah. The litigation alleges violations of open meeting laws, improper denial of a citizen referendum, and constitutional concerns related to the decision-making process.

Training Tomorrow’s Advocates Through Real-World Experience

Students in the **Jacobs Law Clinic** worked on issues related to Alligator Alcatraz, endangered species protection in South Florida, radioactive waste, toxic air pollution, and public records requests. They showcased their work at several major conferences, presenting at the [Public Interest Environmental Law Conference](#), the [Everglades Coalition Conference](#), and the [People and Nature Symposium](#) in Gainesville, Florida, demonstrating Stetson’s ongoing commitment to experiential learning and environmental leadership. Check out the Clinic’s newsletter for more information about what they accomplished during the 2025-26 academic year: [2025-2026-jlc-newsletter.pdf](#).

The **Environmental Law-Teaching Program (EL-T)** is still going strong. Now in its fifth year, the program is modeled after one developed by Professor Zyg Plater at Boston College Law School. Each fall, third-year law students learn how to design and teach undergraduate courses in environmental law and policy. The following spring, the students enter the classroom as adjunct professors co-teaching with Biodiversity Fellow Katherine Pratt. In spring 2026, James Adams co-taught Environmental Regulation at the University of South Florida, while Ethan Garcia co-taught Environmental Law at St. Petersburg College. The EL-T program also expanded in 2026 to include a course at the Stetson University's Deland campus. There, students Dominique Palka and Noah Peretz co-taught a hybrid course on Water Policy.



Ethan and James guest lecturing in DeLand in the fall.



3Ls Noah, Ethan, James, and Dominique (and friend).

In February 2026, Noah Peretz traveled to the University of Oregon to attend the [Public Interest Environmental Law Conference](#) (PIELC). Noah, joined virtually by Professor Gardner, spoke on a panel led by Professor Plater, sharing insights on developing and teaching undergraduate environmental law courses.

Professor Gardner's **International Environmental Law** students spent a lot of time outside of the classroom in 2026, visiting Zoo Tampa at Lowry Park where they presented on the conservation status of select animals and taking a guided boat tour of Tampa Bay with Tampa Bay Watch.





IL students braving alligators, not realizing that it's the snakes you need to watch out for.



Visiting the Rodman Reservoir, which inundates approximately 20 springs.

In the spring, Professors Gardner and Lopez co-taught **Research and Writing II - Environmental Law**, and the class made the annual pilgrimage to Big Cypress National Preserve. Students anticipate the swamp walk and overnight camping trip, where they gain firsthand insight into the unique Everglades ecosystem. This year, the appellate brief assignment focused on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, wind turbines, and black skimmers.

Professors Lopez and Gardner designed an upper-level writing course, **Cases and Places: Florida Springs**, for the 2026 spring semester, patterned after a course developed by Professor Karrigan Börk at UC Davis School of Law. The Springs course provided students with a unique, hands-on approach to studying environmental law. Blending classroom learning with field experience, students visited Florida springs and met with the lawyers, scientists, and advocates who shaped Florida's landscape.



Yes, this is law school.

Celebrating our Students, Community, and Environmental Awareness

Congratulations to our environmental law concentration graduates and to those who received awards at the spring 2026 Graduate Awards Ceremony!



Noah Peretz received the **Hearne Environmental Law Award**



Dominique Palka received the **Nader/Zrake Memorial Award**



Cheyenne Sharp received the **Dean Richard Dillon Excellence in Real Property Award** and the **National Order of Scribes Award**



During their 3L year, Noah Peretz took the lead in restoring natural landscapes and reducing water pollution on campus. They applied for and received funding for a multi-year project to install bioswales around campus. Read more at [Campus Bioswales to Raise Awareness, Cut Pollution](#).



Rachael and Katherine soaking in the sun at the annual Earth Day Celebration organized by the Environmental Law Society.



Jeremy Radwan, longtime roadie and husband of keyboardist Prof. Radwan, joins the Officious Intermeddlers on trumpet for the first time as the band headlines the Earth Day Celebration.

