Stetson University College of Law is committed to providing environmental education, scholarship, and service at the local, national, and international level. The Institute for Biodiversity Law and Policy coordinates Stetson Law’s environmental programs. The Institute’s activities for 2015–2016 are highlighted below.

**Contributing to international and national conservation efforts:**

Stetson Law has continued its support of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, which is an intergovernmental treaty that promotes the wise use and conservation of wetlands. There are 169 countries worldwide that are Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention. Stetson is the only law school that has a memorandum of cooperation with the Convention’s Secretariat, first signed in 2010. In March 2016, Acting Secretary General Ania Grobicki and Dean Christopher Pietruszkiewicz renewed and extended the memorandum of cooperation, highlighting Stetson Law’s support of wetland conservation. Professor Royal Gardner, who is the Director of the Institute for Biodiversity Law and Policy, served as the chair of the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) for the 2013–2015 triennium and was reappointed as the chair for the 2016–2018 triennium. The STRP is the Convention’s scientific advisory body.

In his capacity as chair of the STRP, Professor Gardner attended the Fourth Plenary Session of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-4), held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in February 2016. The first IPBES thematic assessment on pollinators, pollination, and food production was accepted at the session. Professor Gardner also spoke on behalf of the Ramsar Convention at two events at the United Nations in New York. In November 2015, he presented at a meeting of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, where he discussed the role of wetlands in the water cycle. Professor Gardner returned to the United Nations in March 2016 to speak at a joint celebration of the International Day of Forests and World Water Day, where he talked about the importance of mangroves and the ways in which the Ramsar Convention contributes to the wise use of mangroves and other wetlands.
Over the past year, Professor Gardner and Erin Okuno, the Institute’s Foreman Biodiversity Fellow, identified scientific articles that discuss the Ramsar Convention or designated Ramsar Sites and were published in 2015. Summaries and links to the articles were provided to the members of the Ramsar Forum, which is the Convention’s public email list with almost 2,000 members. In May 2016, the Institute drafted a working paper that provides a consolidated and categorized bibliography of all 225 articles. The working paper, titled “Bibliography of 2015 Scientific Publications on the Ramsar Convention or Ramsar Sites,” is available on SSRN at http://ssrn.com/abstract=2649137. The project is a recognized activity under the Ramsar-Stetson memorandum of cooperation. Stetson Law students Miles Archabal and Jess Beaulieu provided research assistance for the project.

The Institute also continued to support the Secretariat of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC). The Institute provided the IAC Secretariat with the results of a research project on the national legislation of the IAC Parties. This collaborative research project began in June 2014, when the Institute hosted a meeting of the IAC’s Consultative Committee. Stetson students took a course on sea turtle protection laws in preparation for the IAC meeting, and as part of that course, the students began to research the laws of the IAC member countries. After the course, the students’ research findings were compiled, verified, supplemented, and completed. The IAC Secretariat posted the final research findings on the IAC’s website at http://www.iacseaturtle.org/marco-eng.htm and gratefully acknowledged Stetson Law’s contributions.

Erin Okuno’s research on the Clean Water Act has caught the attention of the environmental community. This spring at the National Mitigation and Ecosystem Banking Conference in Fort Worth, she reported on in-lieu fee (ILF) programs, which offset impacts to aquatic resources, and the extent to which they comply with the requirements of the 2008 federal compensatory mitigation regulation. Based on her talk, she has been invited to present at a national ILF training program organized by the Environmental Law Institute in Minnesota in July.

Closer to home, Professor Paul Boudreaux offered advice to the Defenders of Wildlife and others in connection with Florida’s revisions of its regulations on protecting imperiled species. Stetson Law students were also engaged in Florida wildlife issues, as Research and Writing II students submitted comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about a proposal to downlist the West Indian manatee under the Endangered Species Act.
Using innovative methods to teach environmental law:

Stetson University College of Law has been awarded a grant by the Sea Turtle Grants Program to offer a special course on Sea Turtle Law and Policy this summer for law students and graduate students who are pursuing degrees in marine science, environmental science, or environmental policy. The one-credit, three-day course, “Topics in Biodiversity Law: Sea Turtles,” is being offered through Stetson’s Institute for Biodiversity Law and Policy on August 26–28, 2016. The special course will educate law and other graduate students about threats to sea turtles and the local, state, national, and international legal and policy framework to protect them. A guided visit to Fort De Soto Park will be part of the course. Scholarships funded by the Sea Turtle Grants Program will be awarded to five law students and five environmental graduate students. The Sea Turtle Grants Program is funded from proceeds from the sale of the Florida Sea Turtle License Plate. Learn more at www.helpingseaturtles.org.

In Professor Lance Long’s Environmental Advocacy course, the students learned about the art and skill of persuasion in the environmental arena. Each student selects a particular environmental issue and then must design a project that consists of a FOIA request, media advocacy, and either a collaborative project with a public or private entity, a draft of a citizen’s suit, or some type of legislative advocacy. This year’s projects included working with town councils to inform them of the potential environmental hazards of gypsum mines and sponsoring a mayoral candidate debate on specific environmental issues facing Gulfport. The class is a model of combining theory, skills, and experiential learning.