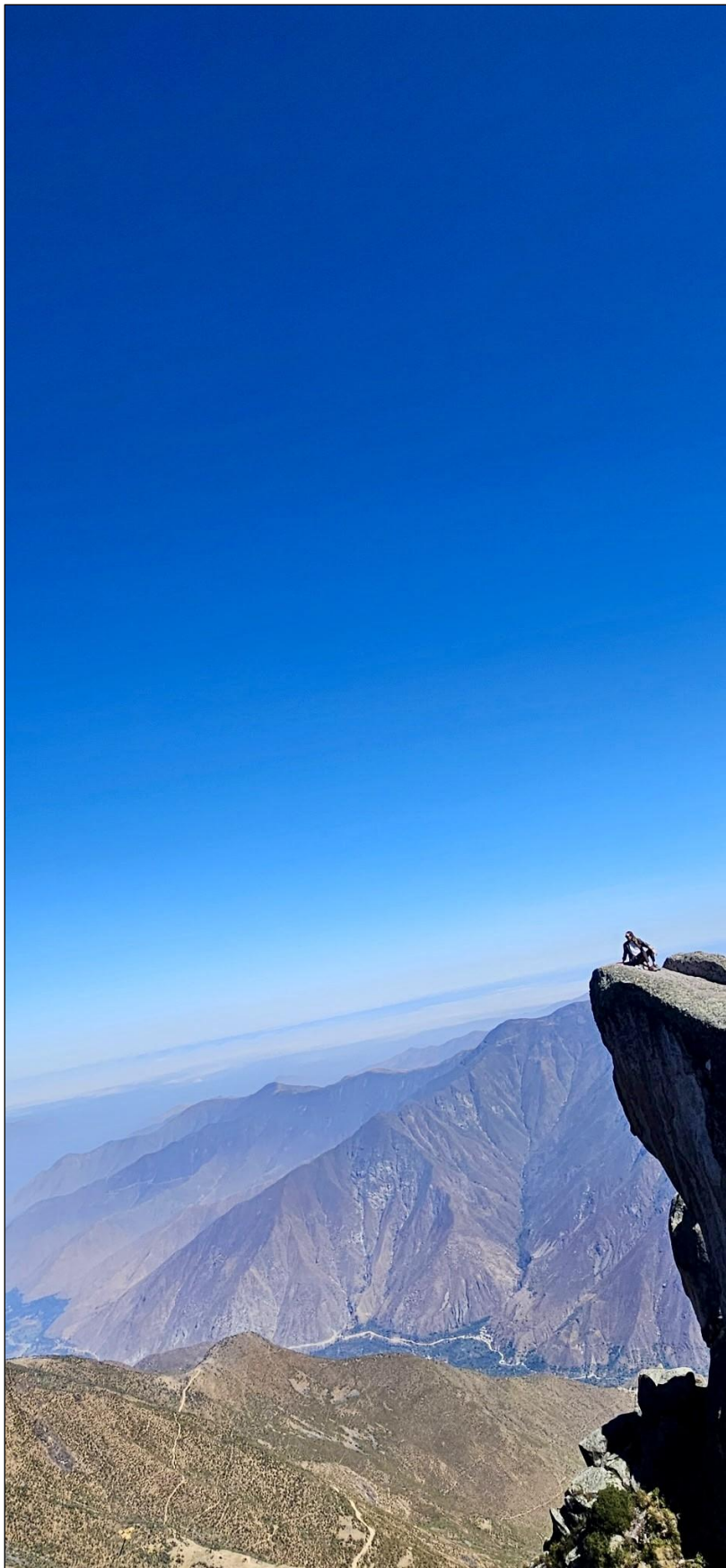


Student Blair Carlyle is spending the summer between his 2L and 3L year on a road trip across the country with the non-profit [United by Nature](#) to bring awareness to water issues.



Alyssa at Machu Picchu in 2026.

Welcome new Environmental Law team member, Alyssa Huffman, Esq! Alyssa joined the Jacobs Clinic as a law fellow. In her role as legal fellow, she supports the legal initiatives of the Clinic as well as the priorities of [Healthy Gulf](#), an organization spanning multiple states that advocates for a just transition away from harmful extractive activities in the Gulf of Mexico.



Katherine at 4000 M in Peru.

For more information about Stetson's Institute for Biodiversity Law and Policy and how to support our programs, please visit www.stetson.edu/law/environmental/institute-for-biodiversity/ or contact Professor Royal Gardner at gardner@law.stetson.edu or Katherine Pratt at kpratt2@law.stetson.edu.