In spring 2016, Professor Gardner and Professor Long taught Research and Writing II—Environmental Law. The course is a special section of Research and Writing II that covers the same fundamental skills as other sections but in an environmental context, with an emphasis on real-world issues. The students researched and submitted public comments on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s proposal to reclassify how the West Indian manatee is listed under the Endangered Species Act. The students also drafted an appellate brief about the Clean Water Rule, which was promulgated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (and is the subject of ongoing legal challenges). The students had the opportunity to continue their learning in the field by participating in a hiking and camping trip to Little Manatee River State Park.
Professor Gardner taught **International Environmental Law** and the **Wetlands Seminar** in the fall. Students in those courses also learned about environmental issues both inside and outside the classroom. The International Environmental Law class took a field trip to Tampa’s Lowry Park Zoo, where the students gave brief presentations about endangered species and spoke with zoo director Dr. Lawrence Killmar. Students also met with Stetson Law alumna Debbie Brown, who is the Director of Human Resources at the zoo. The students in Professor Gardner’s Wetlands Seminar visited the Old Florida Mitigation Bank in Pasco County with site managers and regulators.
Professor Gardner and Erin Okuno taught an International Environmental Law, Policy, and Politics seminar at the University of South Florida Honors College in the spring, as part of the Stetson-USF 3-3 program. Students learned how international legal regimes address global environmental problems, and they engaged in two-party and multiparty negotiation exercises. The course culminated with oral arguments about shark finning in one of the courtrooms at Stetson’s Tampa Law Center.

The Institute offered the Ecosystem Banking Workshop again this year. The workshop is a voluntary enrichment program in which students learn about market-based approaches that may be used to restore and enhance wetlands and their resources, protect habitat for endangered species, improve water quality, and decrease greenhouse gas emissions. This spring, the students presented their case studies on specific mitigation banks.

In summer 2015, fall 2015, and spring 2016, Stetson Law students participated in environmental law externships across the country, where the students had opportunities to practice hands-on legal skills. Daniel Maharaj and Allison Dhand participated in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration externship, Lydia Greiner and Rachael Curran participated in externships at the Center for Biological Diversity, and Allison Dhand, Benjamin Lute, Tea Zubic, and Timothy Stella participated in the Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County externship.

Creating a dialogue about environmental challenges:

In April 2016, Stetson Law hosted the 16th International Wildlife Law Conference (IWLC-16) on its Gulfport campus. The conference began with an Edward and Bonnie Foreman Biodiversity Lecture, which was presented by Elizabeth Gitari, Legal Affairs Manager at WildlifeDirect in Kenya. She spoke about efforts to fight the illegal trafficking of elephant ivory. Marceil Yeater, Former Chief, Legal Affairs and Trade Policy, Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), delivered a keynote address on the role of CITES.

IWLC-16 panel discussions addressed hunting, fishing, and other intentional and unintentional impacts on wildlife, as well as connections and collaborations across multilateral environmental agreements. A broad range of presenters included Professor Annecoos Wiersema (University of
Denver), Professor Patricia Farnese (University of Saskatchewan), Jaclyn Lopez (Center for Biological Diversity), Ryan Tate (VETPAW), Dr. Wil Burns (American University and Founder and Emeritus Editor-in-Chief, Journal of International Wildlife Law and Policy), Melissa Lewis (Tilburg University), Professor Rommel J. Casis (University of the Philippines), and Professor Nadia B. Ahmad (Barry University). The 17th International Wildlife Law Conference will be hosted by the Institute of Environment Education and Research, Bharati Vidyapeeth University in Pune, India on January 6–9, 2017.

Stetson Law and the Environmental Law Institute co-sponsored the Third Annual ELI-Stetson Wetlands Workshop in November 2015. The theme of the workshop was “Wetlands Mitigation and Long-Term Stewardship: Financial Challenges and Title Issues.” Panelists and speakers discussed lessons learned and best practices for long-term funding mechanisms for mitigation sites, as well as competing property rights and interests at mitigation sites. The workshop panelists were Jenny Thomas (U.S. EPA), Greg DeYoung (Westervelt Ecological Services), John Emery (SWFWMD), Bob Polin (NFWF), Professor Paul Boudreaux (Stetson University College of Law), Gray Stevens (EarthBalance Corporation), Seth Johnson (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—Jacksonville District), Clay Henderson (Stetson Institute for Water and Environmental Resilience), and Palmer Hough (U.S. EPA). This year’s workshop also featured a field trip to the Old Florida Mitigation Bank. In spring 2016, the National Wetlands Newsletter published a special issue based on the presentations and issues discussed at the workshop. The Institute is grateful to the Law School Liaison Committee of The Florida Bar’s Environmental and Land Use Law Section (ELULS) for the special grant it provided to Stetson Law to support the workshop.

Professor Boudreaux serves as the editor in chief of the Journal of International Wildlife Law & Policy (JIWLP), and Professor Gardner and Erin Okuno are on the journal’s editorial advisory board. Students at Stetson Law have the opportunity to serve as student editors for the journal, in which capacity they perform “cite and source” reviews of articles and other editing tasks. Select student articles may be chosen for publication in JIWLP. The journal’s mission is to address legal and political issues concerning the human race’s interrelationship with and management of wildlife
species, their habitats, and the biosphere. An article by recent graduate Ethan Arthur was the basis for this year’s Stetson International Environmental Moot Court Competition problem.

Thanks to the generosity of Bonnie Foreman, the Biodiversity Institute offered the Edward and Bonnie Foreman Biodiversity Lecture Series again this year. The lecture series is free and open to the Stetson and larger Tampa Bay communities. Over the years, scientists, attorneys, judges, policymakers, and other experts have presented at the lecture series. The lectures foster a dialogue about important environmental issues and have created meaningful connections and opportunities for students and other attendees. The speakers this last year included Carlton Ward Jr, (Photographer and Explorer, Florida), Mike Walker (Senior Enforcement Attorney, EPA, Washington, DC), Dr. Rodrigo Medellin (Senior Professor of Ecology, UNAM, Mexico), Randall Arauz (President, PRETOMA, Costa Rica), Dr. Anne Meylan (Senior Research Scientist, FFWCC, Florida), and Elizabeth Gitari (Legal Affairs Manager, WildlifeDirect, Kenya).
Stetson again hosted the **International Finals of Stetson’s International Environmental Moot Court Competition**, the world’s largest moot court competition devoted exclusively to global environmental issues. This year marked the 20th anniversary of the competition, which was founded by Stetson Law in 1996. The protection of elephants as cultural property was the focus of this year’s moot.

Student teams submitted written memorials and presented oral arguments at regional rounds throughout the world. The top teams were invited to Stetson’s Gulfport campus to compete in the International Finals in April 2016. This year’s semifinalists were the Law Society of Ireland and National Law University, Jodhpur, India. The runner-up was the University of the Philippines College of Law, and the champion was the University of San Carlos, Philippines. The Institute is incredibly grateful for everyone’s continued support of the competition and would especially like to thank the Law School Liaison Committee of ELULS for its financial support.
In October 2015, members of the Stetson Law community attended the conference “Sea Level Rise: What’s Our Next Move?,” which was held in St. Petersburg. Professor Boudreaux, Professor Long, and Stetson Law student Alex Stewart participated as conference debaters. Erin Okuno participated as a moderator and served as a member of the St. Petersburg/Pinellas County Working Group, which organized the conference. Stetson Law students Hayley Brew, Rachael Curran, Lauren Eliopoulos, and Lydia Greiner volunteered at the event.

In March 2016, Professor Long and Stetson Law students and alumni attended the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference in Eugene, Oregon. Professor Long presented a workshop entitled “Writing to Save the World,” where he gave the attendees the eight most important persuasive writing techniques for environmental documents. Professor Long’s workshop was based on research and statistical studies he has published about persuasion in legal advocacy. Stetson Law alumni Elise Bennett and Katie Cleveland Bright also participated in panel discussions at the conference.
Recognizing the accomplishments of students and recent graduates:

Vanessa Moore and Kira Ramirez, two students in the Research and Writing II—Environmental Law course, participated in the Carlton Fields First-Year Appellate Advocacy Competition in the spring. Vanessa won first place, and Kira won second place.

This spring, Professor Long and Erin Okuno coached two teams of students that competed in the Robert R. Merhige, Jr. National Environmental Negotiation Competition. Hayley Brew, Tiffany Fanelli, Anabella Rojas, and Ciara Willis traveled to compete in Richmond, Virginia. Both Stetson teams advanced to the semifinals at the competition.

Students in the environmental law concentration received several awards at spring graduation: Haley Brew received the Raphael Steinhardt Award, Allison Dhand received the Hearne Environmental Law Award, Lydia Greiner received the Nader/Zrake Memorial Award, and Benjamin Lute received the Dean Richard Dillon Excellence in Real Property Award.

We are proud of our graduates who were recently hired for environmental law and policy positions. Tom Adams is Assistant General Counsel at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Elise Bennett works as a Reptile and Amphibian Staff Attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity in St. Petersburg, and Katie Cleveland Bright is the Special Assistant to the President at the Ocean Conservancy in Portland. The Institute will soon release a spotlight video featuring Stetson Law alumni who work in environmental positions.

And special notes of gratitude:

The Institute would like to thank Dick and Joan Jacobs for endowing the “Dick and Joan Jacobs Environmental Law Externship Fund” at Stetson Law. Because of their generous support, this fund will enable students at Stetson Law to participate in meaningful environmental law internships and externships around the country and the world.

The Institute would also like to thank Hopping Green & Sams, P.A. for establishing a book award at Stetson Law that will be given each year to the student in Research & Writing II—Environmental Law who receives the highest grade in the course. Vanessa Moore was the inaugural student recipient of this award in the spring.
For more information about the Institute for Biodiversity Law and Policy or how to support its programs, please contact Erin Okuno at okuno@law.stetson.edu.